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Language, Land, and Colonial Resistance: A Literary and Linguistic Reading of Claude McKay's "My Native Land, My Home"

Dr. Mehsina Sabnam

Department of English, University of Science & Technology Meghalaya, mehsinasabnam10@gmail,com

Corresponding author: Dr. Mehsina Sabnam

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ABSTRACT

Claude McKay's "My Native Land, My Home," published in Songs of Jamaica (1912), explores Jamaican identity, linguistic belonging, colonial oppression, and attachment to homeland. This paper examines the poem through an interdisciplinary literary and linguistic approach, focusing on Jamaican Creole as a medium of cultural representation and resistance to colonial language hierarchies. Forms such as "Dere," "dat," "wid," "lub," and "mek" distinguish the poem from Standard English conventions and foreground the linguistic identity of working-class Jamaicans. The analysis also considers the ideological significance of "buccra" and "no-land race," which expose racial and political structures in colonial Jamaica. Drawing on Winston James's study of McKay's Jamaican years, the paper situates the poem within the poet's early intellectual and literary development. It argues that McKay's linguistic choices are not merely stylistic but central to his cultural and political imagination. Ultimately, the poem transforms Jamaican Creole into a literary language of belonging, resistance, and national consciousness.

1. Introduction

Language and literature have historically functioned as powerful instruments through which communities negotiate identity, articulate collective experiences, and challenge structures of political and cultural

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domination. In colonial societies, the relationship between language and power becomes particularly significant because linguistic hierarchies often reproduce broader structures of racial, social, and cultural inequality. The privileging of the coloniser's language frequently positions indigenous and vernacular languages as inferior, informal, or unsuitable for literary expression. Consequently, the use of a marginalised language in literature can become an important cultural and political intervention. This relationship between language, identity, and resistance provides an important framework for examining Claude McKay's “My Native Land, My Home.”

Claude McKay (1889–1948), the Jamaican-born poet, novelist, and political writer, occupies an important position in Caribbean literary history and the Harlem Renaissance. Born in Clarendon, Jamaica, McKay developed an early literary interest in English poetry while remaining deeply connected to the linguistic and cultural experiences of rural Jamaican society. His literary development was influenced by his brother, Uriah Theophilus McKay, and the English folklorist Walter Jekyll, who encouraged him to employ Jamaican vernacular in his poetry. McKay subsequently published Songs of Jamaica and Constab Ballads in 1912, establishing himself as an important literary voice representing Jamaican social and cultural life (Giles, 2000; Poetry Foundation, n.d.).

Winston James, in his influential essay “Becoming the People's Poet: Claude McKay's Jamaican Years, 1889–1912,” emphasizes the importance of McKay's Jamaican upbringing in shaping his political consciousness, literary interests, and identification with the Black working population. James argues that McKay's concerns with racial inequality, economic exploitation, social injustice, and the experiences of oppressed Black communities were already evident before his departure from Jamaica (James, 2003, pp. 17–20). This historical perspective is particularly relevant to “My Native Land, My Home,” a poem in which the poet's affection for Jamaica exists alongside a critical awareness of the inequalities affecting its inhabitants.

Published in Songs of Jamaica in 1912, the poem establishes a strong emotional relationship between the speaker and the Jamaican homeland. Its opening declaration, “Dere is no land dat can compare / Wid you where’er I roam” (McKay, 1912), establishes Jamaica as an incomparable geographical and emotional space. However, the poem moves beyond the familiar conventions of patriotic poetry. The speaker acknowledges racial discrimination, economic hardship, colonial governance, and the exploitation of the Black population. Jamaica is celebrated not because its social conditions are ideal, but because it represents the speaker's cultural origin, identity, and enduring sense of belonging.

An equally significant dimension of the poem is its linguistic construction. McKay employs Jamaican Creole throughout the text, using vernacular spelling, phonological representation, lexical expressions, and grammatical constructions associated with Jamaican speech. The language of the poem is particularly important because it challenges the assumption that literary expression must conform to Standard English. Rather than adopting the linguistic conventions traditionally privileged by colonial education, McKay makes the language of ordinary Jamaicans the principal medium of poetic communication. This linguistic intervention can be understood through the broader theoretical discussions surrounding Caribbean Creoles. Carolyn Cooper observes that language has historically been a contested site in the Caribbean, where English has enjoyed institutional and literary privilege while Creole languages have frequently been denied equivalent recognition as legitimate literary languages (Cooper, 2021). The linguistic choices in McKay's poetry therefore acquire significance beyond their immediate aesthetic function.

However, McKay's use of Jamaican Creole also requires critical consideration. Amardeep Singh's introduction to the digital edition of Songs of Jamaica draws attention to Walter Jekyll's influence on the collection, particularly his encouragement of McKay to write in Jamaican vernacular. Singh also identifies the complexities surrounding the representation of Jamaican speech and the role played by Jekyll's editorial and philological interests. This context suggests that McKay's vernacular poetry should be understood through both its cultural authenticity and the colonial conditions under which it entered literary circulation (Singh, 2017).

The present study therefore approaches “My Native Land, My Home” through the intersection of literary criticism and linguistics. It examines how Jamaican Creole functions as a marker of cultural identity, how linguistic and stylistic choices contribute to the poem's political meanings, and how the representation of the homeland exposes the contradictions of colonial society. It argues that McKay's poem transforms the language of the Jamaican people into an instrument of literary self-representation and cultural resistance. The central proposition of this paper is that McKay's celebration of Jamaica is inseparable from his celebration of its people's language. The homeland is not simply a geographical territory; it is also a linguistic and cultural space through which identity is remembered, negotiated, and defended.

2. Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of this research is to examine Claude McKay's “My Native Land, My Home” through an interdisciplinary literary and linguistic framework, exploring the relationship between Jamaican Creole, cultural identity, colonial power, and national belonging. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the representation of Jamaica as a geographical, cultural, and emotional homeland in McKay's poetry.

2. To analyse the use of Jamaican Creole as a literary medium and its significance in challenging the linguistic dominance of Standard English.

3. To investigate the phonological, lexical, grammatical, and stylistic features of the poem from a linguistic perspective.

4. To explore the relationship between language, race, class, and cultural identity in colonial Jamaican society.

5. To examine how McKay employs poetic devices, imagery, repetition, and rhetorical structures to articulate political and social criticism.

3. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative, interpretative, and interdisciplinary research methodology, combining literary textual analysis with linguistic and sociolinguistic examination. A close reading of the poem is undertaken to examine its thematic organisation, imagery, symbolism, tone, speaker, poetic structure, and rhetorical strategies. Particular emphasis is placed on the relationship between patriotic expression and the criticism of colonial social structures. The primary source is Claude McKay's poem “My Native Land, My Home,” published in Songs of Jamaica (1912). The text available through the Academy of American Poets is used as the principal reference for textual analysis.

The research draws upon both primary and secondary sources. Primary material includes McKay's poetry and relevant historical literary texts. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, books, and critical studies concerning Caribbean literature, Jamaican Creole, colonial language politics, and McKay's literary development. Particular attention is given to Winston James's “Becoming the People's Poet: Claude McKay's Jamaican Years, 1889–1912,” which provides historical context for understanding the poet's early intellectual and political formation.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1 The Homeland as a Space of Cultural Identity and Emotional Belonging

The opening stanza establishes the emotional foundation of the poem:

"Dere is no land dat can compare
Wid you where'er I roam;
In all de wul' none like you fair,
My native land, my home." (McKay, 1912)

The opening declaration presents Jamaica as an incomparable homeland. The speaker's attachment to the island is not dependent upon geographical beauty alone; it emerges from a deeper sense of cultural belonging. The expression "My native land, my home" establishes an intimate relationship between the individual and the nation, presenting the homeland as an extension of personal identity.

The repeated first-person possessive expression "my" is particularly significant. It establishes an emotional claim over the land, while the direct address "you" personifies Jamaica as an intimate presence. The homeland becomes an interlocutor with whom the speaker maintains a relationship of affection, loyalty, and trust. From a literary perspective, the personification of Jamaica transforms geographical space into an emotionally significant entity. The island is not merely a physical location but a repository of memory, identity, and cultural experience. This interpretation can be connected to Winston James's observation that McKay's Jamaican upbringing remained central to his intellectual and literary development even after his departure from the island. James notes that Jamaica continued to occupy an important position in McKay's imagination despite his subsequent experiences of geographical displacement and exile (17–20).

The expression "where'er I roam" introduces the possibility of migration and displacement. Although the speaker may travel beyond Jamaica, his emotional attachment remains unchanged. This anticipates an important dimension of McKay's later literary consciousness: the relationship between migration and the persistent memory of one's homeland. The linguistic construction of the stanza also deserves attention. Expressions such as "Dere," "dat," "Wid," and "de wul'" represent Jamaican Creole rather than conventional Standard English orthography. The poem therefore establishes its emotional argument through a language associated with the community whose homeland it celebrates.

The significance of this choice is twofold. First, it makes the linguistic identity of the Jamaican speaker central to the expression of national belonging. Second, it challenges the assumption that patriotic or literary expression must necessarily be articulated through the coloniser's linguistic conventions. Thus, the opening stanza establishes a fundamental relationship between language and place: Jamaica is celebrated not only as the speaker's geographical homeland but also as the cultural and linguistic environment through which the speaker understands himself.

4.2 Jamaican Creole as a Medium of Linguistic Identity and Resistance

One of the most important features of “My Native Land, My Home” is McKay's sustained use of Jamaican Creole. The poem does not simply incorporate occasional vernacular expressions into an otherwise Standard English text. Instead, Jamaican Creole constitutes its primary linguistic medium.

Consider the following expressions:

Table 1. Jamaican Creole forms and approximate Standard English equivalents

Jamaican Creole form	Approximate Standard English equivalent
Dere	There
Dat	That
Wid	With
De	The
Wul'	World
Lub	Love
Neber	Never
Mek	Make
Hab	Have
Caan'	Cannot
Fe	For
Deir	Their

These forms demonstrate the poet's deliberate representation of Jamaican speech patterns through written language. From a linguistic perspective, several of these expressions illustrate phonological correspondences between the vernacular forms represented in the poem and their Standard English equivalents. For instance, “dere” and “dat” represent forms in which the initial dental fricative of Standard

English there and that is represented by a stop consonant. Similarly, “wid” represents the voicing and manner differences associated with the vernacular pronunciation of with.

However, it is important not to regard these differences simply as incorrect pronunciations of English. Jamaican Creole is a systematic language variety with its own phonological, grammatical, and lexical patterns. The written forms in McKay's poem offer a literary representation of this linguistic system, rather than a complete phonetic transcription. The distinction is particularly significant in postcolonial linguistic analysis. Colonial language ideologies frequently associate Standard English with education, authority, prestige, and intellectual achievement, while positioning Creole varieties as inferior or unsuitable for formal expression. McKay's decision to employ Jamaican Creole throughout the poem challenges this hierarchy by making the vernacular capable of carrying complex emotional, literary, and political meanings.

Carolyn Cooper's discussion of Caribbean language politics is useful here. She identifies the historical marginalisation of Creole languages in literary and institutional contexts, despite their centrality to Caribbean cultural expression (Cooper, 2021). McKay's poem can therefore be understood as an early intervention in the debate over the legitimacy of vernacular languages in literature. Nevertheless, the historical circumstances of its production must also be considered. Walter Jekyll encouraged McKay to write in Jamaican dialect and played an important role in the publication of Songs of Jamaica. Amardeep Singh's introduction to the digital edition highlights the complexities of Jekyll's influence, including his interest in the philological representation of Jamaican speech (Singh, 2017).

This complicates any straightforward interpretation of vernacular writing as an entirely autonomous act of resistance. McKay's literary voice emerged within a colonial publishing environment in which the language of the Jamaican population was also an object of scholarly and editorial interest. Yet, despite these complexities, the poem gives Jamaican Creole a central literary function. Its speakers, experiences, emotions, and political concerns are articulated through the language of the community itself. The linguistic choice consequently becomes an assertion of cultural legitimacy.

4.3 Phonological Representation and the Politics of Written Language

The phonological representation of Jamaican Creole is among the most distinctive features of the poem. McKay employs a consistent pattern of vernacular spellings that makes the reader conscious of the relationship between spoken language and written literary expression.

Consider the following examples:

"Dere is no land dat can compare"

"Wid you where'er I roam"

"My lub I neber can repent"

"You hab all t'ings fe mek life bles'"

"Caan' tek away me lub"

These expressions provide opportunities to examine the relationship between phonological variation and literary representation. First, the representation of the dental fricatives through forms such as "dere" and "dat" creates a recognisable vernacular voice. Secondly, the forms "lub" and "neber" demonstrate the poet's representation of differences in the pronunciation of words that would appear as love and never in Standard English. Thirdly, the reduction or omission of certain consonants in expressions such as "bles'" and "deat'" contributes to the visual representation of spoken language. The word "wul'" is particularly interesting because it demonstrates how the poet compresses the written form to represent a vernacular pronunciation of world. Similarly, "strengt'" and "t'ousan'" illustrate the representation of consonant-cluster simplification. These examples are significant because phonological representation does more than reproduce speech. It creates a recognisable linguistic identity within the written text.

From a stylistic perspective, the repeated use of vernacular spelling establishes continuity in the poem's voice. The reader encounters a speaker whose language is distinctly situated within Jamaican society rather than an abstract, culturally neutral English-speaking environment. However, the orthographic representation must be interpreted cautiously. McKay's spellings are literary conventions and are not equivalent to a modern International Phonetic Alphabet transcription. They also reflect the historical circumstances of early twentieth-century dialect writing. The significance of this technique lies in its ability to make linguistic difference visible. McKay's poetry demonstrates that the spoken language of a colonised population can become a legitimate medium of written literary expression. In this sense, phonological representation functions as an important dimension of the poem's cultural politics.

4.4 Lexical Choices, Racial Consciousness, and Colonial Power

The second stanza introduces a more politically charged dimension:

"Jamaica is de nigger's place,
No mind whe' some declare;

Although dem call we 'no-land race,'
I know we home is here." (McKay, 1912)

This stanza is crucial to understanding the ideological complexity of the poem. The opening line makes a direct racial declaration about Jamaica as a homeland for its Black population. The historical racial terminology employed by McKay must be understood within the colonial and racial vocabulary of early twentieth-century Jamaica. The word "nigger" is an offensive racial slur in contemporary usage; its appearance here should be examined as part of the historical language of the poem rather than reproduced as an acceptable contemporary designation.

The expression "no-land race" is especially significant. It suggests the ideological exclusion of Black Jamaicans from a legitimate claim to their own homeland. The phrase indicates that racial marginalisation operates not only through economic and political deprivation but also through the denial of belonging. The speaker directly challenges this imposed identity:

"I know we home is here."

The declaration transforms the idea of belonging into an assertion of collective identity. The speaker does not seek external validation to establish his relationship with Jamaica. His claim arises from historical attachment, cultural experience, and the recognition of Jamaica as the homeland of its Black population. From a postcolonial perspective, this is an important act of resistance against colonial definitions of identity.

The lexical choice "buccra," which appears later in the poem, further develops this criticism. In historical Jamaican usage, the term refers to white people, particularly white colonial or planter-class figures. Within this poem, it is associated with the authority responsible for the deterioration of the social conditions of the Black population. The relationship between these terms demonstrates how vocabulary becomes an instrument through which social divisions are represented. The poem's language consequently operates on two levels. First, it represents the everyday linguistic experiences of Black Jamaicans. Second, it exposes the racial classifications and ideological structures through which colonial society maintained social divisions. The relationship between racial terminology and social belonging makes the poem particularly relevant to postcolonial linguistic studies. Rather than simply describing Jamaica as a beautiful island, McKay presents it as a contested political space in which the question of who belongs is inseparable from race, power, and historical experience.

4.5 Grammatical Features and the Representation of Jamaican Creole

The linguistic analysis of the poem becomes more meaningful when it moves beyond individual word forms to consider grammatical constructions. For instance:

> *"Although dem call we 'no-land race,'*
> *I know we home is here." (McKay, 1912)*

The expression "dem call we" demonstrates a vernacular construction that differs from the conventional Standard English form "they call us." The pronoun "we" functions in a position where Standard English would employ the object form "us." This is an important example of the distinction between Standard English grammatical conventions and the linguistic patterns represented in Jamaican Creole. Similarly, the expression "we home" reflects a possessive construction associated with Jamaican Creole. Rather than employing the Standard English possessive determiner "our," the poem uses "we" in a possessive environment. These constructions are significant because they demonstrate that the linguistic identity of the poem is not restricted to phonological spelling. It is also reflected in grammatical organisation.

Another example appears in:

> *"No mind whe' some declare" (McKay, 1912).*

The expression "No mind" functions as a vernacular discourse construction meaning approximately "regardless of what others say" or "never mind what some people declare." It creates an assertive and conversational tone. The construction allows the speaker to dismiss the opinions of those who question the Black population's claim to Jamaica. The linguistic structure thus supports the ideological argument: the speaker's knowledge of belonging is presented as stronger than the external declarations of exclusion. These grammatical features demonstrate that McKay's use of Jamaican Creole is systematic at the level of literary representation. They also illustrate why a purely phonological analysis would be insufficient to understand the linguistic richness of the poem. A further important consideration is that Jamaican Creole should not be confused with an informal or defective version of Standard English. It possesses its own grammatical conventions and linguistic organisation. McKay's representation of these constructions provides an opportunity to examine how literary texts preserve and legitimise linguistic varieties that have historically been marginalised.

4.6 Love, Personification, and the Contradictions of National Loyalty

The third, fourth, and fifth stanzas develop the relationship between the speaker and the homeland through the language of love, nourishment, suffering, and loyalty. The speaker declares:

"You give me life an' nourishment,
No udder land I know;
My lub I neber can repent,
For all to you I owe." (McKay, 1912)

The imagery of nourishment establishes Jamaica as a maternal figure. The land provides life and sustenance, suggesting a relationship that resembles the relationship between a mother and child.

The phrase "My lub I neber can repent" reinforces the emotional intensity of this attachment. The speaker's love for Jamaica is presented as unconditional, even when the land itself becomes a source of suffering. The following lines complicate this relationship:

"E'en ef you mek me beggar die,
I'll trust you all de same" (McKay, 1912).

Here, the speaker acknowledges the possibility of economic deprivation and personal suffering. The homeland is therefore not idealised as a place free from hardship. The personification of Jamaica becomes increasingly complex when the speaker declares:

"Though you may cas' me from your breas'
An' trample me to deat',
My heart will trus' you none de less" (McKay, 1912).

The maternal imagery is particularly powerful. The homeland is simultaneously represented as a nurturing mother and as a figure capable of abandonment and violence. This contradiction deserves attention because it prevents the poem from becoming a simplistic celebration of national identity. The speaker's loyalty is tested by the possibility of rejection. The land is loved despite its inability to protect all its inhabitants from poverty and suffering. Thematically, this raises a significant question: Can an individual remain emotionally attached to a nation that fails to provide justice and security?

McKay's answer appears to be affirmative, but this loyalty is not politically passive. The poem's later criticism of colonial governance suggests that love for Jamaica should not be confused with acceptance of

the institutions that exploit its population. The emotional relationship between the speaker and the homeland therefore reflects a distinction between the nation as a cultural community and the colonial administration governing it. This distinction becomes central to understanding the poem's political argument.

4.7 National Responsibility, Collective Consciousness, and the Language of Sacrifice

The sixth stanza introduces a collective dimension to the poem:

> *"An' I hope none o' your sons would*
> *Refuse deir strengt' to lend,*
> *An' drain de last drop o'deir blood*
> *Their country to defend." (McKay, 1912)*

The movement from the individual speaker to the collective community is significant. The earlier stanzas focus on personal attachment, whereas this stanza introduces the responsibilities of the homeland's inhabitants. The expression "your sons" establishes a familial relationship between the nation and its people. The country is personified as a mother whose children are expected to defend her. The imagery of blood and sacrifice creates an atmosphere of patriotic responsibility. However, the historical context of colonial Jamaica complicates the meaning of this appeal. The poem was published in 1912, when Jamaica remained under British colonial rule. Consequently, the idea of defending one's country raises questions about the relationship between national loyalty and colonial political authority.

The speaker's appeal should therefore be read as an expression of attachment to Jamaica rather than an uncomplicated endorsement of British imperial nationalism. The linguistic construction of the stanza is also significant. Expressions such as "deir," "strengt'," and "deir blood" maintain the vernacular voice while articulating a relatively elevated theme of national sacrifice. This is particularly important because McKay demonstrates that Jamaican Creole is capable of expressing both intimate everyday experiences and abstract political concepts. The poem thus challenges the assumption that vernacular language is restricted to informal communication or popular entertainment. Its linguistic register accommodates patriotism, collective responsibility, racial identity, and political consciousness.

4.8 Ecological Abundance and Economic Exploitation

One of the most interesting dimensions of the poem is its representation of the Jamaican natural environment. McKay writes:

"Your fertile soil grow all o' t'ings
To full naygur's wants,
'Tis seamed wid neber-failings springs
To give dem to de plants." (McKay, 1912)

The imagery of fertile soil and abundant springs presents Jamaica as a naturally productive environment. The land is represented as capable of sustaining its inhabitants through agricultural resources and natural abundance. The reference to fertile soil also reflects the importance of agriculture in the historical and socioeconomic life of Jamaica. However, the ecological representation is not merely descriptive. It establishes an important contrast between the productive capacity of the land and the economic deprivation experienced by its Black inhabitants. The next stanza makes this contradiction explicit:

"You hab all t'ings fe mek life bles',
But buccra 'poil de whole
Wid gove'mint an' all de res',
Fe worry naygur soul." (McKay, 1912)

This stanza provides one of the strongest political statements in the poem. The expression "You hab all t'ings fe mek life bles'" suggests that Jamaica possesses the natural resources necessary for a prosperous society. Yet this abundance is undermined by colonial authority. The conjunction "But" marks a decisive transition from celebration to criticism. The natural environment is presented as generous, while the political and economic structures are identified as the source of suffering. The term "buccra" is particularly important because it identifies the social group associated with colonial privilege. The reference to "gove'mint" extends the criticism beyond individual exploitation to institutional structures. From an ecocritical perspective, the poem offers an interesting relationship between land, natural abundance, and human inequality. The environment is not represented as the cause of poverty; rather, poverty emerges from the unequal distribution and control of the resources available within the colonial system.

This reading can also be connected to the broader concerns of environmental humanities, particularly the relationship between ecological resources, colonial power, and socioeconomic justice. The poem therefore anticipates questions that are important in contemporary postcolonial ecocriticism: Who controls the land? Who benefits from its resources? Why does natural abundance fail to guarantee social well-being? It is important, however, not to impose a fully developed contemporary ecocritical framework upon McKay's historical text without qualification. The poem is primarily concerned with the socioeconomic and political

conditions of its time. Its ecological imagery becomes significant because it exposes the contradiction between the productive land and the deprivation of the people who inhabit it.

5. Conclusion

Claude McKay's “My Native Land, My Home” is an important literary representation of Jamaican identity, cultural belonging, and the contradictions of colonial society. Although the poem initially appears to be a patriotic declaration of love for Jamaica, its deeper significance emerges through the relationship between national attachment, racial consciousness, linguistic identity, and socioeconomic inequality. The analysis demonstrates that McKay's representation of Jamaica extends beyond geographical admiration. The homeland becomes a cultural and emotional space through which the speaker establishes personal and collective identity. The poem's references to racial exclusion, colonial governance, economic deprivation, and natural abundance reveal the contradictions underlying colonial Jamaican society. From a linguistic perspective, the poem's sustained use of Jamaican Creole is particularly significant. Its phonological representations, lexical choices, and grammatical constructions establish a distinctive vernacular voice that challenges the conventional literary privilege of Standard English. Expressions such as “Dere,” “dat,” “wid,” “lub,” and “mek” are not merely stylistic variations; they contribute to the construction of a linguistic identity rooted in Jamaican cultural experience. The study further establishes that the relationship between language and resistance operates at several levels. The vernacular voice challenges linguistic hierarchies, the racial vocabulary exposes colonial exclusion, and the everyday lexical expression “grub” connects national loyalty with material survival. Similarly, the representation of fertile land alongside economic exploitation reveals the contradictions between ecological abundance and colonial inequality. The historical context provided by Winston James's examination of McKay's Jamaican years is essential to understanding these dimensions. His scholarship demonstrates that McKay's political and literary consciousness was significantly shaped by his experiences in Jamaica before his departure in 1912.

Ultimately, “My Native Land, My Home” demonstrates that language is not simply a vehicle for communicating literary meaning; it is also a medium through which cultural identity and political consciousness are constructed. McKay's employment of Jamaican Creole transforms the vernacular into a language of literary legitimacy, national belonging, and social criticism. The central contribution of the poem is its demonstration that a people’s claim to their homeland is also a claim to the legitimacy of their language, culture, and collective history. Through its combination of vernacular expression, patriotic sentiment, and colonial criticism, McKay's poem establishes an enduring relationship between literature and linguistics in the study of Caribbean identity.

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