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þÿ H o p k i n s o n s T h e N e w M o o n s A r m s a n d D i a n a M c C a u l a y

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Stories of Friendship:
An Analysis of Women's Friendship in Nalo Hopkinson's *The New Moon's Arms* and Diana McCaulay's *White Liver Gal*

Travail de fin d'études présenté par Layla ZAYA MENDEZ

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I. Synopsis

1. The New Moon's Arms

Calamity Lambkin is a Caribbean woman in her fifties that lives in Dolorosse, a town on the fictive island of Cayaba. Her mother disappeared when she was around the age of ten. She went out one night after an argument with her father and never came back. Her boat was found the next morning, empty on the beach. At fifteen years old, Calamity became pregnant from her childhood best friend, Michael, who is a homosexual man. The main plot starts with the burial of her father. Also present at the burial are Calamity's daughter, Ifeoma, and her grandson Stanley. The same night Calamity goes out to the beach to drink and passes out drunk.

When she wakes up, she finds a little brown boy covered in seaweed. With the help of Hector, a man who was present at the scene, she calls the emergency services who brought the little boy to the hospital. Calamity rushes to the hospital and finds out that her old school friend, Evelyn works there. They notice strange things about the boy: his language seems alien, he has a transparent third eyelid, callous skin behind his knees and webbed fingers, which makes Calamity wonder if the boy might be a sea-person. Evelyn informs Calamity that they are looking for a foster family for the little boy to which Calamity volunteers. Evelyn refuses but allows her to come and see him every day until a foster home is found. Calamity names the boy Agway. Right after leaving the hospital and reaching Dolorosse, her hometown, Calamity discovers that two body have been found in the water which she assumes are Agway's parents.

A few days later, Calamity finds Evelyn sitting in the same bus as her. They start talking about Agway, and, slowly, Calamity lets Evelyn understand that Agway might be a sea person. Evelyn seems excited by the idea and Calamity realises that she might have judged Evelyn too quickly. However, an argument breaks out between the two of them when they get out of the bus. Evelyn and her husband, Samuel, end up bringing Calamity back home. After this incident

and a visit of Calamity's house, Evelyn decides that Calamity would be able to take care of Agway.

Evelyn informs Calamity that Agway seems to have breathing problems while sleeping. Evelyn adds that she made an appointment to remove Agway's callous skin from his knees. After his surgery, Agway and Calamity are sitting at home when a special announcement is made on the television: mermaids have been found in Cayaba's waters! Seeing those photos, Agway starts to call for his mother. An immense guilt takes over Calamity, and she decides to give Agway back to his people. This is when she meets real sea-people. The next day, everyone is sad about the disappearance of Agway, but Calamity knows that he is now with his real family.

The main story is intertwined with the tale of the dada-hair lady, a Yoruba woman who is sold as a slave by her own people. In the ship, she prays to Momi Wata to take her message to the goddess Uhamari, begging for something to happen that would free them and bring them home. When a storm breaks out, the dada-hair lady gets her period and takes this as a sign that the goddess has heard her. She begins to transform, like the other Africans on the ship: webbing appears between their fingers, their eyes grow bigger, and their legs start to morph into a big tail. All of them jump into the water, running away from the ship. Her and her people have now found a new home: the sea.

2. White Liver Gal

Karen Vincent is the daughter of a Black English engineer and a white Caribbean woman. She has a brother, Carter. When their mother leaves the house for a younger lover, Karen's father starts coming into her room at night. Karen meets her best friend Angela (nicknamed Angie) when she starts school for the first time. Angela is the daughter of Karen's neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop. After her mother's departure, Karen's aunt Laura moves into the house as Karen's

father is not able to keep the house and care for the children. She stays at their house until the day she dies.

Karen is sent to Broadview College, an all-girl boarding school. Three years pass and Karen goes back home for Christmas. During this vacation Karen meets Gordon Paris, an older, married man. She decides that she wants to seduce him and have sex with him. With very little struggle, she succeeds and loses her virginity to him. After the Christmas break, Karen returned to Broadview. She ignored Stephen messages and did not see him again. Right before her final exams, Karen goes home for the Easter break. At night, she goes to a bar and stumbles upon Gordon who took her to his apartment to have sex. Three days later they meet again, and Gordon asks her to move into this apartment. She stays in that apartment until she is twenty-four. Gordon throws her out when she finds her in bed with another man.

Karen has nowhere to go and goes to Angie's house. Three months later, Roy, Angie's husband, kisses her. A few days later they have sex. Roy confesses to Angie who throws Karen out of her house. For almost a year, Karen lives with her mother. Karen meets Arthur Balfour; a rich American man and they get married. Three days after the wedding the couple left Jamaica to go to New-York. Five years passed and Arthur has business to do in Jamaica. Karen meets with her father in Jamaica, and he confesses that Angela Bishop is her half-sister as Karen's mother had had an affair with Mr. Bishop.

About her year later, her mother dies from lung cancer. Karen goes back to Jamaica to sort her house and finds out that she had another aunt, Miriam. Karen decides to talk to her about her mother and Miriam reveals that her mother too was sexually abused by her own father. That night, Karen lays in her mother's bed when the doorbell rings. It is Angie. Her son Jason had died drowning. She also confesses to having an affair with a married man. Karen tells her about them being half-sisters. And eventually, they start catching up with their lives and Karen realised she might finally feel at peace with herself.

II. Introduction

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines friendship as "the emotions or conduct of friends; the state of being friends." "Friend" is defined as "a person with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically one exclusive of sexual or family relations" (*OED*). The precise definition of friendship, however, varies depending on a person's understanding of the word, as well as their views, values, culture, subjectivity, and experiences. This dissertation will explore Caribbean friendships between women as represented in Caribbean women's novels. In order to do this, the definition of friendship must be contextualised through a brief history of the bonds and breakages between people in the Caribbean generally and between women specifically. Particular attention will be paid to how this historical legacy might have affected today's Caribbean societies.

It can be argued that African-Caribbean people historically have relied on the help of each other and the strength of community to survive. Historian David Richardson claims that out of the four hundred and eighty-five reported attacks on slave ships, ninety-three were carried out by "'free' Africans" on the shores of Africa (Richardson, 72), which highlights the sense of solidarity that some Africans had at the time. A very famous uprising on a slave ship is the revolt on the *Amistad* (which ironically translates into friendship in English). Maritime specialist and historian Quentin T. Snediker and archaeologist and anthropologist Christopher F. Amer explain that, led by Sengbe Pieh (also known as Joseph Cinqué), the fifty-three slaves on board organised a revolt by taking control of the ship in the hope of returning to Africa (Snediker and Amer, 16).

Nearly three years after, in 1841, the revolt on the slave ship *Creole* occurred. Antia Rupprecht explains that during the day, slaves were able to walk freely on the deck, however, at night, they were confined below deck (Rupprecht, 256). Four men, "Madison Washington, Elijah Morris, Doc Ruffin, and Ben Blacksmith" used this time as an opportunity to

"consolidate their bond of fictive kinship" and organise the revolt (Rupprecht, 256). Fictive kinship is an important concept for this thesis which is "most often used in relation to specific bonds forged aboard transatlantic slaving vessels and carried into the Americas" (Rupprecht, 256). Fictive kinship is, in other words, a term used in this specific context to refer to the strong bonds created between slaves to help strengthen their power against the coloniser, slave master, or any other oppressor.

Some scholars, such as Linda M. Chatters et al., even argue "that [the] practice of establishing fictive kinship ties and status among African Americans pre-dates the period of slavery. Persons from various West African cultures viewed kinship as normal idiom of social relations" (Chatters et al., 298), They explain that adults from these communities often encouraged their children to call other adults "Aunt" or "Uncle" (Chatters et al., 298). The notion of fictive kinship is, therefore, engrained in West African cultures and is also present in African-Caribbean culture as Robert Joseph Taylor et al.'s research on "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Extended Family, Friendship, Fictive Kin, and Congregational Informal Support Networks" suggests: "Black Caribbeans [are] more likely to have fictive kin and a larger number of fictive kin in their networks" (Taylor et al. 2013, 619). Fictive kindships are like deep friendships as they "share some of the same relationship qualities as confidants and other close friendships" (Chatters et al. 302). Moreover, fictive kinships are also "based on individual choice as reflected in the high degree of participant similarity on factors such as age, gender, and socio-economic status" (Chatters et al., 301). There also are several examples of inter-racial fictive kinship (Chatters et al., 302), which means that this is not a concept only restricted to Black communities and therefore may be applied to other communities in the Caribbean.

Regarding the role of African women during slavery in the Caribbean, Nicole N. Aljoe claims that "enslaved Caribbean women and girls are often characterized as mute figures in the colonial archives, frequently represented as the passive victims of the institution of

enslavement" (Aljoe, 34), an issue she attributes to slave narratives being mostly written by men (Aljoe, 34). Political historian Barbara Bush-Slimani agrees with Aljoe and comments that until the nineties, "academic literature on the West Indies made little or no reference to the slave woman *per se* […] as an individual" (Bush 1990, 1). She nevertheless observes that the lives of slave women have been more and more studied in the Caribbean field (Bush-Slimani 1993, 83). Richardson comments that the role of women in slave ship revolts may have been undermined. He argues that the way in which African women were managed on the ships may have made it easier for them to participate in revolts: "women were rarely shackled on board ship, even at the African coast. Moreover, […] women were often accommodated close to the officers' quarters as well as to weapon stores and keys. As they were sometimes abused sexually by the crew, they may also have had better access to information vital to the planning of revolts" (Richardson, 76). He comments, nevertheless, that documentation on their role during slave ships revolts remains "obscure" (Richardson, 76) and must be studied more.

It has been revealed that, on Caribbean plantations, slave women and men were to some extent considered as equal regarding field work (Reddock, 65; Bush-Slimani 1993, 84; Morrissey, 18; Bush 1990, 6). While Aljoe implies that more women worked in the fields because slave owners considered them easier to manipulate (Aljoe, 36), sociologist Rhoda E. Reddock argues that one of the reasons for this is because "slave women participating in field work similar to men's lived up to five years longer than men" (Reddock, 65). Furthermore, Marietta Morrissey argues that, in comparison to slave women in the United-States, slave women in the Caribbean not only worked harder and for a longer time in the fields, but they were also given "more status and authority as household heads and as petty entrepreneurs and traders" (Morrissey, 18). However, Reddock explains that "women were always excluded from the more prestigious and skilled jobs" (Reddock, 65). Their occupation consisted primarily of field work, domestic work, or nursing (Reddock, 65). African men and women were thus not

entirely equal on the plantations and women still endured discrimination because of their gender.

Bush-Slimani argues that slave women in the Caribbean suffered from a "'dual burden' […] [:] hard labour in the plantation economy combined with childbearing and household production in the slave community," a burden that was not shared by men slaves and which transformed women's body into a machine used not only for production but reproduction as well (Bush-Slimani 1993, 83). She further comments that power was exercised through sexual violence on women and if women resisted those sexual acts, they were harshly punished (Bush-Slimani1993, 84) even if they were pregnant, as "Jamaican planters were renowned for their callous indifference to the special needs of pregnant women" (Bush-Slimani 1993, 86). Bush also explains that "[t]he common image of the woman slave […] is a compound of the scarlet woman, the domineering matriarch, and the passive workhouse" (Bush 1990, 5) and is a result of the sexualising and dehumanising of the African-Caribbean slave woman (Bush 1990, 5).

As "resistance was an important aspect of slave life in all New World societies" (Bush 1990, 6), women were most certainly also part of this resistance; in fact, Bush claims that "[m]any Europeans in the West Indies declared women slaves to be more troublesome than men" (Bush 1990, 53). She also explains that because of the newfound interest of academic for the slave woman, "[m]ore emphasis is being placed on [the woman slave] contribution to slave resistance" (Bush 1990, 3). As will be explained later, most of the acts of resistance committed by women were committed in group and within tightly knit communities. Having strong friendship bonds within your community was therefore something that seems important and almost necessary for women in slave Caribbean communities, especially as it came from a place of resistance against oppressive forces.

The importance of friendship between women in the Caribbean is a theme that is not often discussed in literature, whether in academic writing or fiction itself, which is why this

dissertation will focus on two novels that do tackle this theme: Nalo Hopkinson's *The New Moon's Arms* (2007) and Diana McCaulay's *White Liver Gal* (2017). *The New Moon's Arms* follows the life of Calamity Lambkin, a Caribbean woman in her fifties who refuses to accept her age. One morning she finds a strange little boy stranded on the beach and immediately feels the need to care for him. Thanks to this event, she meets her old childhood friend, Evelyn Chow. The novel does not exclusively revolve around their friendship, but this friendship does have an important place in the plot, as Evelyn has the power to allow Calamity to keep Agway, the little boy. Moreover, Evelyn is Chinese-Caribbean, a fact that complicates their already rocky friendship.

Hopkinson's *The New Moon's Arms* is a speculative work of fiction that, as Giselle Liza Anatol explains, introduces us to a Caribbean version of the European tale of the selkie (Anatol, 202). In addition to friendship, one of my main interests in *The New Moon's Arms* is the way in which speculative genre is used to integrate the theme of friendship in the story. Speculative fiction has many definitions; Ingrid Thaler defines it as "an umbrella term for all kind of fantastic writing, including utopian and science fiction, which deliberately and explicitly disturbs mimetic notions of "realistic representation" (Thaler, 2). In order to explore friendship through the use of speculative fiction, I will compare *The New Moon's Arms* to another novel that also focuses on friendship but from a realist, non-speculative point of view.

The novel *White Liver Gal* is a realist novel that follows the young Karen Vincent as she grows up. From the day she starts school until the end of the novel, her best friend, Angela, is (almost) always at her side. Even though they are best friends, these two little African-Caribbean girls develop into completely different women. At the end of the story, Karen's father reveals that Angela is actually Karen's half-sister. The dynamic in their friendship is a great commentary on gender issues, what being a woman means, and what friendship means in the Caribbean. Comparing the two novels, on being speculative fiction while the other is not, will

therefore highlight how the theme of friendship is approached differently but also the reason why those friendships are included in those stories.

This dissertation will therefore explore the friendships between women in the two novels paying particular attention to the literary sub-genres used. The main question this dissertation will try to answer is the purpose of the presence of friendship in these novels: why did Hopkinson and McCaulay include those stories of friendship and what do they represent within a post-colonial Caribbean context? To do so, this dissertation will be divided in four parts. After a brief historical and cultural contextualisation of the concept of friendship in the Caribbean, the first chapter will be dedicated to the theme of fictive kinship and how friendship differs from family. In *White Liver Gal* Karen learns that her childhood best friend is actually her sister. The fact that they built such a strong bond without knowing that they were sisters could be understood as the author actually negating the chosen family/fictive kinship trope. Aspects of Caribbean culture will be analysed to understand how the friendship between Angela and Karen reflects the ideas of chosen family and fictive kinship and how that might differ from "real" family. *In The New Moon's Arms*, Calamity and Evelyn come quite close to becoming close friends when they are both trying to take care of Agway. Here the fictive kinship/chosen family theme comes into focus as both women take on the role of very different mothers for the same "fictive" son. This chapter will discuss how this mutual "fictive motherhood" brings the women closer in their friendship and how comparable it is to being related in some way to each other.

The second chapter will tackle the issue of gender. Both Karen and Calamity seem to struggle with their friendship with men. Both women only see men as sexual beings and are incapable of maintaining a platonic relationship with the men in their lives. Calamity obsessively needs men to be attracted to her. Karen also has sexual relationships with all the men she encounters in her life, even her best friend's husband. They are both represented as

hyper-sexual women and this trait seems to have an important impact on their lives and on their friendships with other women. Moreover, Calamity is depicted as a homophobic woman, reflecting the problem of homophobia in the Caribbean, which might also be related to gender issues and gender roles in the Caribbean. This chapter will therefore analyse how these novels reflect on women and men's sexuality in the Caribbean and the impact of these sexual and/or gender issues on those women's friendships.

The third chapter will analyse how ethnicity affects friendships and bonds in a Caribbean context. Evelyn is a Chinese-Caribbean woman while Calamity is an African-Caribbean woman. Both women do not seem to grasp the full extent of the impact of their upbringing or how it affects their views of the world, which ultimately leads to misunderstandings, frustration, and conflict. Their friendship in the novel therefore explores whether trans-racial friendships (especially between Chinese- and African-Caribbeans) can succeed in a Caribbean context and whether it would be easier if they were both were of African descent like Angela and Karen. The historical background of Chinese people in the Caribbean and their relationship with African-Caribbean people will be considered in this chapter to answer this question. Moreover, it will be argued that because of these differences in race (or not, in the case of Karen and Angela), class might also play a defining role in the success of these friendships. In other words, this chapter will analyse how these women's friendships represent the diverse Caribbean society, and especially in *The New Moon's Arms* the struggles between African-Caribbean and Chinese people in the Caribbean.

The conclusion will answer the question of the role and purpose of the presence of these friendships in the stories. The elements found in the three chapters of analysis combined with the theoretical elements discussed in the historical and cultural background will help to understand how Nalo Hopkinson and Diana McCaulay represented friendship in their novels within the post-colonial Caribbean context and what does it add to the stories as a whole.

III. Cultural and Historical background: Friendship, bonds, and breakages in the Caribbean

1. Historical Background

To better understand the concept of friendship in the Caribbean, one must turn to Caribbean culture and history. Elaine Savory argues that Caribbean culture "is richly kinetic" and that it "exhibits an enduring vibrancy of invention and revision" (Savory, 216). It is a culture that is deeply influenced by the many ethnic groups that inhabits the region "such as Hindi, Yoruba, Igbo, Portuguese and Amerindian" (Savory, 216). The Embassy of Jamaica in Washington DC explains that "[m]ost Jamaican slaves came from the region of modern-day Ghana, Nigeria and Central Africa, and included the Akan, Ashanti, Yoruba, Ibo [(Igbo)] and Ibibio peoples" (*History of Jamaica*). Aspects of those cultures will naturally be found in Jamaican culture and consequently in the values associated with friendship as Lou Lichtveld argues:

> [a]ll culture is rooted in history, is founded on a complex of traditions. […] Indeed, all of us West Indians have the same roots, the same kind of history: Arawak settlements, wiped out by Caribs: Spanish and other West European conquerors who exterminated the Indians almost completely and replaced them by numerous slaves from West Africa. Descendants of all these ethnic groups and of all their interbreedings, who tried to construct a culture of their own--a West Indian Culture-by the process of addition and subtraction, multiplication and division of all the poor remainders of some culture in which they or their ancestors had partaken in their land of origins (Lichtveld, 61)

The colonial past of Jamaica and the Caribbean as a whole consequently affects the culture and values present in the region.

Savory adds that the region "comprises not only the islands, large and small, arching down from the northwest to the southeast of the Caribbean Sea, but mainland states on the coast of South and Central America, such as Belize, Honduras, Guyana and Surinam" (Savory, 216), making the Caribbean an extremely vast region. Savory therefore claims that Caribbean culture

is the result of a long history of creolization (Savory, 217). She argues that this process includes "elements of the colonial, anti-colonial, neo-colonial and postcolonial in dynamic interaction" (Savory, 218), which is why a brief historical context of slavery in the Caribbean is important to understand how Caribbean people generally see friendship.

As a starting point for the history of bonds and breakages in the Caribbean, the history of the dada-hair lady in *The New Moon's Arms* will be looked at, for Ingrid Thaler argues that "[i]n the Black Atlantic, the ship also functions as an origin story" (Thaler, 99). Black Atlantic is a term created by Paul Gilroy and defines "black culture's in-between-ness as an intrinsic part and result of the processes of Western modernity" (Thaler, 3). It is "an approach that rewrites culture as fluid, flexible, and constituted through movement" (Thaler, 4). Black Atlantic is therefore a term that is used when discussing the different experiences of people from the African Diaspora.

Thaler explains that "[s]peculative fiction and Black Atlantic writing share a particular concern with imagining time and alternative spaces in time" (Thaler, 2) while Ruth Mayer claims that "[a]ll narratives around the Middle Passage are invariably and necessarily speculative" (Mayer, 556). Speculative fiction was roughly defined in the introduction as an umbrella term used, as Julia Hoydis observes, to refer to "the various kinds and intermeshing subgenres of fantastic writing (i.e. science fiction, magical realism, horror, supernatural, utopia, dystopia, apocalyptic), which all in one way or another unsettle and violate notions of literary realism" (Hoydis, 71). Speculative fiction "speculate[s] about society and its modes of regulation" (Thaler, 9) and "employs particular strategies to construct fictional worlds that purposefully go beyond the empirical realities of a text's socio-historical context" (Thaler, 10). Speculative fiction and literature of the Black Atlantic therefore challenge the reality by bringing past, present and future into the same narrative.

The story of the dada-hair lady is a perfect example of speculative fiction of the Black Atlantic. Her story begins when she is sold to the white men, probably by her own family (Hopkinson, 103), and put into a slave ship towards the West-Indies. According to the historian Philip D. Morgan, "the British Caribbean was the destination of about 2.7 million Africans [between 1625 and 1807]. About half of all the Africans shipped to the Caribbean arrived in the British sector [and] Jamaica was, by far, the biggest recipient" (Morgan, 381). However, this does not mean that this was the exact number of Africans that were taken from their home in Africa. It is widely accepted that during the middle passage, a high number of slaved died along the way. Historians Robin Haines et al. highlight the main reason thereof: poor health at the time of embarkment and "poor *on-board* conditions [such as] inadequate water and rations (particularly on unexpectedly long voyages caused by extreme weather conditions), crowded and insanitary living conditions, and ill-treatment" (Haines et. al, 503-504). These poor conditions are indeed experienced by the dada-hair lady:

> The women and the children [were] forced to clamber into a dark space in the belly of the ship. They had been packed in so tightly that everyone's back was jammed against the belly of the person behind them. […] Many of them had never been on the sea before. The nausea soon had them retching. Often you couldn't reach the necessary in time. Within hours, the heat and the stench in the hold were unbearable, and there wasn't enough air (Hopkinson, 102-103).

With this ship narrative Hopkinson points out the horrible mistreatment of slaves on slave ships that Haines et al. had underlined.

It is nevertheless because of those poor conditions that slaves began to support each other and revolt against the slave owners on the ships. The introduction already touched upon the concept of fictive kinship, a concept that refers to the strong bonds created between African slaves in slave ships to help each other survive during the journey, a phenomenon that led to many revolts such as the revolts of the *Amistad* and *Creole*. This particular story does not

exactly exemplify the creation of such strong bonds; however, it does point out that slaves connected with each other on those ships. The dada-hair lady notes: "[t]hey were Igbos and Ewes and Aradas in the place. Different languages, different ways, but they had been learning each other's speech in the long dark misery of their days" (Hopkinson, 256), showing that slaves on this ship started not only to bond with each other but also to mix their languages and cultures. Moreover, the slaves turning into sea-people and wrecking the ship can be seen as a form of revolt. Her story therefore does illustrate to a certain extent how slaves came together against the oppressor on slave ships.

Furthermore, the dada-hair lady's sacrifice of her fertility to free the slaves from the ship shows the extent that she is willing to go to save the community that has been created on the ship. Historian Monica Schuler claims that slave revolts consisted of "many Africans refus[ing] to eat, jump[ing] overboard, refus[ing] to take medicine, and on occasion tr[ying] to seize control of the ships" (Schuler, 377). Self-sacrifice for the good of the group was sometimes also needed to save others. Richardson argues that one percent of the entirety of slaves transported from Africa to the Caribbean died during slave revolts on ships (Richardson, 74). Furthermore, political economists Andrew Marcum and David Skarbek estimate that "an average of 25 to 32 slaves died during an insurrection" (Marcum and Skarbek, 243). Even though most slaves still reached their destination, Richardson clarifies that "Africans who died resisting slave traders as well as those who resisted unsuccessfully and survived to work on plantations saved perhaps 6oo,ooo other Africans from being shipped to America in the long eighteenth century and 1,000,000 during the whole history of the trade" (Richardson, 74-75). Richardson explains that because the threat of slave revolts was quite high, traders had to invest in more preventive measures against those revolts (mostly barricades and more crew members). Journeys were consequently more expensive and, as a result, a little bit less ships sailed (Richardson, 74). Self-

sacrifice as a slave actually helped in refraining, even if just a little, the slave trade and saved many Africans from suffering.

However, those slave revolts were not as frequent because of the preventative measures put in place by traders and the danger it represented for the slaves. As Marcum and Skarbek argue, "slave participation during insurrection was tentative, and many slaves were afraid, apathetic, or even antagonistic to revolt" (Marcum and Skarbek, 242). As well as barricades and employing more crew members, traders on slave ships tried to find other ways to prevent those slave revolts, "including investments in firearms, swivel guns, and cannon" (Richardson, 73). The conditions in which the slaves were kept on the ships also prevented them to revolt (Marcum and Skarbek, 242). Physical punishments were very common in case of failed revolts. Furthermore, physical violence was not the only means used to deter slave revolts. Richardson argues that "[s]ome contemporaries suggested that the risk of a revolt grew when large proportions of those enslaved came from the same village or community" and therefore separated people from the same community (Richardson, 78). Such practices made sure that slaves could not communicate with each other (Marcum and Skarbek, 254). Some crew members even convinced slaves to turn on other slaves in exchange for their freedom: "[i]n at least two cases, slaves were given their freedom for tipping off or sabotaging revolts" (Marcum and Skarbek, 242). Even though some slave revolts were indeed successful, they required a great effort of solidarity that could not be reached most of the times because of the measures taken by traders on the ships and the threat of suffering and even death if the revolt failed.

Once those ships landed in the West Indies, traders and slave owners made it once again difficult for slaves to express solidarity and revolt. As the historian Michael Craton explains, "[p]lanters prided themselves on their skill in dividing their slaves in order to rule them" (Craton, 231). Schuler explains how division was established between slaves:, for example, some "skilled slaves" were trusted with some of the most important duties on the plantation,

which created disparities between the slaves (Schuler, 375). Historian Gad Heuman points out that there were in fact three major distinctions of occupation between the slaves: “domestic, skilled and field slave” (Heuman, 140). Colour did play a role in slave communities and in those distinctions as well. For instance, light-skinned slaves “did not generally work in the lowest status jobs in the field” (Heuman, 140). Most of the domestic slaves were women (Heuman, 140). Skilled slaved had lighter skin as well but were mostly men (Heuman, 140). Schuler further highlights that Creole slaves, slaves born on the plantations, “seemed to consider themselves different from, and perhaps better than, the Africans” (Schuler, 376). These distinctions in colour, gender, and origin led to the creation of a hierarchy between slaves which then could provoke resentment within the slave community.

Another important group of slaves were the Maroons. The Maroons were communities of escaped slaves that lived mostly in mountains. They were first a symbol “of hope to slaves and a threat to slave discipline” (Schuler, 376). Historians Silvia W. De Groot, et al. argue that Maroons “manifested the opposition of some African slaves to their enslavement and a persistent desire to create a free society of their own" (De Groot et al. 169), they symbolised resistance to slavery. The Maroons nevertheless turned into a threat for slaves that escaped later. In 1739, after the “Maroon War” in Jamaica opposing Maroons to British authorities, the Maroons formed agreements with colonial authorities to turn in runaways in exchange for their own freedom (Schuler, 376; De Groot et al., 172). Moreover, Maroons often refused new members in their community as it meant more people to care for (De Groot et al, 180). Maroons are therefore a great example of the paradoxical solidarity of slaves in the Caribbean. As they were “interested primarily in securing their own freedom” (Schuler, 376), they did not really hesitate to form agreements with the authorities to guarantee the freedom and survival of their own community in detriment to others’.

Resistance and revolts on plantations were “a feature of every slave society [and] its manifestations usually found in ‘day-to-day resistance’” (De Groot et al., 169). By “day-to-day resistance,” De Groot et al. mean little acts of revolt such as destruction of plantation property, insolence, negligence, etc. (De Groot et al., 169). Craton also argues that the schemes put into place by slave owners to divide the slaves sometimes played in their disfavour. Slaves would sometimes use those divisions against the slave owners, overseers, and bookkeepers with “stratagems involve[ing] exaggerated deference and disguised satire as well as outright cunning, duplicity and mendacity” (Craton, 231). De Groot et al. explain that more extreme resistance from the slaves were sometimes committed, such as suicide, self-mutilation, murder, conspiracy, and rebellion (De Groot et al., 169-70). According to them, “Jamaica had a particularly high rate of slave rebellions” (De Groot et al., 181). Craton lists some of the biggest slave revolts of Jamaica, after the Maroon war that ended in 1739: “The island wide rebellion of 1760, the Hanover slave plot of 1776, and the Second Maroon War of 1795” (Craton, 228). Jamaica consequently witnessed a few instances of slaves coming together to resist their oppressor. Resistance therefore involved little acts of rebellions as well as great revolts that most likely asked for solidarity and teamwork from the slaves.

It must be noted that slaves did not exclusively show solidarity and community feelings through active and “violent” acts of rebellions and revolts. By simply reclaiming and perpetuating their culture, African slaves also resisted their white owners. Craton asserts that “the retention of African languages, beliefs, folklore, music, customs and crafts” (Craton, 233) allowed the slaves to rebel against white owners and their attempt to “acculturate their slaves” (Craton, 233). Bush adds that “the retention of certain key facets of their traditional culture, in conjunction with the creation of unique cultural forms out of their new environment, was a crucial element in the self-preservation of the slave community” (Bush 1990, 151). She

specifies that when slave owners tried to suppress their customs and traditions, slaves would still do them but in secret (Bush 1990, 151).

Language is also a key factor in the survival of cultures. Through the passing on of African languages, Craton argues, African slaves were indeed able to secretly organise revolts, as many of the slaves were able to write and read their African language (Craton, 233). However, talking in Creole also simply helped in keeping the African culture alive within slave communities (Bush 1990, 158). African slaves succeeded in preserving their culture of origins to a certain extent as creole languages show in the Caribbean today:

> [e]ven today the common parlance of the ordinary people in every Caribbean territory is a Creole language, in which African words are grafted on to, and African inflexions and grammatical constructions transform, basic European structures […]. It is in these Creole languages that is also preserved a vital wealth of wit and wisdom - almost a corpus of popular philosophy - in the form of 'Negro proverbs'. These not only demonstrate universal popular values and common African roots, but, more specifically, the common legacies of slavery and similar systems of oppression, and of resistance to them (Craton, 234).

Slaves also used music to communicate, which allowed slaves to further perpetrate their African cultures (Craton, 233). Bush adds that singing and talking was almost synonymous in African slave communities: "[t]rhough song, work could be rendered less burdensome, slave morale could be raised, and white masters mimicked, satirised or even subtly threatened" (Bush 1990, 158). Dance was also an important part of the African-Caribbean slave cultures. African-Caribbean people therefore managed to keep some aspects of their cultures alive throughout slavery, allowing their cultures to live on, despite the attempts of British slave owners to acculturate and reform the slaves.

Bush explains that West-African cultures also had an impact on how slaves formed their communities on the plantations. She argues that "the extended kinship group was the integrating social factor in the slave community" (Bush 1990, 105). Slaves did everything they could to

find their families and kin back on the plantations (Bush 1990, 105), and were even sometimes willing to run away to reunite with them if they were on another plantation (Bush 1990, 64). If no family or kin were found, "fictive kinship networks were developed" (Bush 1990, 105), showing that having a close and trusted community was indeed important for African slaves. Bush's observations therefore confirm Chatters et al. statement that "[p]ersons from various West African cultures viewed kinship as normal idiom of social relations" (Chatters et al., 298). Bush adds that "newly arrived slaves considered themselves adopted children, called the slaves who cared for them parents and 'venerated them as such'" (Bush 1990, 105), which shows that fictive kinship was common practice amongst slaves in order to keep the symbol of the family alive.

Bush further explains that the houses of these extended communities were arranged around a yard which was used "for many purposes – as a burial ground, for gossip, fighting, dancing and cooking" (Bush 1990, 107). Family and kin were therefore an important part of African-Caribbean culture as it offered a strong support system: "[f]amily and kin supported the individual slave against the vagaries of plantation life" (Bush 1990, 105); "the development of strong intra- and inter-familial relationships amongst slaves helped to shield the individual against the alienation and degradation inherent to the slave system" (Bush 1990, 107). Being part of a strong, tightly knit community/family was therefore incredibly important for slaves as it allowed them not to resist slavery as such, but to protect themselves from it.

2. The role of women in resistance

As this thesis focuses mainly on friendships between women in the Caribbean, it is also important to discuss the role of slave women in resistance and revolts but also in slave societies in general. As suggested in the introduction, slave women in the Caribbean could be found in either field work or domestic work. It has also been explained that skilled slaves were mostly men, while women were in charge of the household and families. Morrissey highlights the four

main slave family structures that could be found on Caribbean plantations: slave alone, female-headed families, nuclear families, and polygamous relationships (Morrissey, 85-89). She further explains that "[d]omestics generally resided in female-headed families and slaves of authority in families with women and children" (Morrissey, 87-88). Even though some people might think that slave families were an act of rebellion, Morrissey argues that this idea is paradoxical, especially when it comes to women slaves, "for their household responsibilities were greater than men's" (Morrissey, 97). She argues that "slave women's affection and love for their families was functional to slavery" (Morrissey, 98), because women providing for the children meant keeping the slaves alive (Morrissey, 97). On the one hand, slave families and particularly women consequently worked at the advantage of slave owners and slavery.

On the other hand, Morrissey argues that it could also sometimes be considered as resistance. Nuclear families and matrifocal families often achieved

> economic self-sufficiency, [which] relieved masters of responsibility for food and other resources. Nevertheless, […] [t]hey offered status, authority, and economic power to women and families and provided incentives for men and women to reduce their labor commitments to slave masters and increase time and resource investments in their own petty industries. In this sense home production and trade sabotaged the plantation structure (Morrissey, 98).

Slave families that achieved such financial independence from the slave owners were then detrimental to the established slave system as they did not rely so much on their owners to survive and would consequently be less willing to work. Furthermore, families and especially women in those families "formed vehicles for slave conspiracies" (Morrissey, 98). Additionally, slave women had an important role in sharing resistant and rebellious ideas as they were prevalent in domestic work in the slave owners' home. (Morrissey, 98). Finally, women were also the "principal socializers of slave children, they passed on knowledge about communication lines and channels" (Morrissey, 98). It is through women that children learned

about rebellions and acts of resistance. Within families, women had a great power of resistance. Slave families and especially the women in those families could therefore also be rebellious and serve slavery resistance.

The role of women as conspirators is therefore quite clear. However, women resisted slavey in many other ways. Social studies specialist Bernard Lennox explains that "[t]he records show that the abolition of slavery was achieved in large measure as a result of the cultural networking of the slave society with the women having a sizeable role" (Lennox, 51). Following this idea, Bush analysed some plantation journals and punishment lists, out of which came descriptions of how slave women resisted slavery on a day-to-day basis. She explains that "women slaves were frequently accused of insolence, shamming sickness, excessive laziness, disorderly conduct, disobedience and quarrelling" (Bush 1990: 58). It is also domestic slaves, primarily women, who "exhibited he greatest degree of duality of behaviour" (Bush 1990, 61). Women also participated in more serious acts of resistance like murder (mostly by poison) and arson (Morrissey, 155; Bush 1990, 75). Morrissey points out that given the difficulty of organisation of this kind of resistance, "networks of conspirators [were required, which] remind us that the often hidden support of women and children buttressed revolt" (Morrissey, 155). She also argues that sometimes, abortion and infanticide were committed as an act of resistance and that "largely female groups worked together to conceal these events from the white plantation staff" (Morrissey, 155). Morrissey's clarification on the role of women in revolts and resistance shows that women were greatly influential and powerful mostly when they worked together as a group.

Even if there were significantly fewer female runaways than male runaways (Bush 1990, 63), Morrissey suggests that some women served the role of "queen" in revolts, leading a band of rebels (Morrissey, 154). Bush notes that "African tended to run away in groups" (Bush 1990, 64) and that female slaves often took their children or close relatives with them (Bush 1990,

65). Women who escaped with a group and became Maroons in Jamaica were in charge of the agricultural and provisional aspect of the community (Morrissey, 155; Bush 1990, 71). Their contribution in those Maroons communities was therefore crucial for their survival and helped growing the economic and political force of Maroons in Jamaica (Morrissey, 155). Nanny, who was an Ashanti Obeah woman and was the leader of the Jamaican Windward Maroons, is an example of a strong female Maroon leader (Bush 1990, 69). She is known to have played a crucial part in the results of the first Maroon war (De Groot et al., 182; Savory, 221; Morrissey, 155; Bush 1990, 70). She was supposedly killed in 1773 but remains to this day a symbol of slave resistance against the British colonial forces (Savory, 221). Morrissey, nevertheless, argues that because "no other comparable female Maroon leader has been identified", men probably outnumbered women in Maroons communities (Morrissey, 155).

Bush argues that "the spirit of revolt amongst slaves" can be traced back to the West-African root, and that was true for women slaves as well (Bush 1990, 67). She quotes Olaudah Equiano, the author of the first popularised slave narrative, and explains that women in his tribe were considered as much as warriors as men when fighting against white people (Bush 1990, 67). Bush concludes that "[w]omen in West Africa thus have a tradition of active participation in communal resistance against outside aggression" (Bush 1990, 68). She adds that women's opinions were also took into account regarding political decisions (Bush 1990, 68). Bush further argues that the African practices of Obeah and Myalism were used as a form of resistance against the white oppressors. She defines both practices as follows:

> Obeah was worked by individual priests who dealt with magic, poisons, herbs and folk medicine and were highly secretive. Myalism was concerned more with group worship. It was used as an antidote against the harmful aspects of obeah. Both obeah and myalism were directly African in origin (Bush 1990, 73).

She explains that Myalism, as it involves group worships, was without a doubt the most prevalent "Obeah" aspect in slave revolts (Bush 1990, 74). She adds that "a significant

proportion [of Obeah practitioners] were women" (Bush 1990, 74). British slave owners did not understand Obeah and feared it (Bush 1990; 75), practicing it was therefore an act of revolt, mostly led by women.

Women also contributed greatly in the "cultural activities of the slave community" (Bush 1990, 153). As explained earlier, African-Caribbean did whatever they could to preserve their African culture. Although, Obeah is one cultural aspect that women considerably helped in perpetrating, their spiritual involvement was not limited to Obeah. Bush explains that "Black women in the Caribbean played a prominent role in religious ceremonies and resistance stemming from religious practices" (Bush 1990, 153). She also emphasises the fact that those religious practices and "had a high African content" (Bush 1990, 153). As women in West-Africa often had a place of authority within religious practices, the same would be applied in Caribbean slave communities (Bush 1990, 154). Women were "prominent also in healing the slave community" (Bush 1990, 155), as it was traditionally the case in West-African communities (Bush 1990, 155). Bush further argues that "women were arguably more deeply resistant to European influences than men" (Bush 1990, 158). Women were especially keen on singing and dancing, which, as explained above, were important parts of the African culture.

Whether it be to survive the middle passage, to support each other on the plantations or to perpetrate their culture and traditions, African-Caribbean slaves therefore had to come together, as strong community to resist, fight and protect themselves from the oppressor. Caribbean history has shown that solidarity between the slaves was indeed a necessity to survive. Slave owners understood this necessity quite well hence their schemes and stratagems to divide the slaves and create chaos. Creating a hierarchy and putting groups of slaves against each other may have worked in some ways, however, African culture still being alive in the Caribbean today testifies of the failure of colonial authorities to suppress African culture. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that women played an important role in keeping family,

kinships, and communities united through the participation is acts of resistance, rebellions, and perpetration of West-African cultures. What remains of these West-African cultures will therefore be analysed below to explain and understand how contemporary African-Caribbean people conceptualise friendship and most importantly, what it means to be someone's friend in the Caribbean.

3. Cultural background

Friendship, as defined in the introduction, is a relationship of mutual affection that does not include sexual partners of family members. One could consequently wonder whether affection towards one another is the only defining element for a friendship. Psychologist David B. Annis argues that "[a]lthough mutual liking is necessary for friendship, it clearly is not sufficient" (Annis, 349). According to him, spending a great amount of time with the other person and sharing experiences is necessary to call a relationship a friendship (Annis, 349), which means that affection for the other is not the only defining element in a friendship, quality time with the other is also needed. Friendship cannot however be only defined by this, as philosopher Laurence Thomas adds that it is also defined by the trust that binds the two individuals together (Thomas, 223). This trust emerges from the lack of authority from one or the other party over the other and by "the equal self-disclosure of intimate information" which cements the "bond of trust between deep friends" (Thomas, 223). According to Thomas, friendship is therefore a deep, platonic relationship built on mutual trust where the two individuals are on the same level of authority.

However, there are also some expectations that comes with friendships. According to philosopher Jörg Löschke, friendships imply "associative duties of the participants to benefit each other in various ways" (Löschke, 320). Annis explains that it is expected from a friend not only to care for their friends but also to empathise with them, however nothing should be expected in return, the motives cannot be egoistical (Annis, 349-50). Annis specifies that "[w]e

expect friends to be trustworthy, open and honest, loyal, to be concerned for our welfare, to comfort, help and support us" and that we might even feel betrayed if we do not receive such support from our friends (Annis, 352). However, some people believe that there are no associative duties in a friendship (Annis, 353; Löschke 321), which could explain why some friendships fall apart: "[w]hen a friend doesn't live up to those expectations [of duty], we feel that there has been a breach of understanding" (Annis, 354). If two friends differ in what they consider being friends means and in their friendship values, the understanding between the two is broken.

Friendship is therefore a complex concept to define and might not mean the same thing for every individual. The concept of friendship and the values associated with it might even differ from culture to culture depending on their respective values, as Andrew A. Moemeka and Anne Maydan Nicotera, both professors of communication in Nigeria, argue: "[s]everal studies have shown that friendship patterns are culture-specific-that is, are regulated and governed by cultural norms and values" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 107). "Friendship" could thus mean something else in a Caribbean context. Research on Caribbean adolescent friendships in Barbados conducted by Roberta Springer-Proverbs, psychology student at the West Indies University, and psychologist Donna-Maria Maynard "found that Caribbean adolescents have a preference for 'pleasing' which A. G. Richardson (1999) described as being agreeable, friendly, responsible, and useful" (Springer-Proverbs and Maynard, 42), which almost dismisses the possibility of having "undemanding friendships" (Löschke, 321). Expectations for friendships in Caribbean societies and especially in black communities can sometimes resemble expectations for a family member, which brings the discussion to the concept of fictive kinship. Fictive kinship is, as aforementioned a concept that refers primarily to a strong relationship between black slaves, build to protect themselves from oppressors and is still found in Black

communities today. This concept can be associated with friendship, in a Caribbean context as it is often expected of friends to be useful to each other and to bring great support.

As the Caribbean is such a vast region with many ethnic groups and influences, the concept of friendship might even differ from group to group within the same region. Analysing each cultural group and their understanding of the concept is impossible within the scope of this thesis. The events in *White Liver Gal* are mostly located in Kingston, Jamaica. This region will therefore be considered when analysing the concept of friendship in relation to cultural characteristics. However, the events of *The New Moon's Arms* happen mostly in Dolorosse on the fictive island of Cayaba. It is therefore impossible to determine to which cultural group Calamity belongs to as the story is based in a fictive place. The only clear statement about the region is that it is *not* Jamaica (Hopkinson, 223). Determining Calamity's cultural is more complicated as the reader does not know to what extent it differs from Jamaican culture.

As Calamity's cultural background is unknown, her origins could be examined to try finding some sort of cultural influences in her character. One could argue that her origins can be traced back to West-Africa and more precisely to the Yoruba and Igbo tribes. Anatol argues that "Hopkinson eventually ties the sea-people narratives to West African stories of Momi [or Mami] Wata-water spirits" (Anatol, 202). Momi Wata is described by Madhu Krishnan as "a siren-like figure [known] throughout West Africa" (Krishnan, 2). Henry John Drewal, professor in African Art, adds that "[r]eestablished, revisualized, and revitalized in diaspora, Mami Wata emerged in new communities and under different guises, among them Lasiren, Yemanja, Santa Marta la Dominadora, and Oxum" (Drewal, 61). Momi Wata therefore has many forms and is worshipped in many different places but finds her roots in West-African culture. Momi Wata has a lot of different meanings for her worshippers: "nurturing mother, sexy mama, provider of riches, healer of physical and spiritual ills, embodiment of dangers and desires, risks and

challenges, dreams and aspirations, fears and forebodings" (Drewal, 63). Momi Wata can therefore be used in fiction to represent many things.

In *The New Moon's Arms*, Momi Wata is referred to in the story of the dada-hair lady. During her journey on the ship, she prays to Momi Wata: "Momi Wata […] beg you please take a message to Uhamiri for me. Tell her we need her help there. Tell her I am hers. I pledge to always faithfully be hers, but please would she help us now, before we land and the white people eat us" (Hopkinson, 257). Uhamiri is, according to Jalondra A. Davis, an Igbo deity "associated with Mami Wata" (Davis, 6). Razinat T. Mohammed and Abubakar Usman explain that "the goddess, Uhamiri, denies fertility to her devotees, but showers prosperity in business on them" (Mohammed and Usman, 35). Eventually, Uhamiri does grant the dada-hair lady her wish of setting her and the other African on the boat free by turning them into seal-people and denying the dada-hair lady her fertility (Hopkinson, 318).

As Uhamiri is specifically an Igbo deity, the dada-hair lady could be considered Igbo. Moreover, she understands what the Igbo sailor on the ship tells them (Hopkinson, 255). Calabar, the city where the dada-hair lady is put into the ship (Hopkinson, 102), is a coastal city of South-Nigeria. The dada-hair lady also notes that "[t]hey were Igbos and Ewes and Aradas [on the ship]" (Hopkinson, 256). With these clues, one could conclude with certainty that the dada-hair lady is Nigerian and probably from the Igbo tribe, or the Yoruba as Anatol argues: '[t]he author crafts the myth of 'the dada-hair lady' for her narrative, which she links […] to Yoruba spiritual belief and a woman's experience of the slave trade" (Anatol, 206). Since the three biggest tribes in Nigeria are the "Igbo (east Nigeria), Yoruba (west Nigeria) and Hausa (North Nigeria)" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 108), it is entirely plausible that the dada-hair lady would be from one of those tribes. Anatol also points out that "a young child born with locs or dense hair with which quickly form locs in Yoruba tradition is called Dada" (Anatol, 207). Hopkinson therefore mixes Igbo and Yoruba culture in her tale of the dada-hair lady.

The importance of the origins of the dada-hair lady comes into play when one considers Calamity as a descendant of those people who were turned into seal-people by Uhamiri. There are a few hints throughout the novel that point to Calamity being half-mermaid and half-human, as Anatol argues: "[t]he narrative implies that Calamity herself is the daughter of a seal-woman" (Anatol, 205): she has a fat body (like seals), her mother was taller and wider than her father, her last two fingers are webbed, and lastly, she finds a monk seal skin hidden in her father's Cashew farm (Anatol, 205). Calamity and her daughter Ifeoma conclude that her father must have wanted to sell the skin but her mother was against it and that this was the source of their dispute. However, at the end of the novel it is indeed implied that her mother, or another sea-person, came back for the sealskin as it disappeared during the night, replaced by Agway's cast full of "fresh raw shrimp" (Hopkinson, 322). With these implications, the reader is led to believe that Calamity is indeed half sea-person.

One last important clue is how Agway presents Calamity to the sea people. When his mother (or who Calamity thinks is his mother) grows angry at Calamity for removing Agway's callous skin, Agway stops her by calling Calamity "nne" (Hopkinson, 304). Kenneth Ubani explains that the word "nne", often used to refer to "a female who has given birth to a child or one who nurses a child" (Ubani, 25), is in fact much more than a reference to motherhood: "[t]he term "Nne" is the totality of what a woman stands for in Igbo culture" (Ubani, 29). The "nne" is "directly and indirectly responsible to her society and respected because of that" (Ubani, 25). Calling someone "nne" in Igbo culture therefore indicates having a lot of respect for the said person and recognising her important role in Igbo society. Agway calling Calamity "nne" not only means that he considers her to be a mother figure but that he also considers her to be an important part of the society that he knows, making Calamity part of the sea-people's society. This of course does not confirm that Calamity is indeed part sea-person however it is a clear manifestation of Calamity's belonging to their community.

If one considers that Calamity does in fact have some sea-people blood in her, it means that she probably has Igbo and/or Yoruba roots. To come back to her cultural background and understand how she might comprehend the concept of friendship, looking at the Yoruba and Igbo culture might help. Moemeka and Nicotera explain that there exists a "wise saying of the Igbo of Nigeria-'*Ezi oyi ka ego'*- [that] loosely translates as 'a good friend is more valuable than riches'" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 107). Friendship thus seems to hold a great place in Igbo culture, even above money and wealth. Moemeka and Nicotera conducted a study in Nigeria to try and identify the main characteristics that Nigerians search for in a friend. The fifty-four respondents of this study were from different tribes in Nigeria: "Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Kanuri, Efik, Edo, and Ijaw" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 111). The results showed that Nigerian people value tolerance, honesty and caring the most in friendships (Moemeka and Nicotera, 113). Among the other answers, trustworthiness, humour, intelligence, and responsibility were characteristics that were mentioned by more than half of the participants (Moemeka and Nicotera, 113). Even though Moemeka and Nicotera recognise that their study is limited as the number of participants only reflect a very small amount of the Nigerian people, it is these characteristics that will be considered in this thesis, as further study is currently unavailable.

Regarding Yoruba culture in particular, the concept of friendship is defined by theologist Samuel Adekunle Ola Osungbeju. He argues that

> [t]he Yoruba cultural concept of friendship is based on trust, commitment, loyalty and forgiveness as the essential ingredients of any relationship with its attendant repercussions for any erring one in case of a breach of trust in such a relationship. Hence, the Yoruba concept of friendship is strongly opposed to betrayal and fosters peaceful coexistence, harmony and progress in so far as the bond of friendship or trust conforms to the moral values and norms of the society and it is faithfully kept against the individualistic nature and personal freedom of the post-Enlightenment Western culture of friendship (Osungbeju, 3).

His description of what is expected from a friend confirms Moemeka and Nicotera findings that Nigerian people search mostly for tolerance, honesty and caring in a friend. Osungbeju claims that "[t]he concept of friendship in Yoruba cultural context is embedded in the Yoruba religious system of *Ifa* oracles and the daily experiences of the people" (Osungbeju, 81). Osubgbeju explains that "*Ifa* is regarded by the Yoruba as the deity of wisdom and intellectual development" (Osungbeju, 83). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations adds that "[t]he Ifa divination system, which makes use of an extensive corpus of texts and mathematical formulas, is practiced among Yoruba communities and by the African diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean" (*Ifa divination system*). The UNESCO claims that such practices and beliefs are also practiced in the Caribbean. It is therefore possible that within Calamity's understanding of friendship, characteristics of friendship found by Moemeka and Nicotera and Osungbeju are present as well.

The cultural context in *White Liver Gal* might be easier as the story takes place in Jamaica. Similar to the Igbo saying "*Ezi oyi ka ego*" mentioned earlier, a Jamaican proverb also exists that means the same thing: "Good frien' betta dan packet money" which translates to "[a] good friend is better than money in the pocket" (*Jamaican proverbs*). The Jamaican National Library explains the saying as follows: "[n]o matter how valuable our material possessions may be to us, a good friend, especially in times of trouble, is always proven to be of more worth. We should treasure our friends, not only recognising them when we are in need" (*Jamaican proverbs*). The existence of a variation of the Igbo saying in Jamaica shows that friends and friendship are of great value in Jamaican culture as well.

Television Jamaica (TVJ) is "Jamaica's leading free to air television station providing compelling and unique news, information and entertainment for consumers locally and internationally" (Television Jamaica). For their morning program "Smile Jamaica" two women presenters, Dahlia and Simone, sat down to discuss expectations in friendships in "Girl talk:

Unrealistic Friendship Expectations and How to Deal". According to their discussion, friends are expected to be loyal and trustworthy. If one's friend becomes close to one's enemy, Dahlia explains that she might feel the need to remove herself from the friendship because '[she] would not trust that friendship" ("Girl talk"). Instead of fighting with their friend, Dahlia and Simon agree that they would rather choose to distance themselves from this person and it would be impossible to consider them as their friends and even more difficult their best friend. They would also refrain from calling someone a friend too quickly. According to both women, taking time to actually know the person is important to build a strong friendship. They also discuss people who scarcely check up on their friends. Both women agree that not contacting your friends for a while is normal because everyone has their own lives. However, Simone adds that you can only be "as busy as it gets" ("Girl talk") and that if your friend only seems to reach out when they need something it might be a source of concern. Dahlia and Simone agree that communication is crucial for a friendship to work; expectations and boundaries must be clearly stated. Their conversation highlights some of the characteristics that is also found in the Igbo and Yoruba cultures such as trustworthiness, honesty, and caring for your friends to a certain extent.

Thus, it appears that West-African cultures that African-Caribbean slaves tried to preserve during slavery are still present in today's African-Caribbean societies. Some parts of the Yoruba and Igbo cultures for example are still present in the Caribbean. This is also true regarding the concept of friendship. In the history of slavery in the Caribbean, it has been explained how slaves relied on one another for support, security, and resistance. Family is a crucial element of the slave support system; however, members of the same families were not always sent to the same plantations. This is when the concept of fictive kinship gains all its importance. Friendship in the Caribbean may therefore be understood as an extension of family relationships. It has been explained that African-Caribbeans mainly expect support, loyalty,

honesty, usefulness, and commitment from a friend. The sentiment of community is quite strong in the Caribbean and friends hold an important place in these societies. These characteristics will therefore be considered for the analysis of the friendships in *White Liver Gal* and *The New Moon's Arms*.

IV. Chapter 1: Friendship and Family

1. Friendship and Family in *White Liver Gal*

White Liver Gal exemplifies the blurred line between friend and family as the protagonist of the novel, Karen Vincent, learns that her childhood best friend Angie is in fact her half-sister. Family, fictive kinship, and friendship therefore merge into one relationship between Karen and Angie. There is no clear definition of their relationship at the end of the novel and the reader is left with the question of whether finding out that they are siblings changes their initial friendship. This revelation asks the question of whether family bonds are considered better and stronger than friendships in the Caribbean. It is, after all, because of this revelation that Karen actively tries to contact Angie. This chapter will therefore ask the question of whether non-biological strong relationships can replace kinship relationships and specifically how strong is the relationship between Angie and Karen in comparison to Karen's other relationships with her female family members, including her mother. I will also try to highlight the purpose of this friendship within the story regarding the theme of family and thus the reason why McCaulay might have chosen to tackle family through friendship.

The historical background of friendship in the Caribbean shows that family was indeed quite important in Caribbean slave societies, especially for women, as they were often considered to be the heads of the families. Families brought great support against the cruelty of slavery. It has been specified that when it was impossible to find one's family, slaves created networks of fictive kinship. People that were not part of the family were therefore integrated into the family community, suggesting that biological ties may not be that important. Elizabeth Abel argues that "literary critics have focused more exclusively on the mother-daughter bond" (Abel, 413), which is why will be analysing women's friendships rather than the usual mother-daughter relationship.

Anthropologist Constance R. Sutton explains that "[k]inship constitutes the major means by which women establish important social ties among themselves" (Sutton, 97). She makes this statement in her review of *Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English-Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean* written by Peter J. Wilson. His book, Sutton argues, is supposed to give an idea of English-speaking Caribbean societies through his anthropological analysis of the "tiny English-speaking Afro-Caribbean Island of Providencia" (Sutton, 96). If we agree with Wilson that his study of Providencia can be adapted to any English-speaking African-Caribbean Island, the idea that kinship is the most important way for women to create social ties with other women could also be applied to Jamaica, where most of the events of *White Liver Gal* take place. However, in McCaulay's novel, the role of family is more nuanced and does not seem to represent the most important social relationship, which is why the relationship with her family members will be analysed to compare it with her relationship with Angie.

Kinship relationships within Karen's community, especially between women, are extremely scattered and broken. Her mother left their home when she was only ten years old. When Karen's mother comes to visit her on her birthday party for her eleventh birthday, Karen develops jealousy for her mother: "I wished to be taller than my mother, more beautiful, more fascinating. I promised myself that one day I would outshine her" (McCaulay, 38). It could be argued that those competitive feelings appeared when Karen's father started to visit her at night, after her mother left: "I felt the cataclysmic wrongness of my father's presence in my bed, but I also thought: *He prefers me*" (McCaulay, 42). From that moment on, Karen antagonises her mother and considers her the source of all of her problems:

> I hated her. I never wanted to see her again. It was she who had caused the giggles behind my back at school, she who caused me to encounter words like 'whore' and 'slut'. When I read, I paid particular attention to mothers, who were generally on the bread making type. Fictional mothers did not wear red dresses and girdles. Fictional mothers did not have

> young boyfriends. […] I was determined I would not be like my mother. […] She was bad; I would be good (McCaulay, 50).

Karen's suffering is therefore, according to her, caused by her mother. As a consequence, she is unable to identify with her and would rather turn to fiction to try and understand what a mother should be. As the behaviour of fictional mothers does not fit with her own mother's behaviour, she decides that her mother is a bad mother and that she would become the opposite of her. Karen therefore starts forming an identity to oppose her mother's.

Before going further, it is crucial to understand why Karen blames her mother when it is her father that commits abuse. Psychologist Janet Liebman Jacobs argues that women who were abused by their fathers as a child were most likely to experience "anger, hatred, and betrayal" (Jacobs, 500) towards their mothers. She theorises that the reasons for these feelings are related to the incapability of the mothers to play their role of caregivers and protectors (Jacobs, 502). There is no clear indication in the novel that Karen holds her mother accountable for her sexual abuse as a child, however, it is clear that she holds her accountable for some of the suffering that happened in her life. When Karen confronts her mother about her father sexually abusing her, the lack of response from her mother makes her "[want] to hurt [her] mother" (McCaulay, 223), confirming that even then, her mother's incapability to provide her with some sort of emotional support provokes within Karen feelings of anger towards her mother. This sentiment makes Karen question her family ties with her mother: "I struggled against my kinship with her" (McCaulay, 224). Her relationship with her mother is therefore not a healthy mother-daughter relationship as Karen is unable to identify with her mother and does not consider her to be from the same family.

Abigail L. Palko argues that "motherhood, […] especially the mother-daughter relationship, is the most prominent trope through which […] Caribbean women assert a feminine, individualized subjectivity in their novels" (Palko 2016, 41). She further claims that "[t]he mother is perhaps the most important literary figure in Caribbean's women writing

throughout the twentieth century" (Palko 2016, 45). Motherhood is also an important theme in *White Liver Gal*. It is indeed through her mother that Karen asserts her womanhood as *she* defines it. As aforementioned, it is because of her mother leaving home that Karen decides to become the opposite of the kind of woman her mother is. It can therefore be argued that it is because of her mother that Karen decides to entirely reject motherhood: "I was sure I did not want children" (McCaulay, 96). With this decision, Karen breaks the circle of abandonment that she suffered from. Palko explains that "mothering […] is a choice people consciously undertake" (Palko 2016, 70). In the same way, it can be argued that *not* mothering is also a choice people make. In this case, Karen's mother decided to reject her motherhood when she already had children, inflicting the trauma of abandonment to them. Karen choses to not be a mother before having any children because, as Palko argues, "the daughter whose relationship with her mother has been fractured cannot herself choose to mother" (Palko 2016, 139). Karen's refusal of motherhood therefore portrays how her relationship with her mother is broken and how kinship in that case does not allow Karen to "establish important social ties" (Sutton, 97) but rather deters her from doing so.

However, it must be noted that her two aunts, Laura and Miriam, do play a positive role in Karen's life as they help her to re-establish the social, or rather kinship, ties that were broken because of her unhealthy relationship with her mother. These two women play, in part, the role of other-mothers, which are, as Palko explains, women that help mothers by sharing their "mothering responsibilities" (Palko 2015, 18). Anthropologist Sharla Blank points out that "[t]hroughout the Caribbean, women often raise children that are not their biological offspring to help other families cope with challenging economic circumstances" (Blank, 3). Mary Chamberlain defines this phenomenon as "child-shifting (the temporary or permanent fostering of the child by kin folk, usually a grandmother, aunt or a close family friend)" (Chamberlain, 64). Laura and Miriam did not raise Karen *per se*; however, I will argue that they did help in

forming her identity by accepting a role that would have been typically assumed by the mother, especially Laura.

Karen sees her Aunt Laura as a temporary saviour of her family. She explains that "[t]he moment [she] saw her [she] felt relief" (McCaulay, 43). Karen immediately knew that her aunt would take on the tole of the other mother. Palko explains two major maternal failings that can be applied to Karen's mother and that are temporarily erased by Laura: the inability to protect her daughter from sexual assault and the "failure to accept maternal responsibilities" (Palko 2015, 26). Karen notes that once their aunt came to live with them "[their] broken family became organized" (McCaulay, 44). Laura fully endorsed the role of this other mother, teaching the children how to behave and care for themselves, but also caring for them "[w]hen [they] were sick" (McCaulay, 46). She cooked for them every day, made sure they woke up and went to school, checked if they did their homework, and it is also her that had the talk with Karen about periods and sex: "[i]t was not my mother who told me about my menstrual periods. No, it was my Aunty" (McCaulay, 56). In these aspects, her aunt did accept the maternal responsibilities of Karen's mother.

Consequently, by Laura taking the role of the head of the family re-establishes the "matrifocal household [where] the mother is the centre of the domestic sphere and men tend to be marginalized" (Blank, 3). As the man of the family is not actively participating in a matrifocal household, Laura's presence also freed Karen, even if only for a short period, from the sexual assaults perpetrated by her father: "[a]fter my aunt came home, my father disappeared" (McCaulay, 48). Even if he did eventually come back to her room after a few months, Laura managed, involuntarily and temporarily, to save Karen from sexual abuse. Following Palko's idea of major maternal failings and other mothers, it therefore can be said that Laura helped Karen's mothers in her mothering responsibilities and therefore there happened a sort of child-shifting between Karen's mother and her sister Laura.

Karen's other aunt, Miriam, is only introduced at the end of the novel. For this reason, it cannot be claimed that she helped Karen's mother to raise Karen. However, it can be argued that where Karen's mother failed to help Karen understand her identity, Miriam did play a role therein. During her last conversation with her mother, it is very clear that Karen holds her mother accountable for her lack of information on own identity: "'I want you to talk to me! I want you to tell me about your life and *my* life and why it all happened! You're going to die and I don't know you!" (McCaulay, 222; emphasis added). Even though Karen seems angry because she knows nothing about her mother's life, she also expresses how that influenced her knowledge about her own life. Karen therefore feels that if her mother explained her past, it would help Karen understanding her own present. However, her mother never tells her, and it is Miriam, an aunt Karen never knew about, that reveals her mother's past to Karen. Karen's mother and her aunts were also abused by their father. Miriam asks Karen: "[j]udge you mother if you want, but you… have you been so different?" (McCaulay,248), which might have given Karen some insight into her own life. After learning about her mother's past, Karen states that she "realized she no longer felt that hot empty rage [she] had lived with all [her] life. Perhaps the anger and pain could end with [her]" (McCaulay, 255). The end of the novel therefore lets the reader think that, because of her aunt's intervention, Karen is finally able to not only understand but also assert her identity as a woman.

However, there is one character that helps Karen to form her identity and that is constantly there through her life: Angela. Angela is Karen's best friend. They have known each other even since their first day of school as little girls. It is true that, unlike family, one can choose one's friends. However, in Karen and Angela's case, Karen did not have much of a choice. They became best friends because Angela decided it: "[m]y best friend Monica went away. You can be my best friend if you want" (McCaulay, 26). This is when Karen decided that she "needed [Angela]" (McCaulay, 26). The decision of becoming best friends was

therefore immediate which contradicts the idea in Jamaican culture that women prefer taking their time before calling each other (best) friends. However, this friendship quickly becomes very important for both girls. Abel argues that "the role of women's friendships in fulfilling the desire for identification" (Abel, 418). When Karen's mother left, Karen had no one to identify with except Angie, which might be why she feels like she needs her: she needs someone to identify with, therefore she accepts this friendship.

Both girls start to experience puberty at the same time and share their experiences with one another: "[w]e watched the hair sprouting on our bodies, under our arms, on our legs and vulvas, thickening and darkening, threatening us with womanhood" (McCaulay, 60); "Angie told me about the pencil test. You put a pencil under your breasts, if it stayed there, you had too much droop" (McCaulay, 63); "Angie and I would put on belts and sanitary napkins when we were not bleeding […] and we would study each other from rear to see if there was any hint of the belt" (McCaulay, 64); "Then we became obsessed with being thin. […] We went on diets […]. We binged ate and we fasted" (McCaulay, 64). These memories show how close and intimate Karen and Angie friendship is in childhood and in their pre-teen years. For Abel, "[t]hrough the intimacy which is knowledge, friendship becomes a vehicle of self-definition for women, clarifying identity through relation to another who embodies and reflects an essential aspect of the self." (Abel, 416). It is therefore through those exchanges of experience that both Angie and Karen develop their identities as women.

In contrast, Karen cannot share her experiences with her mother: "[m]y mother showed up and insisted I go with her to buy bras, another humiliating interlude, because both she and the saleslady wanted to have a look to make sure the bra fit. I refused and my mother became impatient […]. She pulled back the curtain of the small cubicle in the downtown shop and I crossed my arms over my chest" (McCaulay, 62). This situation clearly shows the contrast with Karen's ease and comfort she feels with Angie. This is linked to her mother's refusal to endorse

her mothering role, making it uncomfortable when she tries to do so because, as Springer-proverbs and Maynard explain, "females acquire much of their gender identity through observational learning. […] [T]heir identity is formed through the feminine behaviours that are modelled by their mothers and other females in their environment" (Springer-proverbs and Maynard, 44). Since her mother is not present, the only other woman Karen can regularly observe to form her identity is Angela. Moreover, Springer-proverbs and Maynard also have found in their study that friendships between Caribbean girls are very intimate (Springer-proverbs and Maynard, 49). Regarding the mother-child relationship, psychologists Taniesha Burke et al. conducted a study on "Jamaican Mothers' Perceptions of Closeness and Intimacy in the Mother–Child Relationship during Middle Childhood." They found that "[p]arent–child intimacy had four subthemes: child self-disclosure; shared positivity and enjoyment; shared physical affection; and shared projects" (Burke et al., 5). None of these four elements are experienced in Karen's relationship with her mother due to her mother's absence. The emotional distance between Karen and her mother therefore makes situations where Karen must be vulnerable and intimate uncomfortable in comparison to those same situations with Angie.

Even though Karen and Angie are very close, Karen also realises through sharing experiences that she and Angie are quite different. This is especially true during her adolescent years, and Karen reminisces about how she would constantly compare herself to Angie: "[w]e dissected our bodies and our faces, Angie had perfect breasts and a stomach flatter than mine, but I knew she was not beautiful. […] I magnified my flaws to my friend in solidarity, but I knew she had missed that ultimate female achievement: good looks" (McCaulay, 95). Springer-proverbs and Maynard explain that "[t]he developmental period of adolescence is wrought with feelings of self-doubt and search for meaning and identity. Since peers and friends contribute greatly to this process, their opinions and views of other adolescents impact the self" (Springer-proverbs and Maynard, 41). Karen considers herself to be more beautiful than Angie growing

up. However, when they are reunited, she comments "I had outshone Angie when we were young, but now she was the better looking, her skin not as tortured by the sun, no trace of drugs and late nights in her eyes. […] She was a wife, mother and successful business woman. She was a fully realized woman, a condition I suddenly knew I had never attained" (McCaulay, 250-51). Even in her adulthood, Karen still feels the need to compare herself to Angie, only this time it is not to make herself feel better, but to understand her own identity as a woman and what she may have missed in life.

The question that must be answered now is whether Angela being Karen's half-sister changes anything in their relationship and in her affirmation of identity. It has been argued in this chapter that the women in Karen's kinship circle have been helpful to some extent. However, the only woman that was constantly present in Karen's life is her best friend, Angela. It could then be argued that Angela provides Karen with the support that would have been expected from her family and especially, her mother. Judith Taylor explains that "[f]eminist psychoanalytic theories posit that women's friendship is often an expression of compensatory longing, an effort to receive the nurturance their mothers denied them" (Taylor 2016, 453). However, she strongly disagrees with these theories and argues that "[f]riends cannot compensate for bad parenting, they cannot intuit one another's every need, and they cannot be expected to stick around, although it can be nice when they do" (Taylor 2016, 467). Taylor thus rejects Löschke's idea of associative duties in a friendship. She believes that "there is no determinate list of things that a trusted friend should do" (Taylor 2016, 454). In *White Liver Gal*, even though Angela sometimes acts like a mother to Karen, Karen does not expect her to do so, but it is still something Angela is willing to do. This behaviour could be attributed to the African-Caribbean belief that friends must be loyal and supportive.

Angela is always the first person Karen thinks about when she is in a difficult situation. When Gordon kicks her out of his apartment, it is to Angela that Karen runs to. Angela

welcomes her without hesitation and shows the same concern that a mother would: "[w]hat happened, did they rape you, are you hurt, should we get a doctor, where were you, what happened, what happened, what happened, don't cry Karen, you're safe now" (McCaulay, 179). The next morning, Angela leaves a few notes for Karen that show once again that she wants to protect and reassure her, like a mother would: "[d]on't worry, everything is going to be okay" (McCaulay, 180); "Don't [call him], Karen! Wait until I come home" (McCaulay, 182). Another clue that shows that Angela acts like a mother is when Karen says that her "mother lent [her] some money and so did Angie" (McCaulay, 184). Angie really does give the emotional and financial support expected from a mother or at least from a family member. Additionally, when Angela needs emotional support, it is also towards Karen that she turns, even after Karen's betrayal. Angela comes back into Karen's life looking for emotional support after the death of her son Jason: "she cried hopeless, wrenching sobs of misery. I sat beside her and hugged her" (McCaulay, 251). This happened before Karen revealed to Angela that they were half-sisters. This shows that even with a severed relationship, their bond is strong enough to resist betrayal.

It can therefore be argued that the revelation that Karen and Angela are half-sisters does not change their relationships that much. Even though Karen differentiates friendship from family: "[Angela] was not only my closest friend, she was my sister. My half-sister. We had stronger ties than friendship" (McCaulay, 212), she does not mention the possibility of their relationship being a fictive kinship one. This omission might be due to the fact that "[w]ithin the adult friendship literature, the existence of fictive kin relations are given little attention and are often not differentiated from other forms of non-kin relationships" (Chatters et al., 299). In that sense, I will argue that Karen and Angela have a fictive kinship relationship. The fact that their initial bond was so strong could be attributed to Jamaican friendship culture and its history. As previously stated, African-Caribbeans in Jamaica come mostly from modern-day Ghana,

Nigeria, and Central-Africa. According to Moemeka and Nicotera, close friends in those countries are introduced as brothers and sisters, a habit that is rooted in "the belief that a brother/sister is culturally more highly valued than a friend" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 109). Even though the story happens in Jamaica and not Africa, it has been shown that African cultures still strongly influence African-Caribbean culture.

Moreover, for Chatters et al., "[w]ith the designation of fictive kin status comes both respect and responsibility and fictive kin are expected to participate in the duties of the extended family" (Chatters et al., 297), which is something both Angela and Karen do for each other without even asking for it. This shows that they behaved as fictive kins even before the revelation as it did not have an immense impact on their perception of their relationship. When Karen tells the truth to Angela she answers: "[m]y father wasn't faithful to my mother? Nobody is faithful to anybody?" (McCaulay, 253). Her answer shows that she is more shocked by the fact that her father was unfaithful than by the fact that they are half-sisters. Angela's reaction indicates that them being "real" family does not really change anything in their relationship. This is probably because they were already in a fictive kinship relationship. Considering the fact that expectations for fictive kins are comparable to those for family, Angela and Karen do not feel the need to clearly state them. This mutual implicit understanding shows that their relationship is not a "simple" friendship where, in Jamaican culture, it would have been expected that both friends would clearly state their expectations.

The analysis of Karen's kinships relationships with women therefore exemplifies how *White Liver Gal* blurs the lines between friendship, kinship, and family. The novel does not explicitly establish a hierarchy between these concepts however it shows the ways in which they intertwine with each other. While Karen's mother denied her role of mothering, her aunts tried to fill in the gaps that she has left for Karen to still be able to evolve and create her identity. Nevertheless, it is her best friend Angela that has the most significant role in Karen's formation

of identity. It is also Angela that provides the emotional support that Karen needs. Their relationship is also reciprocal as Karen also provides emotional support for Angela. As Angela and Karen have some implied expectations for one another without explicitly communicating them, I argued that their relationship could be defined as a fictive kinship relationship before it being confirmed as "real" kinship. In *White Liver Gal* the blurred lines between friendship, kinship and family allows Karen and Angela's relationship to venture into those three categories. The kinship relationships in *White Liver Gal* also illustrate the importance of kinship ties within the Caribbean community, fictive or not, especially for women.

2. Friendship and Family in *The New Moon's Arms*

In *The New Moon's Arms*, Calamity becomes a mother twice. First to Ifeoma, her daughter who she had with Michael and then to Agway, the little boy that she found on the beach. This new kind of motherhood brings her back to her childhood friendship with Evelyn Chow. Evelyn also becomes a sort of mother for Agway. Both women care for him as mothers in different ways which may or may not bring them closer than ever. In this chapter I will try to understand whether this newfound motherhood for the same fictive son does indeed consolidate Calamity and Evelyn's friendship and if so in what aspects. It has been explained how women came together during slavery to help each other especially regarding motherhood and the care of children. Women therefore had to have strong bonds with one another to successfully work as a group. Even today it is not uncommon for African-Caribbean families to call unrelated adults Aunt (or Uncle) as a sign of respect. The concepts of other mothering and child shifting, which are also quite common amongst African-Caribbean communities, have been touched upon previously and will also be used in this chapter. As Anatol writes, the novel "highlights notions of chosen family and the communal rearing of children" (Anatol, 202). However, as opposed to the previous point, family and friendship will not be compared as a

way to know if one is stronger than the other, but rather to understand if having strong fictive kinship ties with the same child can influence one's friendship. First, the relationship between Calamity and her daughter will be analysed to understand how Calamity views motherhood. Then, her relationship with Agway will be discussed to see what has changed and why. Additionally, Evelyn's relationship with Agway will also be examined. Finally, the effect of their respective fictive motherhood on their mutual friendship will be studied. Motherhood in *The New Moon's Arms* will therefore be analysed to comprehend its impact on fictive mother's friendships.

The importance of female headed households in Caribbean history as already been established. Gender and social development specialist Sheila Stuart further explains that "[t]he Caribbean has been regarded as unique in the immense historical importance of the economic role of women, which has given women a motivation to achieve autonomy, in terms of their relationships with men and with wider society" (Stuart, 29). This statement would explain why, according to Blank, "[t]he Afro-Caribbean family is characterized by low rates of legal marriage, high rates of illegitimate children, and the centrality of the mother-child bond rather than the husband-wife bond" (Blank, 2). If women are indeed economically more autonomous, the institution of marriage in itself seems pointless as African-Caribbean women would not need men to financially support them. What this also highlights, is the possibility of more women raising a child (or multiple children) on their own rather than in nuclear families. Blank also adds that "[r]ates of teenage pregnancy are high in the Caribbean. Teenage mothers often have their mothers or other older female relatives care for their children while they continue their education or work" (Blank, 4). This situation is represented with the character of Calamity. She is a single mother who raised her child on her own. She also lives alone, without ever been married. Calamity's situation is therefore quite common in the Caribbean.

Even if her family circumstances are quite ordinary, her relationship with motherhood is difficult, or, as Anatol describes it, "fraught" (Anatol, 202). Her experience with her own mother is comparable to some extent to Karen's experience. Like Karen, Calamity had an absent mother, and this absence caused a lot of issues for Calamity, especially regarding her own daughter; she hates that Ifeoma calls her "mum" (Hopkinson, 6) and would rather be considered as her sister (Hopkinson, 7). This issue stems not only from the feeling of abandonment she has from her own mother (Anatol, 202) but also from her refusal to become old: "[l]ast she'd called me a matriarch. Like I was some wrinkled, prune-faced dowager wearing a hairnet and clothes thirty years out of fashion" (Hopkinson, 7). Like Karen, Calamity was also taken under the care of her aunt at some point in her life. Her father was also quite distant (but never abused her). However, unlike Karen, Calamity has a child. She confesses that she "didn't want to have [her daughter]. […] And looking after [her] was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. Plenty of times I hated it. Plenty of times I wanted to stop. Give [her] up for adoption. Something" (Hopkinson, 311). It has been discussed how "[m]otherhood […] is a chosen state" (Palko 2015, 18). Calamity obviously did not make the choice of being a mother as she became pregnant by accident. In this regard Anatol thus argues that Hopkinson "undermin[es] the notion of innately maternal women" (Anatol, 9). Comparable to Karen, Calamity's relationship with her family is broken.

Since "maternity must be freely chosen" (Palko 2015, 21) and because Calamity did not have that choice with Ifeoma, her relationship with Agway seems completely different. Calamity almost immediately develops motherly feelings towards the little boy and claims him as hers: "*Yes,* said my heart. *Mine*" (Hopkinson, 80). With Agway, Calamity gets to choose to be a mother, something she did not have the opportunity to do with Ifeoma. Calamity thus becomes a fictive mother to Agway. Anatol discusses "the need to consider African American families in terms of horizontal rather than vertical kinship ties" (Anatol, 209), suppressing the

western idea of the nuclear family. As previously explained, because of the slave trade and the division of African communities and families, African-Caribbean people developed the need to form new fictive families as a form of support, a phenomenon that is represented once again in the story of the dada-hair lady. On the ship, the dada-hair lady takes in her care a little boy and makes sure, once the ship is wrecked and the Africans turned into sea-people, that this little boy is still with her (Hopkinson, 318). Her story directly parallels Calamity's story as they both act as mothers for a little boy. The parallel is even more clear when one considers that Calamity is indeed a descendant of sea-people. With these stories, not only does Hopkinson highlights how maternity is a choice and is not always related to female biology, but she also ties past and present of Africans and African-Caribbeans, a particularity of Black speculative fiction, as explained earlier.

Evelyn Chow, Calamity's childhood friend, also takes on the role of a mother for Agway, although in a very different manner. Calamity seems more focused on the emotional support that she can give to Agway while Evelyn is more concerned with his health. For example, Calamity lets him eat raw shrimps because he likes it even though Evelyn told her that he has "[i]nternal parasites" (Hopkinson, 117) that one would get from "eating undercooked fish" (Hopkinson, 118). Evelyn is a doctor, which explains why health is a great concern for her. She worries about his "third transparent eyelid" and "webbed fingers and toes" (Hopkinson, 78). She is also the one who suggests the surgery to remove the callous skin behind his knees: "I want to do something about those skin patches. Should be an easy day surgery. Quick laser treatment, then he's back home to you. I've scheduled it for this Thursday" (Hopkinson, 280). It is arguable whether Evelyn can be considered a fictive mother for Agway. It is Calamity that cares for him on a day-to-day basis and that provides for him, as a mother would. However, Evelyn still takes some mothering responsibilities for Agway such as caring for his health but also his well-being. She wants him to be placed in a "good" family: "whole families […] [,]

families that come with a mummy and a daddy and two well behaved children, preferably one girl and one boy" (Hopkinson, 119), directly opposing Calamity's familial situation. Evelyn therefore seems to care more about Agway's physical health, but she also feels responsible for the general well-being of the boy. Moreover, towards the end of the novel, Evelyn starts to care for the little boy on an emotional level as well: "[n]ear as I can tell, he's healthy. Physically, anyway. Emotionally I am not sure. I'm going to set up an appointment here at the hospital, for a child psychologist to assess him. […] I should have done this from the start. I am ashamed of myself that I waited so long" (Hopkinson, 280). Even if it takes time, Evelyn eventually takes emotional mothering responsibilities as well.

With these elements of analysis, I will therefore argue that Calamity and Evelyn make one half each of one fictive mother. However, I will also argue that this collaboration as mothers does not strengthen their friendship but rather creates distance between the two women because of the expectations they have for each other as surrogate mothers. As discussed previously, friends who do not meet the expectations of a friendship lead to the fall out of this friendship. In this situation, Evelyn and Calamity displace the associative duties of their own friendship to how they care for Agway. In other words, the ways in which Evelyn and Calamity expect each other to act towards Agway have an influence of their friendship. More than caring for Agway, it is the speculations about his origins that first bring the women closer. When they are on the bus and start talking about what characteristics should sea-people have to survive in the water, it is clear that Calamity and Evelyn start to bond again. This conversation starts with Evelyn and Calamity finding a common interest in Cayaban folklore: "'The Cayaba Fairmaid.' 'You know that story?' […] Now she was a folklorist, too?" (Hopkinson, 133). Calamity is surprised to have something like that in common with Evelyn. As the conversation goes on, Evelyn feels more and more excited about the idea of sea-people and Calamity is happy to be able to talk about her interests with someone: "I was busting to talk to somebody about the sea people"

(Hopkinson, 134). As they are both excited about Agway's origins and both, but especially Calamity, expect the other to be as excited as them, they consider themselves on the same level in the friendship and their bond is stronger.

This conversation leads to the cathartic exchange between Calamity and Evelyn. It starts when Calamity cannot accept Evelyn's proposal to take her home: "[n]o, Evelyn. You can't order me about. You're not queen of the schoolyard any more. You can't always have your way. Go home to your beloved Samuel and leave me alone!" (Hopkinson, 139). From this point on, the reader learns that their friendship failed in the first place because Calamity lost her finding power. However, we also learn that there was a lot of things left unsaid between the two: Calamity never explained to Evelyn that she thought she lost her power because she feared finding her mother in a disastrous state and Evelyn never told Calamity that she was jealous of her for example (Hopkinson, 141). These revelations generate an argument that ends with Calamity accepting that Evelyn brings her home. Since they felt close thanks to their interest in Agway's origins, they were able to communicate on their feelings towards each other. This follows Thomas's idea that "the equal self-disclosure of intimate information" strengthens the "bond of trust between deep friends" (Thomas, 223). Moreover, it aligns with the idea discussed earlier that Caribbean women find communicating extremely important to keep a friendship alive. Having to care for Agway thus allowed Calamity and Evelyn to come to terms with their past friendship but also to renew their friendship.

However, I will also argue that their friendship might be a case of obligatory camaraderie. Taylor (2016) introduces Michel Foucault's concept of obligatory camaraderie which originally "asked readers to imagine men's friendship beyond surface engagements" (Taylor 2016, 445). When it comes to women, she claims that it "suggests […] loyal subjugation of reason for the cause of friendship, or a lack of pleasure and investment in one's own discernment" (Taylor 2016, 468). In her text she analyses two novels that, according to her, go

against the concept of obligatory camaraderie: Zadie Smith's *NW* and Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's *Skim*. In short, she claims that "these stories conform neither to conventional nor feminist understandings of good friendship" as "[t]here is no outsized enmeshment, betrayal, or heroism, as found in more iconic feminist novels" (Taylor 2016, 446). She further explains that in "these newer texts, friends are more independent than interdependent, emotionally and corporeally distinct" (Taylor 2016, 446). As they have the need to care for Agway in common, Calamity and Evelyn might feel like they *have* to become friends again and therefore transforming their friendship into an "obligatory camaraderie" relationship.

Evelyn feels guilty for how she treated Calamity as a child and Calamity is proud because Evelyn apologises and helps her, which might create a false sense of friendship and therefore turn their friendship into a case of obligatory camaraderie. In their argument, Evelyn does not stop apologising. To Calamity, "[h]er words [are] music. [She] wanted more" (Hopkinson, 140) and pushed Evelyn to her limit until she cried out: "I was horrible to you in school, all right? I been thinking about it ever since I saw you the other night. And I'm sorry. I'm sorry I said those awful things I'm sorry I egged my friends on to make fun of you. I'm sorry I super-glued your locker shut" (Hopkinson, 140). Evelyn obviously feels guilty about how she behaved towards Calamity and wants to make up for it. That's why, even though she was reluctant at first, she eventually accepts that Calamity takes Agway under her care:

> Come into the hospital tomorrow and apply to be a foster parent. I'll give my recommendation for the little boy to come and stay with you in the mean time. […] You have the time, the experience, and the space. You have toys and books for him to play with. He trusts you. And I have a feeling he might like to get close to the sea. […] And this way, I can come and visit him and you both. Make sure you getting on okay. […] Maybe talk about fairy tales coming true (Hopkinson, 164-65)

It is very clear that Evelyn is trying to make up for all the times she mistreated Calamity in the past by giving her what she wants now, although it might also be out of egoistical motives, as

Samuel, Evelyn's husband, points out: "I don't know what's going on with the two of you, Calamity, but I've learned never to come between Evelyn and her schemes. […] Come on, darling. Let me take you home from a long day of playing the rescuing angel" (Hopkinson, 165). The words "schemes" and "playing" may implicitly indicate that there are hidden egoistical motives behind her actions, maybe getting the possibility to keep contact with Agway, which she would not have any more if he was sent to a foster family.

The friendship between Evelyn and Calamity is thus a case of obligatory camaraderie because their friendship is motivated by egoistical motives. Evelyn wants Agway to go live with Calamity so she can keep an eye on him and to compensate her behaviour in the past, while Calamity benefits from Evelyn's guilty feelings. Both parties in the friendship are therefore emotionally dependant on one another. Calamity depends on Evelyn to get the approval to foster Agway and Evelyn depends on Calamity to get the possibility to keep seeing Agway once he gets out of the hospital. It is therefore because they profit off of each other's mothering feelings towards Agway that they get close again, although their friendship is not entirely genuine but rather obligatory.

Nevertheless, their friendship starts to deteriorate when Evelyn is faced with the fact that Agway is indeed a sea person. Until now, the fact that he might be one and talking about "fairy tales coming true" (Hopkinson, 165) with Calamity is something that excites her. However, when it comes down to real life and most importantly, her job, these kinds of discussions do not have the same outcome. When she explains to Calamity that one of Agway's problems, "Bradycardia, peripheral vasoconstriction, blood shift", is "how mammals respond to being submerged in water. It's called mammalian diving reflex, […] [y]ou see it in seals, dolphins, whales, otters. But human beings can do it too" (Hopkinson, 278), Calamity answers with "[y]ou see! […] I'm right! He *is* a sea child!" (Hopkinson, 278). A quick argument follows that Evelyn concludes by saying that "it's a lovely idea that he's some kind of marine human,

but if the wrong people hear you going on about it, all of us stand to lose. You, me, Samuel. I could be forbidden from practising medicine. You could lose Agway" (Hopkinson, 279). There is thus now no doubt that Calamity and Evelyn do not have the same expectations regarding Agway. While Calamity took the search of his origins seriously, it was more of an escape from the real world for Evelyn. However, once she comes back to reality, she realises this fantasy has to stop. After this altercation the reader does not see the women talking anymore. Calamity hesitates to call her after she gave Agway back to her family but does not because it "[n]ever went good when [she] tried to force ripe a relationship. Same thing with Evelyn" (Hopkinson, 321), realising that their friendship might have been forced and therefore a case of obligatory camaraderie.

Calamity and Evelyn's friendship is therefore a friendship of obligatory camaraderie. Their mutual need to mother Agway initially brought them back together. Both women represented one side of motherhood and together they formed one fictive mother for the same son. While Calamity represents the emotional needs a mother could fulfil, Evelyn represents the physical needs of the boy, making them one half each of a mother. Although at first the women seemed to be close again thanks to that fictive motherhood, it has been shown how their friendship was a case of obligatory camaraderie, resulting in its failure. The motives behind this friendship were egoistical and opportunistic which eventually led to the end of the friendship when the initial expectations could not be met anymore. The novel thus shows that a friendship between two fictive mothers might be difficult if the two mothers have different views on how to care for a child.

V. Chapter 2: Friendship and Gender

1. Gender, Sexuality and Friendship in *White Liver Gal*

Gender issues is a prevalent theme in *White Liver Gal*. The title itself is an expression of the stigmatisation Caribbean women face regarding their sexuality. The term "White liver gal" is explained in the book as an expression referencing to a "[w]oman who like to fuck" (McCaulay, 175). Interestingly enough, no such saying is mentioned for men. Furthermore, the men in the novel are never punished for their sexual behaviour while Karen is always reprimanded. Sociologist Lewis Linden explains that even "[t]hough from time to time there are claims of female sexual autonomy in the region, women's sexuality is still policed by social and gender conventions in ways that do not seem to constraint the behavior of men" (Lewis, 7). It has been established that some women can be financially independent from men and do not specifically need men to survive within the family community, however, women's sexuality is an issue that is very much present in the Caribbean, as Blank argues that "[d]espite these patterns of strong female involvement in family life, Caribbean societies generally remain patriarchal and male-dominated" (Blank, 4). Lewis adds that "notions of gender and sexuality are fundamentally shaped by culture" (Lewis, 13), which means that within the Caribbean culture, there exists specific roles attributed to men and women. It is therefore of no wonder that these issues would also be explored through Karen's friendships. This chapter will thus analyse the gender roles and issues represented in *White Liver Gal* through Karen's friendships with Angela but also with the other people in her life.

The first important element that must be discussed is the fact that Karen does not have any male friends. All the men she comes across in her life have become sexual partners at some point, even her own father figure. This could be explained by the fact that, according to Moemeka and Nicotera, friendships between boys and girls are "openly discouraged" and are considered "culturally suspect" in the Caribbean (Moemeka and Nicotera, 110). They explain

this phenomenon by the idea that Caribbean people feel like they must "protect the citizens against sexual temptations, which if given in to would lead to the violation of cultural norms and values concerning the sanctity of sex" (Moemeka and Nicotera, 110). However, Caribbean culture also admits that "sexuality is innate and uncontrollable. It is expected that boys will want to have sex; if they do not, they are considered to be abnormal. Boys have sexual freedom and are generally encouraged to experiment sexually, whereas girls may be beaten if they are suspected of pursuing sex" (Blank, 5). It is therefore considered normal for men to openly behave as sexual beings. On the other hand, women are reprimanded if they do so. Blank explains that

> an important aspect of Caribbean manhood is being perceived as sexually skilled (Smith 1996). Such skills are primarily measured by the number of lovers a man has and by the number of children. A man's reputation and power increase in relation to the number of sexual partners he has (Sobo 1993). Throughout the region it is common for married and unmarried men to have multiple sexual partners (Chevannes 1998; Mohammed and Perkins 1999; Smith 1988). This is often described as being due to men's "biological" nature (Ellis 2003). Religious beliefs and doctrines are also used to reinforce such gender stereotypes. Men often have concurrent multiple sexual partners; women engage in this practice much less frequently. If Caribbean women have multiple concurrent sexual relationships, they are punished through negative moral judgment and gossip; such behavior is not viewed as acceptable for women by either sex (Lazarus-Black 1994; Senior 1991) (Blank, 6).

Blank thus explains with great details how men and women are expected to behave in regards to their sexuality within the Caribbean culture. In short, men are allowed to express their sexual needs as it is considered normal while women should keep their sexual needs secret, or their will be judged and punished.

Caribbean sociologist Christine Barrow conducted a study on "Male images of women in Barbados". What came out of this study is that "males argued that Caribbean man perceives

women as existing for his sexual pleasure" (Barrow 1986, 58), aligning with the afore explained idea that men are allowed to freely express and act upon their sexual needs and impulses. More than that, Barrow discovered that "[s]everal women perceived men as overbearing and 'bossy'. Comments such as 'they feel they own you' and reference to physical violence or 'beatings' were made. They resented the male view that 'a woman's place is in the home' and restrictions placed on their freedom of movement" (Barrow 1986, 57). She also found out that women feel like they "have no identity apart from their partners: 'you see a woman because you see a man. In other words you say so and so and his wife'. However successful, a single woman remains a class below her married counterpart" (Barrow 1986, 57). It is quite clear that a distinct power dynamic exists between men and women within the Caribbean culture. It could therefore be argued that the Caribbean society, is a patriarchal society. Despite the fact that, as argued in the previous chapter, women are very often the head of the family and of kinship communities, it is still men who rule the Caribbean society and who are considered superior to women. Barrow explains that

> images and stereotypes of Caribbean women found in the social science and imaginative literature reveal a variety of facets depending on role and context. For example, as workers, women are '. . . without skills, reservoirs of cheap human power, always available for exploitation' [Mathurin 8]; as mothers they are authoritarian and solely responsible for their children; and, as conjugal partners they are submissive but devious (Barrow 1986, 52).

Barrow's research and Blank's historical overview thus confirm that expectations exist for men and women when it comes to their sexual behaviour: men are supposed to express their sexual needs freely and are even encouraged to have multiple sexual partners while women are punished if they do so. This is the result of a patriarchal Caribbean culture that considers men superior to women.

Those aspects of Caribbean culture are exemplified in *White Liver Gal*. As explained earlier, the title itself immediately reveals the sexist views that the Caribbean society has of

women. I will argue that Karen and Angela both represent the rejection of the sexist stereotypes of the "African-descended women [who must be either] a) hyper-maternal asexual mammies, and b) hyper-sexual jezebels who are apathetic, emotionally distant mothers" (Anatol, 209). Karen has been exposed to sexuality from a very young age. Her family was quite unstable as her mother left her father when she was only a child which resulted not only in an unstable home but also in her father sexually abusing Karen. Psychologists Kenneth Kim and Peter K. Smith argue that "children from families with scarce or unpredictable resources, unstable parental bonds and familial mistrust would reduce the age of pubertal onset, accelerate sexual activity and would incline toward a succession of unstable pair bonds" (Kim and Smith, 231). Karen did not suffer from financial difficulty however she did suffer from "unstable parental bonds and familial mistrust": her parents separated when she was young because her mother went to live with her new, much younger boyfriend, something that Karen did not see as normal. Her father was also absent from the family life. The "familial mistrust" comes of course from her father sexually abusing her.

I will argue, following Kim and Smith's argument, that all these elements engendered an early development of Karen's sexuality. The first time Karen's father visits her room and sexually abuses her changes Karen's view of love completely. Before abusing her, her father asks her "Presh, do you love me?" (McCaulay, 41), to which Karen answers yes. He then goes on by saying "I want you to show me how much you love me" (McCaulay, 41) right before committing the abuse. This leads Karen to associate love and sex from her very young age. Moreover, as she has already decided to hate her mother at that point, the fact that her father "chose" her over her mother reassures Karen in her value. She admits to thinking "*[h]e prefers me*" (McCaulay, 42). For Karen being chosen is something quite important: "Being chosen. I understood that part. Once you were picked out of a crowd you had passed some test. My father had chosen me over my mother" (McCaulay, 109). The only form of love and affection she

ever received as a child were therefore those instances of sexual abuse. It is only in those moments that Karen felt loved and valued as a child, which is something that greatly influenced her development throughout the novel. In fact, Karen even says, after recounting the first time her father came to visit her at night, "[m]y mother had left us three weeks earlier and my father had put his finger inside my chunky. I never needed a nightlight again" (McCaulay, 42), which may symbolise the fact that from that point on, Karen was not a child anymore; she was not afraid of the dark anymore and did not need a nightlight because only children need one. This confirms Kim and Smith's idea that children who are exposed to instability early in their life are more likely to start sexually developing earlier than usual.

Karen's early sexual development is contrasted with Angie's naivety regarding anything sexual. It is Angie that taught Karen what sex was. However, at that moment, both girls are at the same level of innocence. Angie explains that "you're not allowed to do it before you get married, or else it will be a sin, and no-one will want to marry you. […] The man and the woman get naked and they get into bed together. He takes out his thing and he wees on her… on her *thing*" (McCaulay, 31), while Karen is convinced that it is "unlikely" and that "Angie must have got it wrong" (McCaulay, 32). Even during the first instance of sexual abuse from her father, Karen still has some childish thoughts about what sex is and how one gets pregnant: "[t]here had been no weeing on my chunky. I wondered if I would have a baby" (McCaulay, 42). The use of this childish vocabulary to describe a serious situation shows the conflict within Karen who is forced to grow up while still being a child.

The difference between Karen and Angie's attitude towards sex is made quite clear when Karen is sent to the boarding school. During her time in boarding school, Karen meets Stephen Underwood, a boy from the boy's boarding school Exeter College. Even though they never fully have sex (meaning no penetration ever happened), their relationship is exclusively a sexual one: "[o]ur physical relationship progressed, but we never became friends" (McCaulay,

83). They met at night secretly and there they started by kissing each other, then touching their private parts and, ultimately, masturbation. Karen admits multiple times that either she did not specifically want to have those sexual encounters with him or that Stephen did not respect her boundaries: “I didn’t want to, but I opened my mouth” (McCaulay, 83); “‘Wait. Let me,” I said, but he didn’t wait” (McCaulay, 84); “his attention turned to my legs and thighs. Here I fought him […]. He persevered, […] then a hard and unsexy kiss, a distraction, and his hand moved up again” (McCaulay, 85); “[w]hile I was with Stephen, I wondered why I was there” (McCaulay, 85). These passages show that the sexual aspect of their relationship is not what excites or motivates Karen to continue. Rather, it is the attention that Stephen gives her that she likes and the secrecy of it: “I loved my delicious secret, I believed I loved him, I yearned, I ached, I dreamed about him at night and obsessed about him in my classes” (McCaulay, 85). As with her father, the fact that the situation must be kept secret and the attention that Stephen gives her makes her feel loved and valued. In fact, all her following relationships with men follow the same pattern, whether it be with Gordon, Winston (the man she cheated on Gordon with), Roy, and the men with whom she cheated on her own husband Arthur. What excites her in those relationships is that they happen out of the permitted sphere: “[o]nly forbidden sex had any appeal to me” (McCaulay, 206). It is therefore undeniable that her vision of love and sex was shaped by her father’s abuse when she was a child.

To come back to Karen and Angie’s different approaches to sex, while Karen was in boarding school, experiencing with secret sexual encounters, Karen continued to grow up under Catholic rules and ideology. When Karen comes back from boarding school for Christmas, she meets with Angie who tells her about her high school crush and how they held hands and talked on the phone. Karen mentions how “[t]his all felt childish to [her]” (McCaulay, 93), highlighting the difference between Karen and Angie’s sexual development. The following conversation further emphasises this difference:

> "Have you let a boy touch you?" asked Angie. I told her about Stephen and for weeks afterwards, described our hours under the cotton tree.
>
> "You're so bad Karen," she said, in her bedroom one afternoon. […]
>
> "Bad, how?" I scoffed "I haven't gone all the way, can't get pregnant."
>
> "He won't respect you," she said.
>
> "That's your Catholic upbringing. You think sex is a sin."
>
> "Of course it's a sin if you don't love the person!" (McCaulay, 93)

While Karen is already discovering her sexuality, Angie deems it as bad. Karen blames Angie's point of view on her religious upbringing, however, it is undeniable that Karen's relationship with sex is the result of issues in her childhood and is therefore not normal for her age.

At that point, it is quite clear that both girls are developing opposing points of view on the role of a woman should be but also what they want to be. Karen notes: "Angie wanted to get married and have children. […] I wanted […] to be well-known, to be sought after. Angie mooned about the kind of house she would have and the number of children, three maybe four. I was sure I did not want children" (McCaulay, 96). The girls seem to follow the two stereotypes that are available to them regarding African-Caribbean women, as explained by Anatol: the innate mother with no sexual activity and the hyper-sexual temptress. Barrow argues that "[w]hile cultural constructs, stereotypes and images are not necessarily a reflection of social reality, behaviour is determined and often relationship decisions are made accord into to these cultural interpretations" (Barrow 1986, 51). As Karen does not want children, she might think that the only other path for her to choose is the path of the hyper-sexual Black woman. She even sees sex as a power, "perhaps the only power women had" (McCaulay, 50). Besides, Angie's Catholic upbringing leads her to believe that the only possible outcome for her life is the life of a mother of many children.

For most of the story, the girls seem to follow these respective stereotypes. Karen gets imprisoned in Gordon's appartement, becoming a mere sexual object ready to please him

whenever he wants. Gordon represents how most Caribbean view women, according to Barrow and Blank's research. He sees them as sexual objects and openly admits to indulging in his sexual impulses and needs. He even says to Karen that his apartment is dedicated to sexual relationships with his lovers, even though he has a wife (McCaulay, 140). The apartment itself represents Karen's psychological imprisonment within the stereotype of the hyper-sexual black woman: "[t]here was no doubt what it was – a place for a man and a woman to meet and fuck. It was not a place for friends to talk over dinner. It was not a place for a family" (McCaulay, 147). She is stuck in that place because she herself is stuck in the idea that it is the only role she fits in as a woman.

At first, she wanted him because "he thought [her] desirable, he wanted [her]" (McCaulay, 112), filling in her need to be chosen by a man in order to feel valuable. Her relationship with Gordon makes her feel good about herself, she feels privileged because he chooses her over his wife: "[s]he looked tired and beaten down and I felt immeasurably superior" (McCaulay, 151). However, as years pass, she starts to think as herself as an object: "I came to think of myself as a series of orifices, constructed for those things a man wanted to stuff into you" (McCaulay, 167). This is when she lost her sex drive, she was no longer attracted to Gordon (McCaulay, 168) but could not leave him because she only sees herself as useful and valuable when it comes to sex. It is only when Gordon catches her with another man, Winston, that he throws her out of his apartment. Once again, Gordon exemplifies how Caribbean men see women as sexual objects who must give them what they want. Furthermore, he represents the Caribbean cultural idea that women having multiple sexual partners is shameful and should be punished while he himself has a wife and mistresses and considers it as normal.

While Karen finds herself stuck in this sex apartment and therefore the stereotype of the hyper-sexual Black woman, Angela follows the other stereotypical path of the good wife and good mother. Even though she wants to go to university, she gives up on that idea when Roy

proposes to her. Karen seems surprised: "[m]arried! I thought you wanted to go to university?" (McCaulay, 155), to which Angie answers: "[w]ell, I thought about it, but I don't really know what I would study and Roy asked me to marry him and that's what I really want to do" (McCaulay, 155). It is not quite clear whether Angie really gave up university because she genuinely wanted to marry Roy or because she felt like it was what she had to do according to societal rules. Either way, the way her life is going sparks jealousy within Karen: "I smiled at my friend. She was such an innocent. She looked happy and I was bitterly jealous" (McCaulay, 156); "Angie was getting married. Angie had been chosen. […] Angie had a man who loved her enough to say it to the world. […] I told myself I wanted none of those things, that I would find domesticity stultifying and Roy utterly dull but I failed to convince myself. Angie was good and I was bad" (McCaulay, 157-58). Once again, Karen highlights how being chosen is important for her as it is what makes her valuable, which is why she feels jealousy towards Angie at that moment. Moreover, Karen thoughts illustrates how within the stereotypes for Black woman, one is considered good and the other bad, which aligns with the idea in Caribbean culture that women belong in the domestic sphere and should have limited sexual activity.

Even though the novel seems to confirm these stereotypes and ideologies at first, those stereotypes are debunked as the story progresses. Even though Angie is a wife and a mother, she is not constricted to the domestic sphere. She used to work for Roy's company, however, after Karen's betrayal, Roy tells Karen how Angie actually "got a business degree and now she has a big-shot job with the bank. After us, she said she was never going to be so dependent again" (McCaulay, 218), which might confirm that going to university was indeed something she wanted to do but felt like she needed to fill in the role of the good wife and mother first. Moreover, after their reconciliation, Angie admits to Karen that she cheated on Roy with a married man, making her "no better than [Karen]" (McCaulay, 252). In the meantime, Karen got married to Arthur a rich American man. At first, she considered her relationship similar to

all the other ones she had: “Arthur would love me, would enjoy me on his arm, would put a ring on my finger, and I? I would give him what men had always wanted from me, access to my spread legs” (McCaulay, 202); “He was a quiet, inoffensive man, but he made it plain that he had the right to design me as he chose” (McCaulay, 205). She still sees herself as an object, available to fulfil a man’s desires. However, after learning about Angie taking her life into her own hands, she herself realised that she could do the same:

> I realized I no longer felt that hot empty rage I had lived with all my life. Perhaps the anger and pain could end with me. Perhaps I could even be friends with the man I was married to. Perhaps I could give up the desire to be saved by a man, the longing for the merged cupboard, the wish to be absolved from adulthood. In the end, there would only be me. Perhaps I would leave Arthur to construct a life inhabited by me, an intentional life, a life without the need for recognition in another’s eyes. […] Perhaps I would rebuild relationships with my brother and my old, dear friend (McCaulay, 255-56).

At that moment, Karen realises that there are much more ways of living life that complying to what society expects her to. Even though she did not want to be a mother, she was not compelled to a life dictated by her sexuality, she was not only what her body could offer.

Karen and Angie therefore represent how stereotypes and ideologies engrained in a particular society can influence one’s life. Both women imagined their life based on what was expected of them as women in Caribbean society. On the one hand, Angie, partly because of her Catholic upbringing, thought it wrong to have sex before marriage and abandoned her idea of getting an education to dedicate her life to being a mother and a wife. On the other hand, because she did not want that domestic life, Karen felt like her only use would be to offer sex to men who would give her attention. This is also a consequence of the sexual abuse she endured during her childhood making her believe that it was only through being chosen for sex that she could receive love. However, McCaulay exposed with this friendship how those stereotypes do not exactly reflect reality but rather how reality is shaped by such ideologies, following

Barrow's argument that "behaviour is determined and often relationship decisions are made accord into to these cultural interpretations" (Barrow 1986, 51). *White Liver Gal* therefore exemplifies the ways in which accepting gender roles stereotypes as the only possible reality represents danger for Caribbean women.

2. Gender, Sexuality, and Friendship in *The New Moon's Arms*

Comparably to *White Liver Gal, The New Moon's Arms* also questions Caribbean ideologies on the role of women but on the role of men as well. It has been discussed earlier how Hopkinson challenges the idea that all women should have an innate maternal instinct with the character of Calamity and especially through her friendship with Evelyn. However, *The New Moon's Arms* also tackles an important issue that is not talked about in *White Liver Gal*: homosexuality and homophobia in the Caribbean. According to gender specialist Violet Eudine Barriteau, "[h]omosexuality is dismissed, loathed and ignored in Caribbean culture […] [a]s homosexuality and lesbianism challenge the theoretical fiction of heterosexuality that is required to underpin rigid gender roles" (Barriteau, 31). Homosexuality therefore questions Caribbean ideologies on gender roles. This chapter will first analyse how the friendship between Calamity and Evelyn might be influenced by those gender roles expectations and will then focus on Calamity and Michael's friendship and how homosexuality and homophobia influence their friendship as well.

2.1. Women's roles and stereotypes

Calamity is a single mother, and she has never been married. Blank argues that legal marriage is "the most desired union type among Caribbean women", even though it is not always possible, mostly due to economic reasons (Blank, 6). It has already been explained how Calamity's situation as an unmarried mother is quite common in the Caribbean in the first chapter. Moreover, Stuart explains that "[c]ensus data and research have shown that up to 75 per cent of Caribbean women under the age of 25 have their first child prior to the formation of a residential union" (Stuart, 30), which means that even her teen pregnancy is not as uncommon as it might seem.

These claims nevertheless seem paradoxical when analysing Calamity's behaviour in comparison to gender roles in the Caribbean. Like Karen, Calamity is represented as a hyper-sexual woman. She has quite an active sex life, even for a fifty-year old. However, she is also a mother, which directly contradicts the idea that Caribbean women should focus on the domestic sphere and while having a limited sex life. Being a mother while still being openly sexually active is thus quite paradoxical in Caribbean society. This is a direct consequence of the Caribbean idea that being a mother is what makes as woman a *real* woman. Sociologist Dorian Powell explains that

> the reproductive function of women traditionally has been the primary basis for defining the roles of women, which has been associated not only with the bearing of children, but with a multiplicity of other tasks, including child-rearing and a host of domestic activities. These have most frequently been deemed to be 'naturally' the prerogatives of women. Of course, all such activities take place in the confines of the household and the immediate family. This is in direct contrast to those activities which are generally associated with the roles of men (Powell, 97).

Even though Calamity is indeed a mother, she does not accept her role. She considers her daughter as a friend. According to Powell's explanation, this would mean that Calamity refuses

to take on the role of the woman and would rather assume the role of a man. However, I will argue that rather than wanting the role of a man, Calamity is stuck in the role of a girl, a child.

Calamity's refusal of motherhood represents her refusal of growing up. If within the Caribbean culture being a mother means being a woman, Calamity might feel like she was robbed of her teenage years as she was forced to become a woman when she had Ifeoma. Calamity even says: "I had two years of not being my own person, of changing diapers and feeding someone pap from the spoon. Plus I had raised a girl child on my own. I had done my share. Time for freedom now" (Hopkinson, 101). Consequently, her refusal of motherhood represents her refusal of growing up because she psychologically is stuck in her teenage years. Ifeoma even tells her: "when exactly is you got stuck? 'Cause it seem like you reached a certain place in your life, and you never managed to move on from there" (Hopkinson, 287). Calamity cannot accept that she is growing old because she considers that she was not able to live her adolescence normally. She therefore tries to replicate it endlessly mostly by not conforming to the Caribbean role assigned to women i.e., being a good mother and wife. Hence she never married and refuses to see her daughter as such but would rather consider her as a friend. Calamity therefore acts not as a woman but a as a girl, even though she is in her fifties.

Furthermore, the novel, and especially the dada-hair lady story, places a big emphasis on the importance of a woman's menstruations and therefore ability to have children. However, the reader also witnesses Calamity getting her menopause, meaning that she will not have her period anymore and will not be able to have other biological children. This is also paradoxical: if getting her period and being able to carry children is what makes a woman a real woman according to Caribbean culture as explained by Powell, then not being able to do so anymore brings the woman back to the state of a girl. However, it is around that same time that Calamity understands her mistakes from the past and finally accepts being a mother.

This also happens after Calamity gave Agway back to his family. It could then be argued that admitting she is not the mother of Agway (because he already has one) while also losing her ability to become a mother biologically allows Calamity to realise that she must accept her role as a mother to Ifeoma. She tells Ifeoma: "I didn't start out loving you. I had to learn to love you. […] I had to learn to love you for who you are. About half the time I screw it up. […] So from now on, I want you to tell me right away when I get it wrong. Don't save it up for thirty-eight years" (Hopkinson, 311-12). Calamity's conversation with her daughter highlights two important messages of the novel: motherhood is not innate for all women; it must be learned. Moreover, communication is key to keep relationships alive. Calamity accepting her daughter as such and therefore trying to fix their relationship is therefore a direct consequence of Calamity accepting that she is not the mother of Agway. Agway is thus one of the reasons why Calamity finally accepts to see her daughter as her daughter and not as a friend.

This begs the question of whether Evelyn played a role in Calamity finally accepting herself as a woman and a mother. As discussed earlier, Calamity's friendship with Evelyn might have been a case of "obligatory camaraderie" meaning that it was heavily influenced by egoistical motives which ultimately led to the failure of the friendship. However, I would like to nuance my previous argument in this chapter by arguing that some parts of the friendship were indeed genuine and that they helped Calamity mature and understand her womanhood out of the Caribbean societal rules. For *White Liver Gal* I argued that Angela and Karen represented but also debunked each stereotype for African-Caribbean women. In *The New Moon's Arms*, I will also argue that those stereotypes are represented through the main friendship as a way to debunk them. However, Hopkinson proceeds quite differently from McCaulay: she does not only show how women are able to free themselves from those stereotypes, however, she also illustrates how those stereotypes are a result of negating women's experiences.

The character of Calamity obviously leans more towards the hyper-sexual temptress stereotype however she is also a mother. She is first represented as a cold, distant mother, a depiction that fits into the stereotype of the hypersexual Black woman. However, when Agway appears, she changes completely. As explained in the previous chapter, this is because with Agway, she actually got to choose to be a mother. This is a comment on gender roles in the Caribbean as well. It seems that these stereotypes define Black women as either innate sexual objects or innate mothers, one being bad and the other good. By doing so, they exclude the diverse experiences of these women that shaped them into what they are to exclusively describing them with the stereotypes they fit in. Chimamanda Adiche explains the danger of defining people only by such stereotypes in her TED conference "The Danger of a Single Story": "[a]ll of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience, and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adiche). This is also true for the stereotypes of Black Women. In Calamity's case, it is true that she behaves as a non-maternal, hyper-sexual being most of the time. However, it must not be forgotten that this behaviour is a response to her not being able to enjoy her youth because of her pregnancy. Hopkinson therefore exemplifies the danger of these single stories, especially regarding the expectations for Caribbean women through the character of Calamity.

Through Calamity's friendship with Evelyn, Hopkinson demonstrates how such stereotypical expectations create false ideas about other people which can lead to miscommunication and ultimately failure to create meaningful relationships. She also illustrates how patriarchal ideas are internalised by women and influence their relationships with other women. According to Calamity, Evelyn is the representation of the perfect woman: "[s]he'd been a perfect girl, was now a perfect wife, and had a perfect life with no encumbrances. […]

And I was a broke, aging single woman living on an isolated island" (Hopkinson, 120). Calamity's vision of a perfect woman already differs from the Caribbean vision of a perfect woman: Despite being married, Evelyn does not have children, although the reproductive function of women is what makes them women, according to Caribbean culture[1]. Even then, there is a polarity established between her and Evelyn; one is good the other is bad, following men's ideals for women. This is also the reason why Evelyn does not want Calamity to foster Agway at first, because she thinks her situation makes her unfit to raise a child: "'I raised her well. All by myself.' She gave me that nod, the wobbly 'yes' nod that rally means no" (Hopkinson, 119). Calamity and Evelyn therefore have some prejudices towards each other because of those internalised stereotypes.

However, those preconceived ideas that these women have about each other are slowly deconstructed once their relationship goes deeper than surface-level friendship. The first instance when Calamity questions how she views Evelyn is when Evelyn shares some knowledge on the Cayaban folklore. This event has already been described before as something that brought the two women closer together. However, this is not only caused by a share interest in folk stories, but also by the fact that the prejudices Calamity had against Evelyn are proven to be false. Evelyn is not the stuck-up woman Calamity thought she was, she is actually interested and has some knowledge on the magical. Another anecdote that makes Calamity question Evelyn superiority as a woman (once again, according to patriarchal ideals) is that Evelyn lost her virginity before her: "'I beat you to it. Thirteen and a half.' I goggled at her. 'You?'" (Hopkinson, 269). Once again, Evelyn shows to Calamity that she is not the prude, perfect woman she thought she was. As the prejudices Calamity had towards Evelyn are not justified anymore, it can therefore be argued that both women develop real friendly feelings

[1] Evelyn is a Chinese woman, not a Black woman, which might slightly modify what is expected of her as a Chinese-Caribbean woman. This will be explored in the next chapter. For the sake of this analysis only characteristics that are attributed to Caribbean women in general will be considered to avoid any confusion.

towards each other, thanks to communication. This naturally does not deter the relationship from failing as the motives behind it remain mainly egoistical, as explained in chapter two.

Here Hopkinson proposes a simple solution to deconstruct the preconceived ideas: communication. There are no good or bad Caribbean women, not matter how deep this idea is ingrained in Caribbean culture. She deconstructs the patriarchal perception of Caribbean women through Calamity and Evelyn's friendship by illustrating how those stereotypical beliefs that Caribbean women can either be innate mothers or mere sexual objects is not true. Calamity is a mother who did not have the choice to become one and therefore is stuck in the mindset of a teenage girl. Consequently, she cannot accept motherhood and is sexually active. Evelyn has a good job and is a good wife however, she does not want children and became sexually active quite early. In *The New Moon's Arms,* Hopkinson thus uses this friendship to highlight how patriarchal ideas can negatively influence women's relationship with each other rather than bringing them together.

2.2. Homosexuality in the Caribbean

Calamity's friendships with Michael, the father of Ifeoma, and Hector, the man who helped her rescue Agway, are a great comment on gender roles and issues in the Caribbean especially regarding men's sexuality. It has been explained that men expressing their sexuality was seen as something normal and was even expected of them in the Caribbean. However, it must be noted that this is about heterosexuality. Any other form of sexuality is reprimanded. Kamala Kempadoo, gender, feminist and women's studies specialist, argues that Caribbean society sees "heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexual expression" (Kempadoo 2003, 71) for men. She adds that "Caribbean masculinity [is defined by] a natural heterosexual drive" (Kempadoo 2003, 71). According to her "Caribbean sexuality then regularly appears as rigidly heterosexual and intolerant of sexual difference" (Kempadoo 2009, 9), meaning that

homophobia is quite common in the Caribbean, as homosexuality is considered out of the norm. Kempadoo further claims that homophobia is indeed engrained in Caribbean culture:

> Jamaican dancehall and reggae music is replete with violently anti-gay sentiments which go as far as advocating the murder of the "batty bwoy" (Atluri 2001: 16) a violence that is boomed loudly across the world. Such extreme vocal hostility towards gay men is echoed by various religious leaders and journalists, heard in other popular culture arenas, and is reiterated within government and state institutions (Kempadoo 2003, 76).

Homosexual men are therefore the victims of discrimination and stigmatisation, which Barrow argues is systemic: "[homophobia] is systemic in the refusal, or even termination, of employment and housing, and evident in inter-personal relations with co-workers, school mates, fellow worshippers, prison inmates, family members and the general public" (Barrow 2019, 53). Homosexuality is this disregarded as something unnatural for men and causes acts of systemic violence (physical or not) towards gay men in the Caribbean.

Homophobia in the Caribbean even goes as far as being written into the law, as Barrow explains: "[t]hroughout the Caribbean, 'buggery' (the colonial legal term for anal sex) is written into law as a sexual offence – deemed 'unnatural' by law and as an act of 'gross' or 'serious indecency', even in consensual and in male-female relations. Penalties are severe and have tended to strengthen in recent years" (Barrow 2019, 51-52). In very recent news, Human Rights Watch announced that the islands of Antigua and Barbuda decriminalised gay sex on the fifth of July 2022 (*Antigua and Barbuda*). They state that Belize was the first Caribbean country to decriminalised same-sex relationships in 2018 and that Trinidad and Tobago "followed suit later that year" (*Antigua and Barbuda*). However, they also point out that laws criminalising gay sex are still present in "Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines" (*Antigua and Barbuda*). Even though there has been some progress in the last few years regarding homosexual and LGBTQ+

rights in the Caribbean, there is still a long way to come for people from the community. It must also be considered that at the time that *The New Moon's Arms* was published (2007), same-sex relationships were still criminalised in all of the Caribbean.

This discrimination and stigmatisation of homosexual men is represented *in The New Moon's Arms* through Calamity and Michael's friendship. Michael is Calamity's childhood best friend. She had a crush on him when they were young but before she could confess to her, Michael told her that he thought he might be attracted to men: "Chastity, I think I like Carlton. […] Like I supposed to like girls, I mean. Oh, God, what I going to do?" (Hopkinson, 123). In this passage it is quite clear that Michael fears for his safety now that he has confessed to being attracted to his male friend Carlton: "[t]he doubt, the fear on his face made my throat catch. […] Michael's top lip trembled. 'You can't tell anyone. Not one soul.'" (Hopkinson, 123). He is even convinced that "Carlton would kill [him]" (Hopkinson, 124) if he knew. Michael's fear represents the reality of the danger of being homosexual in the Caribbean at that time. Homosexuality was to be kept a secret otherwise it could lead to serious acts of violence.

Even though, at the time when the book was written, gay sex was still prohibited by law everywhere in the Caribbean, other characters than Calamity are seen talking openly about homosexuality, meaning that the subject is not as taboo as it could have been. On that subject, Kempadoo notes that "[d]espite the claim that homosexuality is unnatural to the Caribbean, same-sex relations have been noted in anthropological studies since the 1930s" (Kempadoo 2009, 5). Homosexuality is therefore not a new subject of study in the Caribbean which is why it might have become gradually less taboo, something that is also depicted in the novel. In the novel, an older Michael is openly in a relationship with a man, Orso. Michael, Orso, Ifeoma and Hector even joke about their sexuality: "[Orso] pointed at himself. 'Mary'. Then at me, with a slight smirk. 'Not Mary'. Ife tapped her own chest. 'Not Mary. Not last I checked, anyway.' Quizzically Michael pointed at Hector. Hector flicked a glance at me. 'Mary,' he said.

Orso snapped his fingers. 'Yes!' '… and Joseph.'" (Hopkinson, 211). "Mary" meaning that the person is homosexual, Hector adding "Joseph" means that he likes men and women. Kempadoo argues that "studies have also brought to the fore a commonality of bisexual behaviour. According to most of the research on Caribbean men-who-have-sex-with-men, many also have sex with women" (Kempadoo 2009, 5-6). Hector therefore represents another group of the LGBTQ+ community in the Caribbean. Moreover, Ifeoma adding "not last I checked, anyway" to her answer might mean that she tried it with another woman before. Despite the prevailing homophobia, this little joke therefore allows the reader to understand that sexual diversity in the Caribbean is indeed present. It also illustrates an evolution on how people react to homosexuality: when Michael was young, he was afraid to tell anyone he was gay. However, the subject becomes easier to talk about when he is an adult.

Notwithstanding the fact that Michael is her childhood best friend, Calamity is homophobic towards him. I will however argue that Calamity's homophobia does not come from the fact that it is common to be against homosexuality in the Caribbean but rather because she cannot get over Michael rejecting her. As Calamity liked Michael, she could not believe that he could like someone else than her, let alone a man: "No way Michael could like him over me. Right?" (Hopkinson, 124), which is way she persuaded him to have a sexual relationship with her to see if he was sure about his feelings for Carlton (Hopkinson, 124). Even though he said that he "want[ed] to do it" (Hopkinson, 146), it becomes quite cleat to the reader that Michael is uncomfortable during the act and feels forced: "[Michael] wouldn't meet my eyes. […] He nodded, still not looking me in the face" (Hopkinson, 148); "Michael wouldn't *look* at me!" (Hopkinson, 149). His refusal to look Calamity in the eye might indicate that he either feels uncomfortable or guilty, maybe for not wanting to do it but doing it anyways. After they had sex, Michael shows once again signs of discomfort and guilt for what just happened: "[Michael] looked up into the ceiling, stared at the empty white space as there were something

there to see" (Hopkinson, 149), still avoiding looking at her, before quickly running out of Calamity's house. The situation obviously upsets Calamity as she feels betrayed by her best friend.

For the reader, this event can be quite conflicting and confusing. In this situation, Calamity can be considered an abuser. It is obvious that Michael does not want to have sex with her however, the Caribbean cultural idea that men must be heterosexual and show their heterosexual needs almost forces Michael to have his first sexual relationship with Calamity, to "test it" even though he tells Calamity that he "always thought [he] would do it with a man first" (Hopkinson, 146). Calamity even admits later that "[w]hen Michael came, he'd thrown his arm over his eyes […] that way he didn't have to see [her]" (Hopkinson, 270). Michael's reaction to having sex with Calamity shows how these ideas about homosexuality and gender roles are deeply rooted in Caribbean society and causes violence in many ways. It could even be argued that in this moment, Calamity becomes an abuser to Michael, profiting from the homophobic idea that men must have sex with women to get what she wants. Once again, Calamity shows egoistical tendencies in her friendships, just like her friendship with Evelyn was partly constructed on egoistical motives, as afore discussed.

However, Calamity does not only use the systemic homophobia of Caribbean society to get what she wants, she also uses it to justify not actually getting it. She cannot accept that her love for Michael was not reciprocated because he did not like women and therefore projects her insecurities onto his homosexuality. Calamity's homophobia therefore stems from her jealousy, as Ifeoma states: "[y]ou could have been part of Daddy's life anytime you wanted. But if you couldn't have him all to yourself, you didn't want nobody else to have him, neither" (Hopkinson, 287). This also explains her reaction when Hector confesses his bisexuality to her: "[y]ou're gay? […] And I just ate from the same dish as you? […] You're sick! […] Can't even make up your mind. Going back and forth from women to men, spreading diseases! […] Anti-

man! Dirty, stinking, lying *hen*!" (Hopkinson, 253-54). Her reaction perfectly illustrates the homophobic stereotypes used to discriminate and stigmatise homosexual men. For instance, homosexual men are being held accountable for the spreading of HIV, a stigmatisation that is still very much present today as it is forbidden for sexually active homosexual men to donate their blood for example. Her saying "Anti-man" also shows how Caribbean masculinity is defined by men having sexual relationships with women and therefore how homosexuality considered to "feminise" men, as they are not real men anymore according to Caribbean culture.

However, this outburst of homophobic insults does not stem from homophobia itself for Calamity but from her inability to accept Michael's rejection. As Ifeoma explains, "[t]his nonsense about Hector is really because he is not interested in you, nuh true?" (Hopkinson, 286), to which Calamity answers "I wouldn't want Hector if he was the last man on earth. Next thing I know, he go and leave me for some man" (Hopkinson, 286). This really proves that Calamity's problem with homosexual men does not come from their sexuality itself but rather form the fact that they are not interested in her and most specifically that her first love, Michael, rejected her for a man, as Ifeoma declares: "[y]ou know what your problem is? You jealous. […] You give yourself as a gift to you best friend one day, and you still can't forgive him for saying 'no thank you'" (Hopkinson, 286). Calamity herself unkwongly admits that her homophobia stems from jealousy: "What did Hector looked like when he…? I got a mental flash of Hector and another man (who looked a bit like Michael) […]. I shut the image down quickly. It *mocked* me" (Hopkinson, 260; emphasis added). She does not seem disgusted by the image but rather she feels humiliated because she imagines someone that looks like Michael not having sex with *her*. Her homophobia is therefore deeply rooted in jealousy but also in her inability to heal from the rejection. It is quite clear that Calamity's homophobia is a result of her own ego being hurt as she declares after insulting Hector "I was the injured party! Me!"

(Hopkinson, 254). She uses homophobia for egoistical purposes which causes her to isolate herself from her friendship with people who otherwise really care about her.

It can nevertheless be argued that Agway helps Calamity in reconstructing her friendship with Michael. When no one but Orso is available to care for Agway while Calamity is on a date, a conversation between Orso and Calamity follows in which Calamity's jealousy is clearly stated as the cause of her hate for Orso and homosexual men. When she first sees him, she comments on his well-kept appearance while thinking that "[i]t just wasn't right for a man to be so well turned out. Made me feel frumpy" (Hopkinson, 233). She also feels jealous when Orso tells her that Stanley, her grandson, comes to their house every Sunday: "[j]ealousy knotted up my belly" (Hopkinson, 235). Finally, she admits to Orso that she is jealous of him and his relationship with Michael: "[y]ou want the hot-mouth truth then? I hate it when you call him 'Mikey.' That's what I call him" (Hopkinson, 237). Calamity's homophobia is obviously still present as the incident with Hector happens after the conversation with Michael, however, she admits (even if only partially) that her homophobia is caused by jealousy. As this conversation happens because she needed someone to care for Agway, Agway can be considered as the root of Calamity's healing process when it comes to her homophobia.

Hopkinson uses Calamity and Michael's friendship to illustrate the problem of Homophobia in the Caribbean. Homosexual men are not considered real men because they are not attracted to women, which is considered the norm in the Caribbean. Because of that idea, Calamity is able to force Michael to have sex with her, even though he clearly does not want it. She convinces him in a way that he must try with a woman to be sure that he is not attracted to them. However, the motives are quite egoistical and Calamity quickly realises that Michael will never love her like that. As a result, Calamity adopts homophobic ideas not because she really is homophobic but because she cannot accept the rejection, which eventually isolates her from Michael. She also has the same problem with Hector who is bisexual. Through this friendship,

Hopkinson therefore shows how people from the LGBTQIA+ community, in this case men, suffer from homophobia in the Caribbean.

VI. Chapter 3: Friendship and Ethnicity

The main focus of this chapter will be Calamity and Evelyn's friendship. Karen and Angie's friendship will of course be discussed in this chapter however, because Evelyn is Chinese, her background is quite different from Calamity's, which asks for more elements of analysis. This chapter will analyse how the different cultural background of Calamity and Evelyn influence their friendship. Miscommunication and inability to understand the other is a prevalent problem in their friendship which eventually causes it to fail. I will argue that this problem might come from their different ethnicities as Evelyn is Chinese and Calamity is Black. Moreover, if one considers that Calamity is half Black and half sea-person, her biraciality adds to the analysis. In order to understand if their different backgrounds and origins influence their friendship, a brief historical background on Chinese-Caribbeans is necessary. Then Evelyn and Calamity's friendship will be analysed through the lens of race. I will also try to find out if Karen and Angie's friendship is influenced by their common African ancestry and whether it makes it easier for them to preserve their friendship and create a strong, meaningful relationship. The purpose of this chapter is thus to determine whether Hopkinson and McCaulay used friendship to comment on Caribbean communities and their relationship either with each other or even between people from the same community.

It is a known fact that the Caribbean is a highly multi-cultural region, which means that many different ethnicities live next to each other within the same region. One of these groups of people are Chinese people. Shin Yamamoto explains that "the Chinese community is counted as one of the three major races in the Caribbean alongside Africans and East Indians because of their economic power" (Yamamoto, 172). Ping Su reports that the first 192 indentured Chinese labourers were brought by British Colonists in 1806 to Trinidad (Su, 9), meaning that the first Chinese in the Caribbean arrived even before the abolition of the slave trade. However, "[a]fter slavery was abolished in 1834, the Caribbean experienced major waves of Chinese

immigrants who took positions on the sugar cane plantations as indentured laborers in place of African slaves" (Yamamoto, 172), as plantation owners "aimed to find a viable new labor source to replace the African slaves who would no longer be available" (Yamamoto, 172). Chinese people therefore primarily came to the Caribbean as a replacement for African slaves as the economic power of slavery and the slave trade was slowly declining.

The number of Chinese people in the Caribbean rapidly increased as "in the early 1870s, approximately 200,000 Chinese contract workers had already been shipped to the Caribbean" (Su, 9). However, as anthropologist Gail Bouknight-Davis explains, many Chinese people were not satisfied with their work in plantation fields, mostly because of the "awful working and living conditions" (Yamamoto, 172), and in the 1880s, Chinese workers left the plantations to work in the retail industry and more specifically as shop owners (Bouknight-Davis, 70; Su, 9). Chinese people quickly "established themselves as 'economic trader middlemen', thriving in shopkeeping and small businesses" (Su, 9), which allowed them to climb the class ladder and become part of the middle-class while becoming more and more economically and socially influential within the Caribbean (Su, 10). Robert B. Kent, specialist in human geography, further argues that "[i]n the early 1960s [Chinese people] ranked among the best educated and wealthiest of Jamaicans" (Kent, 125). Historian Walton Look Lai even asserts that "[t]he average Chinese income was almost five times that of blacks and thrice that of coloured Jamaicans in 1960, and the Chinese of Trinidad and Suriname prosper similarly" (Lowenthal cited in Look Lai, 67), showing that Chinese people were prosperous in many parts of the Caribbean.

The economic prosperity and success of Chinese people in the Caribbean was nevertheless frowned upon by the Black community. As Yoshiko Shibata argues, "there has long existed resentment and even antagonism against the Chinese since they settled" (Shibata, 57), even claiming that "there has seldom been an equal, harmonious and mutual understanding or

intimate inter-relationships between [Black and Chinese people] at a collective level" (Shibata, 57-58). Relationships were therefore difficult between Black and Chinese people as, in "the first half of the twentieth century […] [,] Chinese immigrants [were] being treated as aliens" (Bouknight-Davis, 86). This is especially true for Jamaica where three "major anti-Chinese riots broke out" (Su, 10). These revolts happened in 1918, 1938, and 1965 (Su, 10; Bouknight-Davis, 84). Bouknight-Davis adds that "Afro-Jamaicans are often cited as the source of anti-Chinese antagonism […]. The reason given is that Chinese prosperity in grocery retail is believed to have threatened and displaced members of the larger community" (Bouknight-Davis, 85). Kent further comments that "Black Power advocates viewed the Chinese as members of the nation's ruling elite along with whites and 'off-whites'" (Kent, 126). Resentment against Chinese people was therefore quite common amongst African-Caribbeans who saw their economic success as a threat but also as a sign of oppressive force, similarly to white people.

However, Bouknight-Davis explains that in the 1970s, Chinese businesses suffered from a slight decline in success, which eventually led to a decrease of "negative images of the Chinese in the media" (Bouknight-Davis, 89). By then end of the 1980s, "[t]he general attitude towards the Chinese gradually transformed from regarding them as marginal […] to appreciating their potential contribution to the development of the nation and society" (Su, 11). By the end of the 1990s, Chinese owned shops began to transform into "large chain supermarkets" (Bouknight-Davis, 74), hiring many African-Caribbeans. Yoshiko Shibata argues that, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, Chinese people in the Caribbean

> have established themselves in many respectable professions like doctors, lawyers, academic staff, the Christian ministry, or economically successful occupations such as owners of retail and wholesale stores, restaurants, now rapidly expanding supermarkets and even a big bank; in fact, their ambitions have been achieved in all possible areas including sports and art. Many have become so wealthy that one of the stereotypes of contemporary

> Chinese has changed to something like 'Chinese are rich and keep their wealth to themselves' (Shibata, 56-57)

Chinese people in the Caribbean have therefore successfully settled themselves in the Caribbean, even though they might still suffer sometimes from prejudices linked to their economic success.

It must be noted, that, as Shibata argues, "previous aggression, including ethnic riots, has brought […] Chinese closer and tighter as a group with mutual help, enhancing their Chinese-ness" (Shibata, 53-54). Chinese-Caribbeans therefore have the tendency to stick together as a group. In that regard, Bouknight-Davis explains Chinese organisations:

> Chinese organizations were developed to facilitate social and economic networks. They helped to promote social cohesion for and to foster economic conditions within the Chinese community in Jamaica. Organizations created schools in an effort to sustain Chinese cultural traditions, teach Chinese language, and strengthen ties within the community. Organizations also provided information about ideal locations for setting up shops, helped locate available housing, and offered financial assistance for businesses. […] It fostered an image of the Chinese deliberately 'isolating' yet also gave rise to positive results such as a strong Chinese economy and coherent Chinese cultural identity (Bouknight-Davis, 81).

These organisations are reminiscent of African-Caribbean slave communities described in the historical background. Although slave communities were mainly a survival necessity, they also helped in preserving West-African cultures on plantation communities while aiming for financial independence from the slave owner. Shibata even claims that the typical Chinese family consists in "having strong bonds, close relationships and networking with mutual help" (Shibata, 73), closely resembling the (fictive-)kinship networks found in African-Caribbean communities. It can therefore be argued that the community feeling is similarly strong within Chinese and African-Caribbean communities.

Yet it also illustrates how Chinese people might not mix as much with other ethnic communities in the Caribbean. When Chinese people first arrived in the Caribbean, "inter-racial marriage was unavoidable, especially with Black women" (Shibata, 54), as it was mostly men that came from China (Bouknight-Davis, 82-83). It seems that, for Chinese men, the economic status of the partner prevails over their origin as "an important feature of Chinese ethnicity [is] class distinction. […] Both economic and social factors are important in the construction of Chinese identity" (Bouknight-Davis, 70). Consequently, "[y]oung, Jamaica-born, full Chinese men were expected to marry a woman of at least the same economic status" (Bouknight-Davis, 83). However, relationships between a Chinese woman and an African-Caribbean are frowned upon and more rare than Chinese men and African-Caribbean women: "[b]y the end of the twentieth century, intermarriage between Chinese women and Afro-Jamaican men was still a rare occurrence" (Bouknight-Davis, 83). Shibata adds that "even though many Chinese Jamaicans show tolerance about inter-racial unions, there are still those married-out of Chinese being 'disowned' by their families who have needed to 'hide'" (Shibata, 63). Furthermore, if the relationship were to fail, the failure would be attributed to the fact that the partner was not Chinese (Shibata, 63). Chinese-Caribbeans therefore tend to stay within the Chinese community, even though, as Bouknight-Davis explains, "interracial dating [is] increasing amongst the younger generations" (Bouknight-Davis, 83).

Although Evelyn Chow does not get a proper background story in *The New Moon's Arms*, it can be argued that Hopkinson wanted to create a typical Chinese-Caribbean woman with her character. She is a successful doctor, which, as afore-mentioned, is one of the professions in which Chinese-Caribbean people have established themselves. She has money, had good grades in school and is well educated, for instance, she speaks multiple languages such as French and German (Hopkinson, 78). She says herself that she was expected to be "Proper little China girl" (Hopkinson, 142). Nevertheless, Samuel, Evelyn's husband is a Black

man: “Samuel was a quietly handsome light-skinned black man” (Hopkinson, 151). It can therefore be argued that Evelyn is part of the younger generation of Chinese women who were able to date out of the Chinese community. This also means that she does not really care about race or ethnicity, which is why she is also friends with Calamity. However, Samuel “reeked of money” (Hopkinson, 151), which means that he is part of the same class and economic status as Evelyn. The reader does not have much information about Evelyn’s parents however, it is stated multiple times that they were strict parents “[who] never let her out of their sight” (Hopkinson, 269). It can thus be concluded that Evelyn grew up in a strict Chinese environment which conditioned aspects in her life such as her professional choices and her relationship partners.

The character of Evelyn is quite innovative in Caribbean fiction, according to scholars such as Ping Su and Joyce Johnson. The presence of a Chinese woman in a work of Caribbean fiction is itself innovative as Johnson claims: “Chinese characters do not figure prominently in the fiction produced by Anglophone West Indian writers, and those depicted are usually male” (Johnson, 36). Su argues that

> Chinese people in the fictional world of Caribbean literature, despite being constantly visible, have remained in the background for a very long time. In many works, Chinese characters are minor, often standing in for particular stereotypes ‘as inscrutable or clever or linguistically deficient rural shopkeepers, preoccupied with money and profit’ (Su, 11).

Evelyn is indeed represented as someone who is intelligent. She is a doctor and had good grades in school. Despite not being the main character, she still plays an important role in Calamity’s character development and cannot be considered a minor character as her involvement with Agway influences Calamity’s actions. Moreover, Johnson highlights that most Chinese characters in Caribbean novels, and especially in Jamaican and Trinidadian fiction, are poor shopkeepers, “clearly reflect[ing] only a stage in that minority’s adjustment to the society, a stage when, for the man in the street, the Chinese represented a useful ‘incarnation of Otherness’

(Johnson, 41). By doing so, those novelists are "ignoring to a large extent increasing numbers of educated Chinese" (Johnson, 41). In that aspect, Evelyn's character is therefore unusual and new in Caribbean fiction.

Yet, her character and especially her Chinese-ness is used for the same purposes as earlier Caribbean novels, i.e., "to emphasize the separation between the cultures which interact at the economic level" (Johnson, 45). Moreover, Evelyn also "provides insight into the dynamics of racial interaction in West Indian societies" (Johnson, 36). The financial division between Evelyn and Calamity is quite clear and is even at the root of the failure of their friendship. Their whole argument after Evelyn suggests that her and Samuel take her home is a prime illustration of the economic differences that can exist between Caribbean communities and their consequences on the relationship between those communities as the financial status of both women is a source of great misunderstanding in their friendship. As stated in the first chapter, Evelyn was jealous of Calamity when they were children, which is one of the reasons why she started bullying her. Evelyn lists some of the things that made her jealous of Calamity: "[t]hey let you climb trees. They bought you *trucks*. You know how bad I wanted a Johnny Lightning Plymouth Duster? […] And you could swear!" (Hopkinson, 141-42); "you lived in a cool place, and your parents let you climb trees, and you got to row to the mainland in your own boat" (Hopkinson, 142). To Evelyn, these represent how Calamity was a free child. Of course, Calamity does not understand why Evelyn would be jealous of such things as they represent how she grew up in poverty, especially the boat: '[w]henever I had to do that, it felt like my arms were coming out of their sockets by the time I reached mainland.' 'Yes, but you got to do it. […]' […] 'You never rowed a boat because you never had to. Poor little rich girl' 'Riche little poor girl'" (Hopkinson; 143). This exchange represents how Evelyn's upbringing and financial situation completely changes her views in Calamity's situation. She does not see Calamity poverty but rather the freedom she had as a child.

Contrastively, Calamity fails to realise how Evelyn's childhood might have been difficult because she is blinded by her wealth. Evelyn complains that her mother "drove [her] everywhere, made [her] sit properly in the car in my proper little dresses with [her] knees properly together. Proper little China girl" (Hopkinson, 142-43). She adds that she had "to be perfect all the time" and to "be good" in school (Hopkinson, 143). The reader thus understand that Evelyn's parents had high expectations for her and were strict which is why she envies Calamity's freedom. However, Calamity cannot accept Evelyn's complaints because she considers that Evelyn was a "[spoiled] selfish brat" (Hopkinson, 142). She cannot feel bad for her because she "[got] everything: all the nice clothes; all the nice lunches; all the nice friends.'" (Hopkinson, 143). She further argues that she too had to be perfect at school: "[t]hey expected me to be good in all of them. And they were both right in the same school with me. They knew everything I did. So don't give me that shit" (Hopkinson, 143). Calamity therefore rejects Evelyn's problems as she does not consider them legitimate in comparison to hers. It can therefore be argued that more than their ethnicity, it is mostly their class difference that separates Evelyn and Calamity.

Another point to consider is that Calamity might be bi-racial. For the sake of this analysis, it will be assumed that Calamity's mother is indeed a sea-person and therefore that Calamity is half-mermaid. As argued in the first chapter, speculating over Agway's origins is something that Calamity takes seriously while Evelyn considers it as more of an escape from reality. Besides, when her work is involved, she does not hesitate to prioritise it. By doing so, Evelyn fails to understand the importance of the subject for Calamity. The question that is yet to be answered is why is Calamity obsessed with finding out that Agway is a real sea-person? The question is not clearly answered in the novel; however, it might be because Calamity is unconsciously trying to understand her own identity as a sea-person. She points out some of her physical characteristics that resemble those of sea-people, such as her webbed fingers, and her

fat thighs without even realising that they are similar. However, she immediately feels connected to Agway.

This immediate connection is also something that happens with the little girl Calamity meets at the beach when she was a child. Even though they could not communicate through words, they understood each other: "'Come.' Said Chastity again, motioning with her hand. The girl seemed to understand that" (Hopkinson, 38); "She reached for the little girl's shoulder. The little girl seemed to understand" (Hopkinson, 53); "'I like you,' Chastity said to her: "You want to be best friends?' The little girl looked up at her […] [.] She smiled at Chastity. Chastity guessed that meant yes, they were now best friends. She smiled back" (Hopkinson, 54). They do not need words to communicate because they understand each other. Calamity and the little unconsciously identify with each other and therefore a strong bond is created. Furthermore, Calamity also links Agway to the little girl with no hesitation when she finds him on the beach: "[m]emories sideswiped me: of a bluish-yellow brown body bobbing and swimming as though the sea were its home, gurgling at young Chastity in an alien tongue" (Hopkinson, 74). Calamity, the little girl and Agway are all related to some extent, which is why Calamity recognises Agway as hers (Hopkinson, 80). Then, if Calamity is indeed unconsciously trying to understand her own identity by taking care of Agway and trying to prove that he is a sea-person, Evelyn rejecting the possibility of sea-people existing and refusing to join Calamity in her search would therefore mean that Evelyn is rejecting Calamity's identity, creating an even bigger cliff between the two.

The last difference that Hopkinson points out between the two women that is linked with their ethnicity is their generational trauma, especially in relation to slavery. The story of the dada-hair lady is not only present in the novel to make the reader understand that Calamity might be a descendant of sea-people, but it is also a reminder of the history of African-Caribbean people and how their ancestors arrived in the Caribbean. In the novel, the sea-people

are used as a metaphor for slavery and its lingering impact on African-Caribbean people today. People around Calamity (including Calamity herself) are quick to dismiss the stories about sea-people. When Calamity finds herself at the scene of a drowning, Mr. Lee tells Calamity that "[t]hose rocks tear up a slave ship once" to which Calamity answers "[y]eah, yeah, and the ghosts of drowned slaves haunt the island to this day, blah, blah. I read the brochure" (Hopkinson, 89), assuming that the story of drowned slaves is only a story told to tourists. However, it also shows how this painful past is ignored and dismissed. Moreover, "the ghosts of drowned slaves" haunting the island could directly reference the death of all the Africans that died during the Middle Passage and the trauma that slaves who did land suffered. Furthermore, Gene admits to Calamity that "Fishermen, Coast Guards, Emergency Services. Not the doctors, for the most part. They scarcely do outcalls. Even the police know about this. We all know it. We just don't talk it. But they real. The sea people? They real" (Hopkinson, 99). Gene thus confirms that people of the island are aware of them, they just chose to ignore it.

Interestingly enough, Gene also emphasises the fact that doctors are not really aware of sea-people existing. Evelyn is a doctor which is of course no coincidence as it confirms that for her, sea-people are nothing less than fairy tales. Moreover, she is Chinese which means that she cannot relate to slave ships stories and this lingering trauma does not really apply neither to her nor her ancestors. As discussed earlier, Chinese people came to the Caribbean as the slave trade was being abolished and quickly left the fields to open their own shops, which led to the rapid elevation of Chinese people into the Middle-Class. On the other hand, Black slaves were indeed freed but were left to their own devices with no financial support to rely on. The context of the establishment of Chinese-Caribbeans and African-Caribbeans within the islands is therefore quite different. It must be noted that it is only when Calamity gets the confirmation that Agway is indeed a sea-person and that she is confronted with the sea-community and Agway's family

that she starts healing or at least processing her past trauma, namely by admitting her faults to her daughter. Evelyn rejecting Calamity's identity as a sea-person could therefore represent Evelyn's dismissal of Calamity's generational trauma and her trying to process, making it impossible for Evenlyn to forge meaningful bonds with Calamity. Although she does not purposefully dismiss Calamity's generational trauma, Evelyn's Chinese background makes it impossible for her to fully understand the extent of Calamity's search for answers about sea-people and, thus, her own identity.

Calamity and Evelyn's friendship is therefore heavily influenced by their different ethnicities, upbringings, and backgrounds. However, it is not really their difference in ethnicity that causes their friendship to fail but rather their difference in class. Yet, the fact that Hopkinson made Evelyn a Chinese-Caribbean woman and not an African-Caribbean woman is not only to highlight the economic differences between the different communities in the Caribbean, but also to reflect on the impact of slavery and its lingering trauma on African-Caribbean people. As Chinese people mostly came after the abolition of slavery, they did not suffer from all the violence that Black slaves did. Moreover, they had the opportunity to elevate themselves in Caribbean society while African-Caribbean still tried to recover from their past, which is why many Black people in the Caribbean antagonised Chinese-Caribbeans. With Evelyn and Calamity's friendship, Hopkinson thus illustrates the diverse population of the Caribbean and their different financial situations while also highlighting the fact that not all communities in the Caribbean share the same past and therefore the same generational trauma. These differences can therefore lead to misunderstandings and frustration towards the other communities.

Regarding Karen and Angie's friendship, McCaulay gives the reader a lot less information about the influence of their ethnicity on their friendship. Although both women are considered Black, Karen is bi-racial as her father is a Black man and her mother is a white

woman. Angie is fully Black as both her parents are also Black people. However, this information does not seem to really affect their friendship. Their financial status is also quite similar, even though Angie's family seems a bit poorer. Karen's house is in Kingston Harbour and "came with a nanny, a maid and a gardener" (McCaulay, 2), which indicates that Karen's family had money. Angie's house is situated in Barbican "not far from where [Karen] lived" (McCaulay, 27). Karen notes that "Angie's house was a slab-roofed box, much hotter than ours, and smaller, but she had her own room, as I did" (McCaulay, 27) and that "[a]t Angie's house, there was one maid, Jean" (McCaulay, 33). The financial situation of Angie's family thus seems a bit inferior to Karen's. However, this does not influence their friendship at all as there is not indication in the novel that Karen feels superior to Angie because of that. Money therefore has no influence on Karen and Angie's friendship.

The legacy of slavery is also discussed in *White Liver Gal*. Karen notes that her parents' nationalities are, according to her, "swapped" (McCaulay, 3): "[m]y Jamaican mother's eyes were an English blue, her skin an English cream. My English father was swarthy skinned with wiry hair like the steel wool Lucinda used to scrub pots" (McCaulay, 3). Through Karen's parents, McCaulay comments on the history of the Caribbean where white and Black identity have always intertwined. It becomes even more obvious when it is revealed that Karen's family was once involved in the plantation business: "your grandfather, was an English man. You know, old plantation money. So you're not half English, you're three-quarters English" (McCaulay, 241-42). Karen's complicated ancestry carries (to some extent) a similar message to Hopkinson's stories about sea-people. While Hopkinson choses the speculative genre to speculate about the legacy of slavery in today's Caribbean, McCaulay establishes a sort of fictional historical background for Karen which reminds the reader of the history of the Caribbean itself.

McCaulay could have also shown how Karen being light-skinned could have influenced her friendship with Angie as Angie is assumed to be a dark-skinned woman[2]. However, while McCaulay does imply that Karen is mostly English and white, her ethnicity does not have an influence on her friendship with Angie. As explained in the historical background, having light skin has always been considered as better than dark skin. For example, light-skinned slaves had more chances to work as house slaves rather than field slaves. Such discriminations are still present in Caribbean culture today. Political and social psychology specialist Christopher A. D. Charles argues for instance that, in Jamaica, "Brown and White groups are placed into the top traditional public high schools, while poor Black students are shunted into the upgraded new secondary schools of lesser ilk" (Charles, 159) and that "[l]ight-skinned broadcasters have more prestige than dark-skinned broadcasters" (Charles, 160). Furthermore, Charles claims that "[b]eauty contests that originated in the colonial era have been criticized for discriminating against Black women" (Charles, 161). Finally, he adds that "[t]he mulatto women of the colonial period have evolved into the contemporary browning (light-skinned woman), who is the object of desire for Black men" (Charles, 162). These examples of how light-skinned Black people are privileged are not really represented in *White Liver Gal*. Light-skinned herself, McCaulay might either not be aware of those discriminations within the African-Caribbean community or did not want to include the issue in her novel. Another possibility is that she considers that such discriminations do not happen as frequently anymore as most people think[3].

White Liver Gal therefore does not give much information about the women's friendship being influenced either by their ethnicity (or skin colour) or their financial status. *The New Moon's Arms* provides a relatively considerable number of elements that allows the reader to speculate about Caribbean society and more specifically about the relationship between

[2] This is my own interpretation as Angie has two Black parents. The novel does not specify Angie's skin colour.
[3] However, the information about McCaulay not touching this theme is not available, the reader can then only speculate

Chinese-Caribbeans and African-Caribbeans. Because of their different history, Chinese and Black people in the Caribbean fail most of the times to understand each other's struggles. Even though hostilities are not as bad as they used to be between both communities, *The New Moon's Arms* highlights through Evelyn and Calamity's friendship that some things such as different historical trauma and different financial situations makes it harder for these communities to communicate and mix. On the other hand, *White Liver Gal* does not really mention colourists issues in the Caribbean. Karen and Angie are depicted as equals and neither their skin colour nor their finances influence their friendship. The fact that they are both from the Black community could explain why those elements do not have an impact on their friendship, however, it is never disclosed in the novel.

VII. Conclusion

The motivation of this thesis was to determine the purpose of the presence of the stories of friendships in Nalo Hopkinson's *The New Moon's Arms* and Diana McCaulay's *White Liver Gal*. In that regard I analysed three themes present in both book through the theme of friendship: family, sexuality, and ethnicity. The theme of friendship in both books is approached quite differently and used to highlight different sub-themes.

The New Moon' Arms mainly discusses motherhood through friendship. Both Calamity and Evelyn become other mothers to Agway which ultimately negatively impacts their friendship. Although it brought the women together at first, their different expectations as mothers led them to the unavoidable failure of their relationship. Furthermore, the novel also emphasizes that not all women want to be mothers, opposing Caribbean cultural ideas on women. Calamity is a mother who did not choose to become one and Evelyn deliberately chooses not to be one. Hopkinson also uses the theme of friendship to comment on homophobia in the Caribbean. The other main theme in *The New Moon's Arms* that is tackled through the lens of friendship is the difference between Chinese-Caribbeans and African-Caribbeans. However, more than discussing their difference in ethnicity, I argued that it is the women's class that does not allow them to fully understand each other. Additionally, Hopkinson points out Calamity's ability to understand sea-people without acknowledging that she might be related to them. With the theme of ethnicity, Hopkinson also allows the reader to reflect on the Caribbean's history and on how not all communities are equal in the region because of their different histories. Consequently, *The New Moon's Arms* comments primarily on the diversity of communities present in the Caribbean and the difficulties it might engender in the region.

Through the lens of friendship and by writing her novel in the speculative genre, Hopkinson therefore allows the reader to think about the present state of the Caribbean but also its history and the influence it might have had in the present. It has been discussed how through history,

African slaves in the Caribbean insisted on creating kinship communities not only to protect each other and survive but also to keep traditions and culture alive. However, in *The New Moon's Arms*, Calamity's egoistical tendencies causes her to isolate herself from her friends and family: her friendship with Evelyn is mostly based on profit which ultimately causes the failure thereof. Calamity's inability to understand Evelyn's point of view is also a reason why their friendship failed. Calamity cannot accept to be a mother and treats her daughter as a friend which leads to her daughter establishing distance between them. Her friendship with Michael is also ruined because of her homophobia rooted in jealousy and egoism. Consequently, Calamity is stuck in a particular stage of her life and cannot escape from it. Calamity is therefore represented as someone who lost touch with the traditions of her ancestors as she is not depicted as having a large group of friends or kinship community but rather as someone who isolates herself.

What allows her to grow as a woman and free herself from her past, is understanding and accepting her own identity as a woman and mother, which caring for Agway allows her to do. It is indeed caring for Agway that reconnects her with Evelyn and Michael but also allows her to have an open conversation with her daughter about the difficulties of being a mother. Hopkinson thus places a great emphasis on communicating and expressing one's feelings, as it leaves a space for a better understanding of the other. Hopkinson also links past and present with the speculative genre. As Agway and the sea-people represent African-Caribbean's past, Hopkinson also demonstrates through the character of Calamity and her friendships how reconnecting with a forgotten past might help healing from untreated trauma but also reconnecting with your own community. However, she also shows through Evelyn and Calamity's friendship that the Caribbean is a diverse region with diverse communities and that communication between those communities is not always easy or possible.

In *White Liver Gal*, Diana McCaulay uses the theme of friendship in quite a different way. There is only one central friendship in the novel which is the friendship between Karen and Angie. The main purpose of this friendship in the novel is to highlight women's roles in society. Like Hopkinson, McCaulay comments on mothers who did not choose to become one and the trauma it caused to their daughter. While Hopkinson focuses on the mother and how she was able to finally accept her motherhood and thus rebuild her relationship with her daughter, McCaulay focuses on the daughter and how she was able to overcome the trauma inflicted by her mother and thus to finally assert her own identity, something she was able to do with the help of her best friend. With Karen and Angie's friendship, McCaulay thus highlights the importance of community and fictive kinship for African-Caribbean women. Although it is only revealed at the end that they are half-sisters, Angie and Karen have always behaved as fictive sisters throughout their lives, providing emotional and financial support, something that Karen's mother could not do. Even though her aunts helped her at some points in her life, it is Angie that remains constant. McCaulay therefore shows how family does not mean guaranteed support, especially if the mother of the family did not choose to be one.

Karen and Angie's friendship is also used to discuss the different stereotypes for women present in Caribbean culture. They both represent one specific stereotype; however, they also depict how to break those fixed images of African-Caribbean women. *With White Liver Gal*, McCaulay therefore tackle women's issues in a patriarchal society. While Hopkinson touches upon those issues while staying focused on motherhood, McCaulay proposes a broader discussion about women in the Caribbean and the issues they might encounter because of their gender. McCaulay really focuses on women's issues while Hopkinson also tackles homosexuality, a subject that is not mentioned in *White Liver Gal*. Friendship in both novel is therefore used to discuss gender issues, especially regarding women, however they both focus on different aspects of those issues.

White Liver Gal and *The New Moon's Arms* are therefore two novels who use friendship to discuss similar themes in the Caribbean, such as the role of family, gender and sexuality issues, and difference in ethnicity. The main characters of both novels are women, which further highlights the importance for women to have meaningful relationships and friendships in their life in order to assert their identity, whether it be as mothers, daughters, sisters or simply friends. Both novels depict a Caribbean society in which women must fight for themselves in order to find their place in the community. Even though Karen and Calamity do not have a big and strong kinship community surrounding them in their lives, they still have people they can count on to help them assert their identity and therefore their place as women in Caribbean society. The novels thus show that support is indeed necessary in a society created by a difficult and cruel past where generational trauma is still quite present.

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