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Sonorities: Decolonizing Voice in Post-1945 Caribbean Literature and Media

Fecu, Yanie

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SONORITIES:

DECOLONIZING VOICE IN POST-1945 CARIBBEAN LITERATURE AND MEDIA

YANIE FÉCU

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Advisers: Ben C. Baer, Simon Gikandi, Nick Nesbitt

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Abstract

My dissertation, *Sonorities: Decolonizing Voice in Post-1945 Caribbean Literature and Media*, examines literary, musical, and technological turns to noise during the uneven spread of decolonization. I claim that the notion of voice as shorthand for intelligibility and agency is simultaneously overused and under-examined in cultural studies of marginalized groups. I consider how the development of new audio technologies raised questions about the ontological difference between live and recorded performance. My thesis posits the rich history of black diasporic engagements with disruptive sound as a key site for the contestation of liveness. I argue that Caribbean cultural producers experimented with what I term *vocal labor*: a range of formal aesthetic strategies with a political charge. I draw on postcolonial theory and media studies to investigate works by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Wyclef Jean, and Edwidge Danticat.

My first chapter takes up the neglected figure of the crowd in Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. I argue that although the narrator wants to elicit a revolutionary cry from the impoverished masses, he struggles to hear and interpret the utterances they produce. I draw on crowd theory to explore how Césaire dismantles the primacy of the lyric "I" speaker. Next, I consider the B.B.C. radio program *Caribbean Voices* and Fanon's involvement with the Algerian resistance to address audience involvement and the radio's assimilationist and revolutionary functions. I contend that two programs with opposing goals ultimately supported similar results: the ascendancy of nationalist activism. My third chapter brings together musical and digital dissonance through readings of Brathwaite's "video" poems. I trace how jazz ensembles become a model for the relationship between individual artists and their communities. The final chapter

focuses on Haitian refugees and the extralegal procedures of detention centers through an analysis of Wyclef Jean's audio-engineering techniques and lyrics alongside Danticat's use of speech and silence in her memoir *Brother, I'm Dying*. Through close readings of prose and poetry in French, English, and Haitian Creole alongside radio transcripts and audio recordings, I demonstrate how artists deployed vocal labor to reimagine the perceptual through and as the political.

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Introduction

"Krik? Krak! Tim tim. Bwa sèche!"
—Haitian sayings

"Et ce ne sont pas seulement les bouches qui chantent, mais les mains, mais les pieds, mais les fesses, mais les sexes, et la créature tout entière qui se liquéfie en sons, voix et rythme."
—Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*

"I want Aretha to set this to music."
—Sherley Anne Williams

Signal

Earl Lovelace's novel *Salt* (1997) traces the development of the protagonist Alford George from his first six years as a mute child to his mercurial rise as a teacher-turned-politician. Steeped in Trinidad's local history, the narrative depicts Alford's struggle to reconcile his desires to travel the world and the familial obligations that tether him to the island. For years he fantasizes about and prepares for his eventual departure, first to England and then beyond. He envisions himself as a mobile and cosmopolitan figure. The path to freedom, for him, is paved with language. Armed with *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the British literary canon, and the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) radio programs, Alford tasks himself with training his voice, not only changing his vocabulary and syntax but his vocal delivery as well:

> At times, though, the language defeated him. His thinking was in another language and he had to translate. He began to speak more and more slowly to make sure that his verbs agreed with his subjects, to cull out words of unsure origin and replace them with ones more familiarly English. Caribbean words like jook, mamaguy and obzocky all had to be substituted. He felt his meanings slipping away as he surrendered his vocabulary. But, he had to surrender meanings; he couldn't take his words out into the world. … For better elocution he began to speak with pebbles under his tongue. For the correct pronunciation of words, he put his radio on the BBC. (33)

Nearly a decade earlier, Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau published his second novel *Solibo Magnifique* (1988). It deftly recounts the life and death of a renowned storyteller and the community his words helped to shape. Throughout a mostly incompetent police investigation, various characters share not only their knowledge of the events leading up to Solibo's passing but also the nature of the man himself and the oral tradition he helped sustain. The narrative, ostensibly written in French, is replete with untranslated Martinican creole terms, idioms, riddles, and wordplay; through these gestures, it emulates the eponymous character's idiolect. Moreover, the novel contains unflinching commentary on the use of metropolitan French, Martinican French, and race relations on the island. In one instance, a detective interrogating a townsperson on Solibo's mysterious passing states, "[N]ous sommes entrés dans une enquête criminelle, donc pas de charabia de nègre noir mais du français mathématique" (98).[1] Black speech is perceived as nonsensical while metropolitan French is "mathematical"—that is to say, governed by logical rules and precision. The most illuminating meditations on the nature and purpose of orality come from the metafictional character Chamoiseau. He describes one storytelling scene which begins, like so many occasions left to the imagination, with Solibo crying out to the crowd "É krii?" and his audience responding "É kraa!"

> "...tandis qu'au loin les rumeurs s'épuisaient, le Maître de la parole avait parlé parlé inoculant à l'auditoire une fièvre sans médecine. Il ne s'agissait pas de comprendre le dit, mais de s'ouvrir au dire, s'y laisser emporter, car Solibo devenait là un son de gorge plus en voltige qu'un solo de clarinette quand Stélio le musicien y engouffrait son souffle." (33)

[1] "[T]his is a criminal inquiry now, so no black Negro gibberish, just mathematical French" (67). English translations are taken from *Solibo Magnificent*. Translated by Réjouis, Rose and Val Vinokur, Random House, 1997.

> "…while far away the murmur died, exhausted, the Master of the Word spoke, spoke inoculating into his audience an incurable fever. It was not about understanding what was said, but about being open to it, letting it carry you away, because Solibo would become a throaty sound fluttering higher than the song of a solitary clarinet when Stélio the musician breathed into it." (13)

These two literary examples seem to offer opposing perspectives. In one instance a young man works in isolation to transform his lexicon and manner of speaking. Alford believes that "he had to begin alone" because "[h]e knew of no one else journeying to that world" (33). His inherited vernacular speech and his natural voice require disciplining to become intelligible to future interlocutors. His exercises include rote memorization as well as forced forgetting. He has somehow learned that the words, meanings, and accents he has grown up with are unfit for the wider world. Alford resembles the confused schoolchild Edward Kamau Brathwaite describes in his 1984 text *History of the Voice*, one who writes "'the snow was falling on the canefield,' trying to have both cultures at the same time" (9). While Alford awkwardly jams his new vocabulary into regular conversations as a way to remember them, his language use only further alienates him from his family and neighbors. Despite this widening gulf, Alford chooses to sacrifice his own goal and help his father purchase the land he has labored on for decades. Alford later brings his linguistic and literary knowledge to the classroom, where he moves through three distinct phases. He initially subscribes to the notion that English culture is superior and organizes the course to reflect this belief. He then becomes disillusioned with the island's educational system, because its colonial structure only allows a small handful of students to succeed. Finally, he dedicates himself to helping students understand and thrive in their particular cultural and material

circumstances. He can do so only by accepting his own social enmeshment and by realizing that Trinidad, as a multiethnic, multilingual island shaped by Amerindian, African, European, and Asian cultures, contains and refracts the larger world in its own way. This last development later propels his move into local politics.

In the second example, we are presented with an individual and a community whose relationship is shaped by the oral encounter. Solibo's call—*é krii*—and response—*é kraa*—circulates throughout the Caribbean with slight variations in pronunciation and spelling. It is an invitation and an anacrusis of sorts, the upbeat before a story or riddle unfolds. In the novel the voice and ear are both points of entry, but mutual intelligibility is no longer the primary goal. Comprehension is characterized as an opening up of one's worldview rather than a narrowing in on a specific semantic sense. The voice does not simply bridge the individual and society; it grounds the one in the other. As Solibo says to Chamoiseau, "Chaque créature n'est en réalité qu'une vibration à laquelle il faut simplement s'accorder" (71).[2] Attuning oneself to others becomes a theory of performance and an ethical stance, one that supersedes standard linguistic norms and hierarchies. On several occasions Solibo scolds Chamoiseau for his reliance on written language.[3] Paradoxically, it is Solibo's mastery of the spoken word that encourages

[2] "Each creature is but a chord which you just have to tune in to…" (44).

[3] The metafictional Chamoiseau greatly admires the storyteller and demonstrates a deep knowledge of Martinique's sociolinguistic reality. In one scene he describes Solibo's appeal with a precise, scholarly vocabulary, remarking, "This verbal energy seduced me even then. Especially since Solibo used the four facets of our diglossia: the Creole basilect and acrolect, the French basilect and acrolect, quivering, vibrating" (22). The term diglossia refers to situation wherein speakers employ two languages (or two varieties of the same language), typically of varying status, under different conditions. A basilect is a dialect or variety of language with low social prestige while an acrolect has the most prestige. This observation is even more unusual because it does not simply oppose a low-status creole and high-status European language. Instead, it acknowledges that Creole itself has linguistic range and includes varieties with more or less social standing. Similarly, French is not presented as a uniformly prestigious language; its basilect varieties might include verlan and louchébem.

Chamoiseau to recommit himself to writing. This result is less surprising, however, if one takes into account Chamoiseau's critical writing on the role of oral culture, particularly in the collection of essays *Éloge de la créolité* (1989). Just one year after *Solibo Magnifique*, Chamoiseau, along with Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, makes a case for orality as creole "intelligence," despite its systematic repression. When they call for its social reintegration, they specifically call upon Caribbean authors to pursue multilingual fluency and to develop innovative methods for incorporating creole languages and attendant social realities into their writing. Text becomes part of the creolized oral continuum rather than opposed to it.

Does either one of these novels offer a corrective to pre-conceived ideas about the human voice and language?[4] Or are they both limited in some way? What can we learn about the relationship between sound and sense in the Caribbean? This dissertation takes up these questions by tracing the convergence of literary, musical, and technological turns to noise in the wake of global anticolonial struggles.

Although voice—whether spoken, sung, live, or recorded—is a key element of African diasporic cultural production, it remains both over-represented and under-theorized. The reason for this paradox is no doubt connected to a reliance on the

[4] The human voice has been taken up in several disciplines, including psychoanalysis, anthropology, and speech act theory. An overview of these approaches can be found in Carolyn Abbate's *Unsung Voices* (Princeton University Press, 1991). For more on psychoanalytic perspectives, see Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror* (Indiana University Press, 1988); and Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT Press, 2006). For more on speech act theory see J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard UP, 1975); Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997); and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). Anthropological approaches can be found in Dell Hymes, *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative Inequality: Toward An Understanding Of Voice* (Taylor & Francis: 2003); Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge UP: 2003); and Tyler Bickford, "Music of Poetry and Poetry of Song: Expressivity and Grammar in Vocal Performance," *Ethnomusicology,* vol. 51, no. 3, 2007: 439–76.

reductive notion of "coming to voice" that has dominated cultural analyses of marginalized communities, particularly in postcolonial criticism.[5] Christopher Miller notes "the rhetoric of speech and silence…dominates this field" and that "[t]here is no question that… silence is the most powerful metaphor for exclusion from the literary mode of production."[6] These tropes develop out of a Western philosophical tradition that has privileged the human voice in an effort to distinguish it meaningfully from other non-human sounds. In doing so, thinkers such as Plato and Jean-Jacques Rousseau conflated voice with language and speech and argued for its inherent intelligibility.[7] In more modern theories of language and voice, two particular interventions have had a notable impact. In the structuralist vein, the semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure presented the linguistic sign as two components: *signifiant* **(**the signifier or sound-image**)** and *signifié* **(**the signified or concept**)**. In his 1916 *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics) he distinguishes between *la langue*, which is the institution of language and its norms, and *la parole*, which refers to a manifestation of language in spoken or written speech. Saussure's distinctions, and others that have followed, help us understand that

[5] This vocal trope is also common in feminist studies and has a particular power in black feminist thought. The work of bell hooks elucidates three linked elements in her analysis of African American women's political activism: breaking silence, cultivating self-reflexive speech among groups, and "talking back" to dominant discourses. She writes that "[c]oming to voice is not just the act of telling one's experience. It is using that telling strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects" (hooks 1994:144). In *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (1998) Patricia Collins notes that the phrase "coming to voice" began gaining momentum in the 1970s and replaced the earlier motto "the personal is political." She finds the metaphor of voice useful but limited in the face of state surveillance and unjust power relations.

[6] Miller, Christopher L. *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*, U of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 250.

[7] Appelbaum, David. *Voice*. Suny Press, 1990; Neel, Jasper. *Plato, Derrida, and Writing*. SIU Press, 2016; Stocker, Barry and John Bolender. *Rousseau on Language and Writing: Two Perspectives*. Andrews UK Limited, 2014.

while voice, language, and speech are interconnected, they are not interchangeable.[8] Moreover, his focus on *langue* rather than *parole* reaffirms that the linguist's task is to analyze the conventions that shape a *community*, not the idiosyncratic variations of an individual. The phrase "l'arbitraire du signe" signals the arbitrary connection made between a word and an object or concept as well as the arbitrary nature of phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters). Saussure claims that even as formal language systems depend on slight degrees of phonetic difference (164), the acoustic dimensions of the voice remain incidental. Saussure seems to have inherited what Adriana Cavarero calls the "devocalization of logos" (62) from Plato. Saussure's interest is not in the embodied voice or sounds themselves but in the relations between sounds.

I wish to interject here and note that although Saussure's research is seen as outdated in many respects, his distinction between *langue* and *parole* remains meaningful, particularly in communities where slavery and colonialism have created a considerable rift between institutionalized language norms and everyday speech patterns. In *Le discours antillais* (1981) Édouard Glissant ultimately dismisses Saussure, however, because of the latter's refusal to engage with sonorities that would destabilize a system of signs or serve to create a system within a system. By cleaving so closely to matters of convention, Saussure cannot account for phonemes and graphemes that resist assimilation rather than engender it. Nearly fifty years later, Jacques Derrida leveled a critique of semiotics as it developed in the wake of Saussure's work in *De la Grammatologie* (1967). Derrida's argument is primarily concerned with a rupture between writing and

[8] For instance, Adriana Caverero, in *For More Than One Voice* (2005), asserts that an individual's speech "is not simply the verbal sphere of expression; it is also the point of tension between the uniqueness of the voice and the system of language" (14).

speaking. His critique of Husserl's phenomenology is also linked to this categorical break which, Derrida asserts, has resulted in "phonocentrism," a privileging of voice over writing. Derrida's claims about the denigration of written language was a turning point in the theorization of language because it deconstructed the voice as a primary site of meaning and unmediated presence. I foreground Saussure and Derrida here not only because of the influence they have had on the philosophy of language but because of how their work has destabilized the agency of the speaking subject. In many ways, this thesis sets out to recuperate subjects whose locutionary power was never presumed in the first place.

The coupling of voice and language in Western metaphysical traditions not only enabled the assertion of a human exceptionalism but also contributed to the establishment of racial and ethnic hierarchies.[9] Take, for example, the etymology of the term barbarous. The word, used to describe the perceived primitiveness and cruelty of non-Western peoples, comes from the Greek *bárbaros* or foreigner, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit *barbara*, meaning stuttering or stammering. The destruction of non-Western cultures not only depended upon the eradication of indigenous languages, but also on the assertion that they were never full-fledged languages to begin with. Artistic works and scholarly research concerned with the voice of the oppressed consciously push against the conflation of voice and intelligible speech. In doing so, they counter philosophical frameworks which gain authority by restricting who can speak and what can be communicated. This dissertation shifts away from the idea of voice as merely a

[9] See for example Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), Joseph Errington's *Linguistics in a Colonial World* (2008), and Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard's *Languages and Publics: The Making of Authority* (2014).

transparent vehicle for language. Instead, my study considers its sonorous materiality—and attempts to render this sonorous materiality through text—to be equally significant. While silence has become synonymous with powerlessness, voice continues to symbolize agency and self-determination. It is important to note that this shorthand appears in black studies as well as postcolonial studies. In both fields questions of cultural dispossession, linguistic inheritance, and knowledge production are paramount. One significant contribution can be found in Henry Louis Gates's discussion of the African American literary tradition, which emphasizes the "Talking Book." In these scenes, narrators aim to make a Western printed text speak to the slave or speak in black vernacular speech (181).[10] This strategy, Gates argues, is part of a larger effort to initiate African Americans into the culture of print literacy that seeks to exclude them and, in turn, to legitimize their political claims to freedom. Scholars of the Caribbean working across numerous disciplines necessarily pull from theories elaborated upon in postcolonial studies and black studies. Voice has come to represent and the carry the weight of several politically and ethically charged concepts, including resistance, authenticity, and identity, without giving rise to its own cohesive field of inquiry.[11] To simplify and dismiss voice as language is to risk neglecting a significant dimension of Caribbean history, aesthetics, and politics. In *For More Than One Voice* (2005), Adriana Cavarero draws attention to the uniqueness of the human voice in order to foreground *who* is speaking rather than what is being said. As she notes, voice "is not only sound; it is always the voice of

[10] Gates observes that narrators in early African American prose and poetry actually depicted the "Untalking Book" or the failure of this endeavor (131, 165). He locates a critical turning point in the work of Zora Neale Hurston in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).

[11] Recently scholars across musicology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, film and media studies certainly have delved into the role of the voice in society. See for instance the work of Mladen Dolar, Michel Chion, Nina Eidsheim, Walter Ong, Martha Feldman, Steven Connor, Shane Butler, and Alexander Weheliye.

someone" (148). Like Cavarero, I wish to attend to particular individuals or groups who produce and perceive sound and to analyze the conditions of possibility or impossibility that underpin their ability to signify.

By examining voice within the interdisciplinary framework of noise, I uncover how specific sounds such as radio static, linguistic accents, vocal timbre, and electronic effects became embedded in histories of empire building and collapse. Noise is a compelling point of departure for understanding the formation of modern Caribbean cultures, linked as it is to questions of authority, representation, and intelligibility. Western sensory regimes have long designated black speech and black music as noise in an effort to discredit the creators and their content. In his influential 1977 text *Bruits: essai sur l'économie politique de la musique* (*Noise: The Political Economy of Music*), Jacques Attali interprets noise as a foreshadowing of radical change within the dominant symbolic systems that underpin aesthetics, economics, and social relations. Encouraged by these claims, I ask what, how, and to whom noise conveys in my readings of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Edwidge Danticat, and Wyclef Jean. The thesis takes 1939, the year Adolf Hitler invaded Poland, as its starting point and ends in 2004, when a coup d'état ousted Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In the Caribbean, a region characterized by the cross-currents of colonial, creole, and indigenous languages, the question of "proper" speech has long been a preoccupation. When Martinican thinker Édouard Glissant asserts that "din is discourse" and Jamaican novelist Vic Reid describes how knowledge comes "like a noise in the blood," they point to disruptive sound as an organizing principle in black diasporic cultures. These epigraphs offer a conception of noise that cannot be reduced to irrationality, error, or

disorder. They not only imagine a link between noise and knowledge—they imagine noise *as* knowledge. In the textual and aural artifacts of this dissertation, disruptive sound is as much a manner of information gathering as it is of information scattering. This dual function both serves to protect marginalized populations to and disseminate its most potent truths under guise. Analyzing prose, poetry, radio transcripts, and audio recordings in English, French, and Haitian Creole, I demonstrate how the artists and intellectuals in this study deployed metaphorical and literal noise in response to the social alienation that resulted from the Atlantic slave trade and that has persisted throughout the staggered, uneven process of decolonization.

Scratch

Many existing accounts of the traumas of racial subjugation hinge on theories of social and civic death. Orlando Patterson first outlined the relationship between slavery and social death in his landmark 1982 study, tracing the psychological process from the slave's initial capture and loss of identity to the violent acts that defined the master-slave power asymmetry. Scholars such as Alexander Weheliye and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson have pointed out that the dominant frameworks for interrogating state violence and social injury and their foundational role in the formation of democracies have failed to acknowledge the impact of transatlantic slavery and colonialism. Philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe has taken on the two thinkers most strongly associated with these frameworks: Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. He suggests that Foucault's notion of biopower cannot account for newer forms of domination and posits necropolitics as an alternative to biopower. Necropolitics describe modes of subjugation that exceed Foucault's *droit de glaive* (right to kill) and that include the right to enslave

others, to expose others to death, and to create entire zones of death. Mbembe contrasts Agamben's bare life with raw life, which he defines as "a place and a time of half-death… a place where life and death are so entangled that it is no longer possible to distinguish them" (197). In doing so, he emphasizes states of precarity and terror wherein death saturates everyday life in postcolonial Africa.

Saidiya Hartman asserts that the social death of enslavement is not only a matter of history but a phenomenon that still "engenders the black subject in the Americas" today (51). In other words, it is a "history that hurts" (51). With this perspective in mind, Abdul JanMohamed's "death-bound subject" not only describes the experience of living with the constant threat of death, as he argues, but also points to the transhistorical force of antiblack racism. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to offer a comprehensive reading of Afro-pessimism, but I highlight these interventions to mark one important way my work diverges from the Afro-pessimist perspective that black bodies exist in a constant state of ontological death. Although such theories expose the inadequacy of conventional accounts of sovereign power and legal personhood, I want to suggest that they frequently obscure the emancipatory possibilities of political insurgency and aesthetic experimentation. Amidst notions of bare life, raw life, and death-bound life, what might one say about the quality of *liveness* itself and its imbrication within black arts and critical thought? I posit that the long history of black sound-making offers an answer.

Beginning with the invention of the phonograph in 1877, sound recording equipment allowed for the preservation and dissemination of human voices in the absence of bodies. This decoupling of sound and physical presence gave rise to a new medial

distinction and cultural value known as liveness. While the concept is a nebulous one, it is deployed in media studies and performance studies to describe, as Erika Fischer-Lichte puts it, the spatial and temporal co-presence of performer and spectator. Liveness signals simultaneity, immediacy, and ephemerality, in both the performance and in the audience's response. Philip Auslander historicizes this term in his 1999 text *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, arguing that liveness "is not an ontologically defined condition but a historically variable effect of mediatization" (3).[12] The idea of this perceptual category arose because of sound recording innovations; Auslander specifically identifies the radio as the turning point in the emergence of liveness. He explains that "[w]ith cylindrical recordings and phonograph records, the distinction between live performances and recordings remained experientially unproblematic" (4). Listeners could not confuse the two, and such sound recordings served as supplementary or complementary materials. The institutionalization of radio broadcasting, however, destabilized the dichotomy of these two listening situations. Writing about the United States, he points out that the Department of Commerce preferred to give licenses to stations that did not play recorded music "since there was a feeling that playing records was a rather inferior style of broadcasting" (qtd. in Auslander, 4). However, not all stations shared these sentiments. As sonic technologies became more refined, listeners could not reliably distinguish between recorded and live sounds without a visible source present.[13] Auslander ultimately argues there is no clear-cut ontological opposition

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[12] See Philip Auslander, *Liveness* and Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993 to follow a key debate in performance studies regarding issues of liveness in mediatized cultures.

[13] For the most significant conceptualization of the "acousmatic"—sound without a visible source—see Pierre Schaeffer's *Traité des objects musicaux: Essai interdisciplines* (1966) (recently translated as *Treatise on Musical Objects: An Essay Across Disciplines*, University of

between live and mediatized performance, given that liveness is a consequence of new media (198). He highlights the historical and cultural contingency of the term rather than intrinsic characteristics, suggesting that "the idea of what counts culturally as live experience changes over time in relation to technological change" ("Digital Liveness," 3).

Peggy Phelan's disagreement with Auslander has produced one of the central debates of performance studies.[14] Her oft-cited book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) theorizes performance as that which occurs over time, unable to be repeated. "Performance's only life is in the present" (146). Phelan is invested in defining liveness not only as communal co-presence but as a discrete ontological category. She describes live performance as fundamentally non-reproductive and "unmarked," by which she means, "[p]erformance cannot be saved, recorded, documented" but rather "becomes itself through disappearance" (146). That foundational dependence on disappearance and on what Phelan calls the "generative possibilities" of disappearance is key to how performance acts as counterpoint to the universal condition of human mortality and frailty. At the same time, she claims this essential non-reproducibility is what enables live performance to resist capitalist regulation, commodification and appropriation. While I am inclined towards an intermediary position with regards to this debate, Phelan's argument is particularly helpful for thinking through the etymological constellation in which the term liveness is situated. "Live," "alive," and "lively" span

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California Press, 2017). See also Brian Kane's study of Schaeffer in *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

[14] Their debate has inspired critical reviews and further arguments by other scholars including Mathew Causey, Daniel Sack, Rebecca Schneider, and Jennifer Parker-Starbuck. For a helpful overview see Meyer-Dinkgräfe, Daniel. "Liveness: Phelan, Auslander, and After." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2015, pp. 69-79.

definitions that encompass audiovisual modes, biological existence, and affective qualities. The slippage between these terms echoes what Sianne Ngai observes about the word *animated,* which creates "counterintuitive connections… between the organic-vitalistic and the technological-mechanical" (572). With its parallel inflections, liveness, I argue, becomes a vital metaphor for understanding black subjectivity as it was conditioned by the biopolitics of the colonial and postcolonial state. Having recourse to such a metaphor deepens our understanding of racially charged encounters through an emphasis on the limits of corporeal and cognitive co-presence. The dehumanization of non-white peoples relegates them to two non-human categories: animals and objects. People of African descent have long undergone what Césaire calls *la chosification* (thingification)—through this process they are transformed into and treated as the socio-legal equivalent of property or a thing to be possessed. This strategy is apparent even in works ostensibly created to humanize black people, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was originally subtitled "The Man That Was a Thing." Liveness becomes a way, or a set of ways, to register interiority and individual experience in the aftermath of racial slavery and colonialism.

The question of how race shapes sound production and listening practices remains under-examined in media histories, sound studies, and performance theory. In black studies, however, music and sound more broadly have often expanded or even generated new readings of social realities and aesthetic objects. One can trace this strategy to W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), which incorporates bars of musical notation at the beginning of each essay. This decision is complicated by the fact that standard notational practices have often proved insufficient for the transcription of non-

Western musics. And while Du Bois's sorrow songs are undoubtedly American, black Americans' performance of such music drew on unconventional sounds and methods, such as moans, shouts, chants, flattened pitches, and tonal strain. For this reason, Du Bois's musical measures are sketches rather than paintings. They can only suggest what notes were sung and when. They do not, however, provide much information on how these notes were sung or, just as importantly, how the spaces between the notes were articulated. This kind of performance knowledge historically has been passed down rather than written down.

Du Bois claimed "the problem of the color line" would define the twentieth century. In 2016 Jennifer Lynn Stoever reinforced and recalibrated this statement, arguing that a sonic color line also underpins ideologies of white supremacy. LeRoi Jones, also known as Amiri Baraka, published the seminal study *Blues People* in 1963, tracing the impact of different black musical genres on American culture and American values. In *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984) Houston Baker identified the synthesis of oral genres at the heart of African American expressive culture by analyzing the vernacular "blues voice" in conjunction with post-structuralist ideas. One of Paul Gilroy's achievements in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) was his rethinking of non-essentialist modes of cultural belonging in relation to black popular music. Fred Moten, like Saidiya Hartman before him, turns to Frederick Douglass's Aunt Hester and her scream as an entry point into black radical aesthetics in 2003's *In the Break*. The unprecedented audio-visual rupture engendered by audio technologies became central to black cultural production in the twentieth and twenty-first century. More recently, Alexander Weheliye has contributed to this scholarly corpus by focusing on the

technological dimension; at the same time, he resists technological determinism, or the notion that technological developments dictate historical and social change.[15] Such a view obscures the role and responsibility of human agents while Weheliye wishes to highlight black artists' active engagement with sound. He outlines the concept of sonic Afro-modernity to investigate not just the form and content of black musical practices, but the conditions of their transmission and reception. For Weheliye, sonic technologies provide a non-linguistic approach to the theorization of subjectivity. A vibrant body of Caribbean thought has emerged in response to new acoustic experiences which range from the installation of radio towers that linked "peripheral" islands to metropolitan centers to Jamaican dancehall sound systems that enable masterful remixes. Through close analysis of twentieth century Caribbean literature and media, this dissertation delineates the ways in which key cultural producers have challenged the social, economic, and political failures of decolonization by articulating an aesthetics of disruption and dissonance.

The advent of recording technologies allowed black voices to proliferate and circulate to an unprecedented degree.[16] Nevertheless, the amplification of these voices happened against the backdrop of continued subjugation and degradation of black life globally.[17] My thesis charts how postwar Caribbean artists and intellectuals lay claim to

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[15] For extended discussions see Smith, Merrit Roe and Leo Marx. *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*. MIT Press, 1994.

[16] It's important to note, however, that many measures were taken to silence these voices. Take for example noise abatement acts in the U.S. or the forced closure of dancehalls in Jamaica.

[17] The same is true today. Musical artists from the United States and the Caribbean such as Beyoncé, Jay Z, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, and Cardi B dominate global radio stations and the internet. As Yale art historian Robert Farris Thompson asserted in 2011, "The big triumph [today] is that the airwaves of our planet belong to black people." Nevertheless, the unarmed shooting of black people has escalated at the same time the recording and dissemination of such acts through cellphones and online videos has. This ongoing form of domestic terrorism coexists with

this ephemeral quality of liveness by staging what I call *vocal labor*. Vocal labor, I contend, is a set of formal strategies defined by a preoccupation with aural projection, articulation, repetition, and modulation. These staged sensory encounters draw on sound's affective work and critical purchase; they center on speech, song, and that which exceeds both categories. Vocal labor, which encompasses both sound production and sound perception, offered new models of community for Caribbean peoples at home and abroad struggling to redefine citizenship amidst the reality of racial antagonism. The artists of my study meditate on the political possibilities embodied in four different collectives: crowd, audience, ensemble, and diaspora. All of these categories are amorphous; while diaspora would seem to indicate the widest possible swath of people, none of these terms presumes a number. The sonic becomes a mode of amassing; it not only enables new assemblages but offers alternative ways of constructing and understanding the relationship between an individual and a community. Self-determination is figured as a collective enterprise. The urgency of such a claim is compounded in contexts where the government does not function as a guarantor of rights for all subjects.

To elaborate on what I mean by "labor," I want to make a connection to Sylvia Wynter's 1971 essay "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation." She demonstrates how the emergence of the market economy gave rise to plantations and the novel form at the same time. Even as a product of the market system, however, the novel manages to express cultural values that resist and challenge the values of such an economy. What is most helpful in Wynter's analysis is her exploration of how the plot served a vital function

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innumerable atrocities being committed against non-white Americans across the country and sanctioned by the Trump administration.

alongside the exploitative plantation site. Slaves and indigenous peasants used these provision grounds to grow food to feed themselves and their families. Planters supported this practice because it maximized profits. However, Wynter discovers that these marginal parcels of land were also a site for the cultivation of folk culture, divergent value systems, and "a secretive history." Although it appears that the plantation system encapsulates and profits from *all* labor, black people nevertheless labored in ways that did not reinforce that system. The provision grounds were the site of other, fruitful modes of labor beyond the coercive power of the masters. Vocal labor echoes this dynamic; the term describes marginalized forms of voicing and listening that coexist with the dominant ideologies of subject formation. Vocal labor, in my formulation, is work *beneath* work. I am thinking here of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's assertion that the "unity is submarine," and Ralph Ellison's invocation of "speaking on the lower frequencies," and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's intellectual undercommons, where a black person's labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. Vocal labor is work that refuses to be recognized as work, lest it risk co-option by larger forces. The term signals both the cultural and political work that has been done—by 19th century maroons thriving in the Caribbean hinterlands, by 1960s Civil Rights Freedom Riders, by today's Black Lives Matter protesters—and the work still to come.

Scattering

This thesis challenges reductive theories of technological determinism by reclaiming the users' agency. Thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan's ("the medium is the message") and Friedrich Kittler ("media determine our situation") have presented influential, but sweeping claims about how media shapes conditions of knowledge and historical

developments. While scholars of science and technology studies have developed more nuanced formulations, the deterministic model still holds sway in society more generally. To read humans as passive bystanders in the face of technological advancement is to fail to account for how these listeners interact with objects such as radios and CDs in ways dictated neither by the colonial state nor by technological design.[18] I do not deny that technology has powerful and manifold effects on all sectors of human social activity.[19] However, I similarly resist arguments that deny the possibility of meaningful decision-making and that posit technology as a force for inevitable socio-historical trajectories. Raymond Williams, in his 1974 *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, responded to McLuhan by refusing to minimize the role of economic interest, social need, and government policy-making in his media history. In 1994 Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith suggested that technology still contributed to the development of events even when divested of its all-powerful agency. Thus, they offered a new definition of technological determinism which "now refers to the human tendency to create the kind of society that invests technologies with enough power to drive history."[20] Thomas Misa also sought to understand technology as that which shapes and is shaped by a society.[21] More recently, scholars such as Leila Green in her book *Technoculture* (2002) have referred to technological determinism as one of the prevailing "myths" of innovation. Green offers

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[18] See for instance Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*. MIT Press, 1994.
[19] Take, for instance, the London literary scene which is the focus of my second chapter. One need only consider the central role of technological progress in the modernist imagination. See for example Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study*. Cambridge University Press, 1998; and Danius, Sara. *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*. Cornell University Press, 2002.
[20] Smith and Marx, *Does Technology Drive History?* MIT, 1994, xiv.
[21] Thomas J. Misa, "Retrieving Sociotechnical Change from Technological Determinism," in Marx and Smith, 115-41.

instead social determinism as an argument for how society shapes the development and application of specific technologies. Her focus on the decisions of the social elite nevertheless ignores the choices and influence of a wider range of users and what I would call emergent counterpublics.

Within this broader medial frame I also wish to consider critical arguments that specifically address the role of listeners. Theodor Adorno, in his 1938 essay "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," argues that the subject's autonomy disappears once they become a radio listener faced with "the public mechanism" of the radio broadcast (294). Similarly, Jean-Paul Sartre insists that broadcasting produces "a reifying relation in which the voice is given as praxis and constitutes the listener as the object of praxis… I, as an inert object, am subjected as inorganic matter to the human work of the voice" (272). Tellingly, these conceptions of the listener are that of an isolated individual who is unable to intervene in the unidirectional flow of an authoritative voice. In countering the pitfalls of technological determinism, I do not wish to propose what we might call an "audiential determinism" (one that would be distinct from social determinism in its reference to a much broader spectrum of users across race, class, and gender). Rather than merely reattribute a sound technology's power to the listener, I seek to advance an understanding of the processual dynamic between media and audience. Technological artifacts and socio-political forces form a matrix of interrelatedness. This dissertation takes up Richard Rath's proposal that scholars listen for "the paths, trajectories, transformations, mediations, practices, and

techniques—in short, the *ways*—that people employ to interpret and express their attitudes and beliefs about sound."[22]

I focus on the archipelago that snakes westward from Florida along the Gulf Coast and eastward across South America's northern coast. I refer to this zone as postcolonial even as I analyze the ways in which the project of decolonization remains partial, stalled, and incomplete. I interrogate a black Atlantic shaped by French and British imperialist networks and take into account America's long and oft-forgotten history of political and economic intervention in the region. I place Anglophone and Francophone works in conversation without conflating or ignoring intra-Caribbean differences and particularities. I do so in order to combat what Harry Hoetink and Gordon K. Lewis, in 1985, decried as "a single-language focus" that still characterizes Caribbean studies today.[23] Like J. Michael Dash, locate in Glissant's notion of the region an alternative to the presumed dichotomous poles of national and universal. I nevertheless must acknowledge the limits of my comparative lens which, for the moment, leaves aside the Spanish- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. One cannot deny that divisiveness exists in the region—whether it be territorial debates regarding maritime borders or the complex dynamics that characterize Haitian-Dominican relations. However, as Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel demonstrates, intra-island exchanges and migrations have always been pivotal and have, over centuries, contributed to an overarching regional consciousness. In the early 2000s, few scholarly monographs analyzed Caribbean literary studies from a comparative, multilingual approach. Silvio Torres-Saillant's *Caribbean Poetics* (1997),

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[22] Rath, Richard Cullen. *How Early America Sounded*. Cornell, 2003, 2.
[23] Hoetink, Harry. "'Race' and Color in the Caribbean," in Mintz and Price (eds.), *Caribbean Contours*, p. 56; Lewis, Gordon K. "The Contemporary Caribbean," p. 228.

Brent Hayes Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003), and J. Michael Dash's *The Other America* (1998) were some of the rare comparative analyses of Caribbean literature available. Within the last two decades, studies including Guillermina De Ferrari's *Vulnerable States* (2007), Paul Miller's *Elusive Origins* (2010), Raphael Dalleo's *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere* (2011), H. Adlai Murdoch's *Creolizing the Metropole* (2012), Rosamond King's *Island Bodies* (2014), Victor Figueroa's *Prophetic Visions of the Past* (2015), Jeannine Murray-Román's *Performance and Personhood in Caribbean Literature* (2016) have emerged. I build upon these scholarly models, which treat the Caribbean not as isolated islands but as a linked archipelago that challenges traditional geographic, cultural, and political boundaries.

Part of the larger sensorial turn in the humanities and social sciences, the field of sound studies has expanded since the early 2000s.[24] Jonathan Sterne's landmark text *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2003) argues that with the invention of various audio technologies, ranging from the stethoscope to the phonograph, "sound itself became an object and a domain of thought and practice, where it had previously been conceptualized in terms of particular idealized instances like voice or music."[25] Sound studies scholars such as Kara Keeling and Josh Kun have successfully demonstrated how Western civilization has privileged vision and distanced aurality from

[24] See for instance Bijsterveld, Karin. *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*. MIT, 2008; Dyson, Frances. *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*. UC Press, 2009; Erlmann, Veit. *Reason and Resonance*, 2011; Goodman, Steve. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. MIT, 2009; LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. Continuum 2010; Kahn, Douglas. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. MIT, 2001; Thompson, Emily. *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933*. MIT, 2002; and Kahn, Douglas and Gregory Whitehead eds. *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*. MIT, 1994.

[25] Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Duke, 2003, 2.

rationality.[26] One can detect this bias as early as Aristotle, who claimed, "[a]bove all we value sight... because *sight is the principle source of knowledge* and reveals many differences between one object and another" (qtd. in Ihde 7; emphasis in original). Despite the many meditations on the human voice that can be found in this tradition, it is nevertheless defined by what Martin Jay has called a "scopic regime." Scholars working on aurality in various disciplines have offered critiques of existent discourses of Euro-American modernity by shifting away from visual and logocentric frames. As Art M. Blake notes, however, race and ethnicity have had limited purchase in sound studies. Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes observe the absence of the global South in sound studies research, stating that Routledge's four-volume *Sound Studies* anthology (2013) does not contain any chapters on Africa or Asia while Pinch and Bijsterveld's *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2011) ignore these continents as well.[27] As Sterne writes in the edited volume *Keywords in Soun*d (2015), "The West is still the epistemic center for much work in sound studies…" (71). In a review of three useful reference texts in a relatively new field—*The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012), edited by Karen Bijsterveld and Trevor Pinch; *The Sound Studies Reader* (2013), edited by Jonathan Sterne; and *Keywords in Sound* (2015), edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny—Gustavus Stadler notes the paucity of chapters concerned with social difference and race in

[26] As Kara Keeling and Josh Kun note, "[v]ision has traditionally been linked to reason, knowledge, science, truth and rationality; sound is 'seen' as fleeting and ephemeral, mystical, subjective and contingent." See *Sound Clash: Listening to American Studies*. Edited by Kara Keeling and Josh Kun. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012, p. 2.
[27] "Remapping Sound Studies." Humanities Futures Franklin Institute. Website. https://humanitiesfutures.org/papers/remapping-sound-studies/

particular.[28] He also points to an unquestioned reliance on black music to fill the gap and the lack of a wider critical frame to interrogate the whiteness of the field.

The tide is slowly changing with texts such as Jesus Martín Barbero's *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations* (1993) and Mark M. Smith's *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (2006). Scholarship concentrating on comparative colonial contexts also remains scarce. Roy Rodano and Tejumola Olaniyan's *Audible Empire* (2016) provides a much-needed exploration of the role of musical practice in the spread of imperial networks across a range of time periods and locations. Alejandra Bronfman and Andrew Grant Wood's edited collection *Media, Sound, and Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2012) is a significant contribution in this respect, both because of its geographical focus and because of the editors' decision to "decenter music" as a fundamental category of analysis without ignoring it altogether. Bronfman's pioneering media history *Isles of Noise: Sonic Media in the Caribbean* (2016) presents the archipelago as a laboratory where experimental telecommunications technologies and listening practices developed. Like Steingo and Sykes, I believe that the study of sound in colonial and postcolonial contexts inspires different questions and different approaches to understanding aesthetic experimentation, racial formation, and structural inequities. The dissertation responds to a notable lack in the field by engaging with the status of the voice as a way to think through the construction of racialized otherness and the spread of political mobilization. The influence of concepts such as Edward Said's Orientalist gaze, Fanon's epidermal racial schema, and Glissant's right to opacity illustrates how visual metaphors have structured

[28] Stadler, Gustavus. "On Whiteness and Sound Studies." *Sounding Out!* July 6, 2015. Website. https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/07/06/on-whiteness-and-sound-studies/

postcolonial theory and overshadowed sound's significance. The Caribbean artists and thinkers I study take up vocal labor to reimagine what it might mean to understand the perceptual through and as the political. I wish to emphasize that sensory perceptions are not only hierarchized but racialized. In doing so, I examine the interplay between a spectrum of sounds and literary practices as the site for the contestation of race, empire, and nationhood.

My first chapter, "Reluctant Listeners in Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*," takes up the neglected figure of the Martinican crowd in Césaire's long poem. Paradoxically described as both "chattering and mute," the masses circulate as a reminder of the everyday precarity that sustains colonial metropoles. When analyzing the text's many revisions, which span from 1939 to 1956, scholars have tended to emphasize the unnamed narrator's explosive voice. I argue that although the speaker wants to elicit a revolutionary cry from the impoverished masses, he struggles to hear and interpret the many utterances they already produce. He casts himself as an enlightened spokesperson, one set apart from the crowd. Only when he surrenders his desire to project his voice above all others can he begin the process of social reintegration. I explore how the poem pushes against prominent theories of the lyric and "I" speaker. I also draw on crowd theory from its emergence in the 19th century disciplines of sociology and psychology to more recent critical work in order to consider two ideological extremes: crowd as anarchic threat and crowd as democratic potential.

In "Frantz Fanon and the BBC's Resistant Frequencies" I turn to England and Algeria to address radio's assimilationist and revolutionary functions and the impact of audience involvement. Fanon's 1959 essay "Ici la voix de l'Algérie" ("This Is the Voice

of Algeria") examines the ways in which Algerians transform the radio, a means of French domination, into a mode of resistance during the war. Although their broadcasts were often fragmented and marred with static, Algerian listeners heard this incoherence as an invitation to co-create a narrative that reaffirmed their national identity. This chapter probes the complex role of Fanon's own voice, particularly in Anglophone cultural studies, as the sole spokesperson for the Algerian war for independence. I read Fanon's ethnographic piece alongside an under-explored chapter of media history, namely the radiophonic origins of Anglophone Caribbean literature. The British Broadcasting Corporation's program *Caribbean Voices* (1943-1958) launched the careers of canonical West Indian authors by broadcasting short stories, poetry, and plays during the war and postwar period. Although BBC staff did not support literature and cultural discussions with a political bent, they solicited audience feedback. Through questionnaires they learned that West Indian listeners took issue with on-air readers' articulation of linguistic accents. More specifically, audiences rejected the assumption that Caribbean accents and dialects were interchangeable. This criticism reveals a larger preoccupation with the conflation of distinct Anglophone island cultures and the rise of nationalism. Of the two programs I analyze, one is a moving target, a fugitive figure in its own right, and the other a reliable, weekly connection meant to extend the civilizing process. I contend that two broadcasts with opposing goals—the state-sanctioned BBC show and the state-censored Algerian program—ultimately supported similar results: the ascendancy of nationalist activism and the fight for political independence in colonial territories.

My third chapter, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Multimodal Ensembles," brings together the aural and the textual through readings of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's early jazz poetry and later work rendered in what he calls his Sycorax video-style. I posit that despite radical shifts in form made possible by digital technologies, an abiding commitment to the role and rendering of oral traditions unites the two major periods of his poetic practice. This chapter looks closely at Brathwaite's concept of "nation language" in order to think through the importance of vernacular speech in the formation of literary canons. I then chart how Brathwaite collapses the division between oral and scribal approaches by transforming the graphic environment of the printed page into a stage for aural performance. Avant-garde jazz, like non-standard languages, is difficult to reproduce in conventional notation. More specifically he turns to the jazz ensemble as a model for understanding relationships between individuals and their communities as well as between communities with a vested interest in transnational forms of solidarity. Ultimately, I claim that Brathwaite's critical and creative work decenters the individualism so often perceived as poetic ideal and poetic impetus. In these oral texts Brathwaite carefully weaves repetition in form and content, embodying what he terms tidalectics, a worldview and historiographical model that counters the teleological or progressive linearity of Hegel's dialectic. This imprecisely cyclical cultural logic is bound up in Brathwaite's privileging of what is creole and communal in the West Indian experience.

In my fourth and final chapter, "Misperforming Diaspora in Edwidge Danticat and Wyclef Jean's Refugee Narratives," I address the treatment of Haitian immigrants in the U.S., the extralegal procedures enabled by detention centers, and the affirmation of

diasporic belonging in the works of musician Wyclef Jean and writer Edwidge Danticat. I pay close attention to Wyclef's musical syntax, lyrics, and audio-engineering techniques on his first and fifth studio albums. *The Carnival* (1997) and *Welcome to Haiti: Creole 101* (2004) evince a growing belief in and embodiment of diasporic consciousness by immersing the listener in conversational interludes, untranslated Creole interjections, and ambient noises that conjure his hometown of Croix-des-Bouquets and the Haitian enclaves of Newark, New Jersey and Flatbush, Brooklyn. I focus on the interjected scenes of Wyclef's ongoing fictional trial and the remixed Cuban folksong "Guantanamera" to examine the formal conferral and denial of rights to undesirable immigrants. Danticat's memoir *Brother, I'm Dying* (2007) gives an account of her uncle's wrongful detainment, abuse, and death at the Krome Service Processing Center in Florida. Following his battle with throat cancer, Danticat learns to decipher her uncle's dysfluent speech and his silences. His use of an artificial larynx is yet another barrier to his entry as an asylum-seeker. Her exploration of voice and language is linked to a series of tacit questions: what counts as an asylum claim? Who is allowed to make such claims? And what can you do if this claim goes unrecognized? Despite the bombastic nature of many tracks, Wyclef similarly engages with commingled strands of xenophobia and racism. His trial interludes, intended as humorous, can be interpreted as meditations on a shared concern about the nature of testimony from or on behalf of individuals who are generally punished rather than protected by the law.

The term sonority has definitions both in musicology and linguistics. Scholars and performers of music use the word to refer to clusters of notes that fall outside the bounds of traditional, tertiary harmonies. Sonorities include but are *not* limited to triadic chords.

In linguistics, the word can refer to speech sounds "characterized by relatively free air passage through some channel" or the relative amplitude of a speech sound. The term sonorities functions in part as a metaphor for the increasingly significant presence of the Caribbean on an international stage throughout the twentieth century and in part as a description of the technological developments that have transformed the black public sphere and private lives. Radio airwaves, for example, emanate from a central transmitting source before dispersal across vast tracts of land and sea much like people undertaking forced and voluntary migrations. In the same way that diasporas consist of varying generational waves and degrees of assimilation, wireless networks are composed of varying frequencies. Acoustic metaphors also encourage one to consider the ways in which migrating subjects create social or legal "interference" in exclusionary juridical systems and processes. Thus, sonority, referring to unanticipated sonic groupings and open channels of air, becomes an appropriate figure for understanding black diasporic experience.

My interest in drawing on Wynter's essay deepened when I learned that, before it became associated with radio, the term "broadcast" originally referred to the act of scattering seeds by hand rather than in orderly rows. Broadcasting in mass media emerged with AM radio in the 1920s, when electronic communication was no longer limited to one recipient but could be transmitted to many. A submerged preoccupation with territory, expansion, and cultivation is built into the lexicon of sound technologies and fundamental to the nature of media more broadly. This connection underscores the need for additional studies of sound production in and *as* the production of empire. I acknowledge the gap that exists between page and performance, but I perceive this space

as valuable conceptual terrain in its own right. Rooted in Caribbean studies and postcolonial critique, my project intervenes in sound studies by reviving the trope of coming to voice. Rather than function as a flattened symbol of resistance, authenticity, or authority, vocal labor animates the process by which characters, readers, and listeners might unlearn the language of normative rights and with it the impoverished ontological status to which the marginalized are relegated. I argue for a reevaluation of Caribbean literary traditions and auditory cultures as performance sites where liveness is reconstructed and conferred to groups who historically have been denied. In doing so, I revise standard assumptions about how discursive norms serve the interests of empire and recast the formation of modern Caribbean nation-states alongside larger shifts in the dissemination of technology and modes of perception.

Reluctant Listeners in Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*

"a man opens his arms wide to the crowd
i read the gesture: *we* i"
—Evie Shockley, *The New Black*

Learning to Listen

The opening stanzas of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1956) place readers well within earshot of depicted sounds.[29] The unnamed narrator recounts his altercation with a police officer: "Va-t-en, lui disais-je, gueule de flic, gueule de vache, va-t-en je déteste les larbins de l'ordre et les hannetons de l'espérance. Va-t-en mauvais gris-gris, punaise de moinillon" (1).[30] Readers are privy only to the narrator's reported speech. During his litany of insults, the officer is rendered mute. As a figure of authority, the policeman embodies the surveillance and violence which sustain the colonial state apparatus. The vehemence of the speaker's rant is matched only by its startling diction. Shakespeare's deformed slave Caliban is a ready point of reference here. Taught English by the magician Prospero, he uses this imposed language to curse his master. Even now writers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds rework the character as a model for the oppressed colonial subject.[31] Many Caribbean authors, including Césaire, have endowed

[29] All French translations are from the 1956 Présence Africaine edition. English quotations are drawn from Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith's 2001 reprinted translation *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land.*

[30] "Beat it, I said to him, you cop, you lousy pig, beat it, I detest the flunkies of order and the cockchafers of hope. Beat it, evil grigri, you bedbug of a petty monk" (1).

[31] The Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó is best known for his essay *Ariel* (1900), which align Caliban with primitive U.S. materialism and Ariel with the promise of progress in Latin America through a return to Greek and Roman aesthetic ideals. The Cuban writer Roberto Fernandez Retamar, however, championed Caliban as a symbol for the strength of Latin American cultural identity in *Caliban and Other Essays* (1989). Harold Bloom (1992) addresses Caliban's increasing popularity as a model for the colonized subject, particularly since the 1980s. However, this phenomenon began much earlier (see Nadia Lie). Césaire reworks this trope in his portrayals of Caliban, Henri Christophe, and Patrice Lumumba in *Une tempête, La tragédie du Roi Christophe*, and *Une saison au Congo.*

Caliban with numerous afterlives. But this particular outburst is no ordinary curse. The injunction is both an expulsion and an entanglement of speaking and silencing that prefigures the critical but largely unacknowledged aural impulse within the poem. In his extensive commentary on the *Cahier*, Abiola Irele addresses the importance of oratory in the text.[32] His observation is all the more significant in light of the speaker's denouncement of the absent(ed) interlocuter. Natalie Melas reads this scene—and the poem's entire existence—primarily as an issue of untimeliness. The text's palimpsestic publication history between 1939 and 1956 unsettles any easy distinction among the colonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial periods while the scene itself incorporates a temporal delay. The reported utterance does not happen in its own present but rather has already happened. Melas points out that while scholars rarely ignore this extraordinary opening, they fail to consider the possible "ramifications of this gesture for conditions of speech in the poem" (573). She goes on to make astute observations about what this monological mode of address might mean for the prose-poem at a structural level. However, Melas, like so many, reduces the question of conditions of speech to the act of speaking while paying scant attention to the act of listening. Although the narrator dismisses his initial interlocutor, there *is* another figure present in the text whom he consistently and passionately addresses: the Martinican crowd.

The second stanza begins with an archipelago in ruins: "les Antilles qui ont faim, les Antilles grêlées de petite vérole, les Antilles dynamitées d'alcool, échouées dans la boue."[33] The speaker's aerial view of his native country seems to set him apart. He

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[32] Irele, Abiola, ed., *Aime Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* 2nd ed. Ohio State University Press, 2000, xlix.

[33] "the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud" (1)

gradually narrows his scope to focus on a particular town where one finds “les fleurs du sang qui se fanent et s'éparpillent dans le vent inutile comme des cris de perroquets babillards.”[34] Being the mimic-men of the animal kingdom par excellence, parrots orient us towards speech by way of ventriloquism. The word babbling suggests an uncontrolled, aimless mode of discourse. It is little surprise, then, that parrots later reappear in a description of the abject Martinican masses. In this desolate scene one encounters “une vieille vie menteusement souriante, ses lèvres ouvertes d'angoisses désaffectées.”[35] But the speaker does not clarify what sounds or “agonies” this gaping mouth might have articulated. He juxtaposes this mouth against “une vieille misère pourrissant sous le soleil, silencieusement.”[36] There is an asymmetry in this series of abstractions, one created by sound’s spectral presence in these personifications. He completes the triptych by characterizing silence itself as “un vieux silence crevant de pustules tièdes.”[37] In the fifth stanza he finally turns his ear to the town’s population, a “cette foule criarde si étonnamment passée à côté de son cri comme cette ville à côté de son mouvement, de son sens, sans inquiétude.”[38] But what does it mean to be detoured from a particular sound? The speaker posits a vague correspondence between cry, movement, and meaning, but leaves this question unanswered. However, he seems to enact a detour of his own: only after lingering on the metaphorized absence of sound does he reintroduce human utterance. Upon doing so, he immediately points to its failings. Although Césaire’s crowd

[34] “flowers of blood that fade and scatter / in the empty wind like the screeches of babbling parrots” (2)
[35] “an aged life mendaciously smiling, its lips opened by vacated agonies” (2)
[36] “an aged poverty rotting under the sun, silently” (2)
[37] “an aged silence bursting with tepid pustules” (2)
[38] “squalling throng so astonishingly detoured from its cry as this town has been from its movement, from its meaning, not even worried” (2)

is *criarde*—squalling, like an infant or tempest or both—its cry nevertheless lacks a fundamental element. The narrator appears at once moved to anguish and exasperation when he claims the crowd is estranged from "son vrai cri, le seul qu'on eût voulu l'entendre crier parce qu'on le sent sien lui seul."[39] By incorporating the second-person pronoun "you," he attempts to assign his desire to another imagined listener. He idealizes one cry above the rest and, in doing so, invalidates the other sounds produced by the crowd. In the stanza's final line he defines the nature of this imagined utterance. What the speaker longs to hear is a protesting cry "de faim, de misère, de révolte, de haine."[40] He gestures towards the history of genocide and racial slavery in the Caribbean which have led to material and cultural deprivation. He awaits the emergence of an audible resistance in a society seemingly overdetermined by its traumatic legacies.

Scholars in the interdisciplinary field of sound studies often make what appears to be a rather straightforward observation: eyes have eyelids, but ears have no physiological mechanism for canceling out unwanted sound.[41] Nevertheless, varying modes of attention mediate our aural experiences. Human beings can adjust the scope of their auditory system by filtering information both consciously and unconsciously.[42] Césaire's narrator demonstrates his capacity for selective listening long before the crowd appears. After all, he chooses to relay only one side of his encounter with the police officer. When he does

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[39] "its true cry, the only cry you would have wanted to hear because you feel it alone belongs to this town" (2)
[40] "of hunger, of poverty, of revolt, of hatred" (3)
[41] Bijsterveld, Karin and Alexandra Supper. "Sounds Convincing: Modes of Listening and Sonic Skills in Knowledge Making." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2015.
[42] Treisman, Anne M. "Contextual cues in selective listening." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology,* vol 12, no. 4, 1960, 242-248; Wood, Noelle L., and Nelson Cowan. "The cocktail party phenomenon revisited: Attention and memory in the classic selective listening procedure of Cherry (1953)." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General,* vol. 124 no. 3, 1995, 243; Moray, Neville. *Attention: Selective processes in vision and hearing*. Routledge, 2017.

encounter the crowd, he can only describe them as "cette foule si étrangement bavarde et muette."[43] This paradoxical observation is never explained or resolved in the poem. However, if we take the narrator's listening practices into consideration, this formulation is not only possible but understandable. While his auditory system may take in all the sounds of his surrounding environment, he only attends to certain aspects of this sensory information. In emphasizing the acoustics of the *Cahier*, I want to consider the kinds of sounds the narrator acknowledges as well as those he fails to take into account. His tendencies are shaped not only by preference but by perceptual and epistemological limitations. He fulfills the role of the emigrant interwar intellectual when he leaves his homeland and returns to a country both intimately known and defamiliarized. Studies of the poem generally support the claim that the speaker comes to terms with his fellow colonized subjects and successfully merges with the collective in order to give voice to their traumatic losses.[44] This merging, however, is only ever speculative. His wish is never realized. The narrator claims to be preoccupied with the masses' revolutionary cry but readily casts himself as their spokesperson. Césaire would have been acutely aware of the risk of many voices being elided or occluded by one. As a founding father of *négritude*, he himself experienced what Peter Kalliney, discussing the Anglophone Caribbean literary scene, describes as a "sort of slippage—in which the successful individual artist becomes representative of a movement of artists, and then of an identifiable minority community" (249). I argue that although Césaire's speaker wants to inspire a unified outcry against colonial powers, he himself struggles with the task of listening. On the surface the poem seems to support the narrator's mission to speak on

[43] "this throng so strangely chattering and mute"(3)
[44] See for example James Arnold, Malachi McIntosh, and Jennifer M. Wilks.

behalf of the crowd, but I wish to analyze key instances wherein the text subverts the legitimacy of his claim.

The privileging of a singular aesthetic subjectivity is perhaps the most significant convention of lyric poetry. Césaire's long poem certainly fulfills this expectation; it not only foregrounds a first-person narrator but dramatizes the art of vocal projection. However, this chapter emphasizes the ways in which the poem's speaker is also subtly figured as a listener, albeit a reluctant one. Contemporary debates about the definition of the lyric tradition arise in part because the term is made to encompass a vast range of poetic texts.[45] Scholars such as A. James Arnold, Gregson Davis and Mara de Gennaro have applied this capacious term to the *Cahier* without interrogating how the poem situates the speaker in and against a crowd.[46] And while studies acknowledge the narrator's desire to speak for others, they do not question how his position offers a counterpoint to theories of the lyric and poetic address.[47] Although a sustained analysis of the *Cahier* as lyric in the context of lyric's critical genealogies and changing discourses is beyond the scope of my argument,[48] I would like to make a point about the confessional persona placed at the center of lyric reading. Dominant theories focus on how poems can

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[45] See Jackson, Virginia and Yopie Prins. Eds. *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology* and Hosek, Chaviva and Patricia Parker, Eds. *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, Cornell University Press, 1985.

[46] Arnold, A. James. "Cesaire's Notebook as Palimpsest: The Text before, during, and after World War II." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 35 no. 3, 2004, pp. 133-140; Davis, Gregson. "'Homecomings without Home': Representations of (Post)colonial nostos (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott." In Graziosi, Barbara and Emily Greenwood, Eds. *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Between World Literature and the Western Canon*, Oxford University Press, 2007; Gennaro, Mara de. "A Return to *The Waste Land* After Césaire's *Cahier*." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 52 no. 3, 2015, pp. 479-509.

[47] I am indebted to Simon Gikandi for this observation.

[48] For a discussion of Césaire's plays and poetry (alongside Léon-Gontran Damas) and lyricism, see Noland, Carrie. *Voices of Negritude in Modernist Print: Aesthetic Subjectivity, Diaspora, and the Lyric Regime.* Columbia UP, 2015.

stage, as T.S. Eliot conceived of it, the individual mind speaking to itself. Similarly, Helen Vendler writes that the genre is primarily concerned with "the performance of the mind in *solitary* speech."[49] In 1957 Northrop Frye turned our attention to the unacknowledged audience for such performances, arguing that there could be "no word for the audience of the lyric" because "the poet, so to speak, turns his back on his listeners" (250). What Césaire's poem makes clear, however, is that the "lyric I" need not commit to or idealize the conceit of total self-enclosure. The "lyric I" can exist in relation to a collective, even if this collective poses a problem, whether for a model of poetics or political change. Césaire's speaker, then, is no longer the only figure being "overheard." Just as he mutes his first interlocutor, so, too, do we risk ignoring other voices sounding on the poem's "lower frequencies."[50]

Though the speaker accuses the crowd as being "detoured from its cry," the poem sketches his own vocal diversions as he continuously attempts to construct and fulfill his role as a spokesperson. In his work on postcolonial narration, Simon Gikandi outlines how "the doctrine of modernity transfers the authority of power and utterance in the Caribbean from the colonizer to the black male" (19). Césaire's readers are repeatedly drawn to the singular voice of an unidentified black man at the epicenter of the poem's seismic activity. While this voice condemns as eloquently as it despairs, I want to insist that the narrator's coming into language is necessarily a coming into listening. In the section that follows I provide a brief outline of the development of crowd theory and consider how it both shapes and is shaped by racist beliefs. Next, I take up the under-examined question of crowd speech in relation to Édouard Glissant's writing on

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[49] See Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets.* Harvard UP, 1997, p. 1-2.
[50] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. Random House, 1952.

Caribbean vernacular language. I then develop my argument through close analysis of key passages to demonstrate how the *Cahier* stages an oscillation between the wish to project one's voice and a sense of complicity with the colonial project. The relationship that unfolds between speaker and crowd does not harbor the antagonism he displays towards the police officer. Instead, his struggle to hear and interpret their utterances is characterized by ambiguity. I want suggest this ambiguity does not simply arise from the narrator's selective hearing but from a series of encounters marked by *mis*hearing. Sound functions as more than a motivic element—it actively structures the narrator's relationship to the masses he aspires to lead. While both the speaker and the crowd are colonial subjects, that category is not homogenous. Reading the *Cahier* as a sonorous space allows us to interrogate the narrator's intertwined poetic and political desires while asking: what is it about listening that exceeds hearing?

Crowd Control

The social and political tumult of the 19th century led to new conceptions of the crowd as part of a larger inquiry into the changing power relations of modern society in the West. The question of social control became central as the growth of cities created urban masses no longer bound to the same pre-existing hierarchies. Beginning with the "delinquent crowd" of Scipio Sighele, mass psychology slowly assumed its position as a scientific discipline. Although the European academy initially resisted the development of a field that straddled both sociology and psychology, scholars such as Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon attempted to delineate the ways in which the modern phenomenon of the crowd differed from pre-modern collectivities. Social scientists sought to

understand what they deemed a new public assemblage, which emerged concurrently with the spread of industrialization and urbanization, and its relationship to popular sovereignty. These explorations in mass psychology were an attempt not only to analyze crowd behavior but to govern it.[51] The roots of these interdisciplinary studies were in the classification procedures of psychiatric pathology and criminal anthropology. Le Bon and Tarde argued that the crowd's regression into irrational or atavistic behavior was inevitable. According to these thinkers, the chaotic throng could only be controlled by a charismatic leader. From this perspective, crowd actions are random and destructive; such frameworks do not allow for the possibility that coherent or rational collective beliefs might arise in response to social injustices or limitations.[52] With events such as the Paris Commune entrenched in the public mind, the crowd's existence was viewed as a threat to the established social order. Furthermore, classical crowd theory posited an antagonistic relationship not only between the crowd and society, but between the crowd and the individual. Scholars commonly held that individuals lost themselves in the frenzy and fervor of the crowd. It was this dissolution of self which then opened the floodgates for mindless hostility.

The supposedly brutish nature of such collectivities drew repeated comparisons to women, children, the working class, and the poor. These were all figures with suggestible minds and primitive passions which oppose the Western rationality that presumably resides in the individual Western male alone. Criminalized and pathologized from the outset, it is not surprising that the crowd also drew comparisons to "the children of some

[51] See Jeffrey Schnapp and Matthew Tiews's *Crowds* (2006) and Christian Borch's *The Politics of Crowds: An Alternative History of Society* (2012).
[52] Le Bon, Gustave. *Psychologie des foules.* F. Alcan, 1895.

savage races (especially perhaps of the Negro race)," an equation which conflates childlike ignorance with racialized barbarism.[53] In the end, however, the crowd's naïve lack of self-awareness cannot mitigate the violent threat it poses. The ease with which thinkers asserted this equivalence makes the question of the colonized or "colored" crowd all the more complex. Frantz Fanon, Césaire's pupil, understood this conflation and shed light on how Europeans envisioned such crowds as threats: "Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or end… General de Gaulle speaks of 'the yellow multitudes' and Francois Mauriac of the black, brown and yellow masses which soon will be unleashed" (33). If dominant crowd theories painted crowds as regressive, then colonial crowds were even an even more pressing issue.

The crowd is a site for exploring and ultimately affirming a particular set of notions about bodies, instincts, and sensations that hinges on the emergence of the repressed and the fear of contagion. Crowd theory remained a focal point for social scientific inquiry during and after the world wars. At stake was the issue of political action and an as yet undetermined democratic subject.[54] Elias Canetti makes a crucial intervention with his *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*), an impressive example of twentieth-century intellectual history and ethnography. He shifts the conversation by framing the crowd not simply as something that exists or operates outside the social but that is, in fact, a potential social actor. Diverging from Freud's popular conception, he argues that crowds were not necessarily destructive; they could also be intelligent and

[53] See LeBon and McDougall, William. *An Introduction to Social Psychology*. Boston UP, 1923, 97.
[54] Schnapp, Jeffrey and Matthew Tiews, editors. *Crowds.* Stanford University Press, 2006.

independent of a leader.[55] By the twentieth century and onwards, key political figures were beginning to see the working class in particular as an untapped political force for progress. Both classical and contemporary crowd theory are dominated by the image of the illogical, hostile mob, but divergent views have also emerged.[56] One way to articulate what Stefan Jonsson and other cultural historians identify as a primary rift in crowd theory is to state that these social theories either evinced a belief that the crowd threatened society with anarchy or the crowd represented the promise and potential of democracy. With this in mind, it is important to note that social scientists were not the only ones fixated on the figure of the crowd. These particular ways of viewing the masses permeated other domains and shaped political and aesthetic discourses beyond the realm of social psychological thought. The question of a people in flux in relation to concrete social action becomes all the more salient in the context of anticolonial movements and postcolonial thought.

One Mouth among Many

Sound is a crucial but nevertheless ignored dimension in classical crowd theory. It is dealt with sparingly and almost always in conjunction with language. The politics of speech in particular have been explored with respect to the persuasive rhetoric of the charismatic crowd leader.[57] However, the speech of the masses, as well as any other

[55] Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. Trans. Macmillan, 1962.
[56] More recently, the concept of the crowd has undergone further transformations in works such as Hardt and Negri's *Multitudes* (2005) and Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015). As public life expands further into the virtual realm, discussions of the crowd have begun taking increasingly globalized networks and new media technologies into account.
[57] See Daria Frezza's *The Leader and the Crowd: Democracy in American Public Discourse 1880-1941* (2010) and Jeremy C. Young's *The Age of Charisma: Leaders, Followers, and Emotions in American Society, 1870-1940* (2016).

sounds they might produce, has garnered little attention. This lack exists in part because mob thinking (and thus mob speaking) is largely viewed as imitative. If the crowd manages to articulate something, it surely will be a slogan or piece of rhetoric that the leader has provided. If it is in the crowd's nature to be riotous, then "the people" become synonymous with pandemonium.[58] Figurations of the unruly crowd consistently refer to their inherently cacophonous character, but this cacophony itself is rarely explored.[59]As one might expect of a region characterized by the co-existence of multiple colonial, creole, and indigenous languages, the question of "proper" speech has long been a preoccupation of Caribbean thought. And while the criteria for determining propriety here might refer to accent, diction, syntax, prestige, or any number of grammatical or sociolinguistic factors, one must also consider how a more open-ended notion of aurality might play a role. In *Le Discours antillais* Edouard Glissant writes:

> From the outset (that is from the moment Creole is forged as a medium of communication between slave and master), the spoken imposes on the slave its particular syntax. For Caribbean man, the word is first and foremost sound. Noise is essential to speech. Din is discourse. ... Since speech was forbidden, slaves camouflaged the word under the provocative intensity of the scream. It was taken to be nothing but the call of a

[58] Quiet crowds are not really crowds in this sense. Rather, they are captive audiences at a concert hall, in a classroom, a film screening or other sanctioned mode of public assembly. These spaces not only silence noise by way of implicit (and sometimes explicit) dictates; they also help to foster certain kinds of contemplative listening.

[59] Throughout the twentieth century, however, a certain strain of non-academic writing about the urban masses did focus on sound. Numerous tracts on noise pollution were published in Europe and North America, and noise abatement campaigns flourished. For studies of anti-noise movements in relation to urban life, class, race, music and technology see Karin Bijsterveld, *The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age*; Beth Meszaros, "Infernal Sound Cues: Aural Geographies and the Politics of Noise"; and Clare Corbould, "Streets, Sounds and Identity in Interwar Harlem." Urs Staheli writes that the crowd's noisiness is "not only a nuisance, but also the celebration of the chaotic and equalizing logic of the crowd" (Urs qtd. in S&T's book). Indeed, social scientists observed that a high level of social homogeneity was common in collective phenomenon. This equalizing logic was a real problem when one considers the ways in which concerns about noise pollution were used, however poorly, to mask fears about dissolving race and class-based borders.

wild animal. This is how the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving it into the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise. (123)

Crucial here is how Glissant foregrounds sound in order to get at the materiality of language. He is, in some ways, directly opposing the linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure who tries to deny the significance of sound in speech in his theory of the sign. For Saussure, sound functions as "merely something ancillary, a material the language uses… Linguistic signals are not in essence phonetic. They are not physical in any way. They are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another."[60] He sidelines the materiality of speech but, at the same time, is forced to acknowledge that sonic distinctions constitute language. If Saussure had to incorporate the fragmented, multi-layered utterances of Césaire's crowd into his framework, he would only factor them in as a kind of disruption. For Glissant, however, the so-called noise—that is, the creolized language—of the Caribbean crowd is a vocal terrain worthy of exploration. In a way, his writing confirms the real and persistent mishearing so evident in the racist assertions of classical crowd theorists. The other's language is always heard as noise. Moreover, the perceived misuse of language is not incidental but integral to colonial stereotypes. Take, for instance, the term barbarous. Synonymous with notions of savagery and cruelty, it is etymologically linked to the Greek term *bárbaros*, meaning foreigner, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit *barbara*, meaning stammering. Colonial institutions have long positioned themselves as the suppressors of barbarism and used the notion of a *mission civilisatrice* to justify atrocities committed against native and enslaved populations. In Glissant's formulation, noise has

[60] de Saussure, Ferdinand. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Trans. 1916, p. 116-117.

nothing to do with deficiencies and everything to do with disguises. His writing helps us to ask: how does Césaire's crowd work with and against this vocal materiality? And how does the camouflaged word or provocative scream complicate what one might call conditions of intelligibility?

Césaire's preoccupation with the "squalling throng so astonishingly detoured from its cry" echoes a preoccupation with the vacillating sociopolitical contexts from which the poem repeatedly materialized. His revisions between 1939 and 1956 coincide with the start of World War II, the initial phases of the Cold War, and France's reorganization of its colonies into *départements d'outre-mer*. Because a key part of crowd theory centered on manipulating the masses, regulating their literal and metaphorical "voice" was imperative. The dispossessed's need to be heard only grew in the twentieth century, and the confusion of tongues took place on an increasingly international stage. The *Cahier*'s narrator describes the Martinican crowd, in almost pitying terms, as a "foule qui ne sait pas faire foule, cette foule, on s'en rend compte, si parfaitement seule sous ce soleil."[61] Although this crowd is a plural entity comprised of individuals, it remains isolated and insular. Perhaps they fail at knowing how to be a proper crowd because they are caught between these two extreme poles: crowd as anarchic threat and crowd as democratic potential. What one encounters in the poem is an exploration of the limits and possibilities of political radicalization. Nick Nesbitt writes that the poem "simultaneously articulates both the aesthetic semblance of an autonomous black subjectivity and its immanent critique," and I wish to assert that the figure of the crowd is a crucial component of this immanent critique (111). The narrator is first and

[61] "throng which does not know how to throng, this throng, so perfectly alone under the sun" (3)

foremost a striving poet-politician. What readers witness is the staging of a kind of political desire that never comes to fruition.[62] As many scholars have noted,[63] the narrator slips into the conditional mood when he outlines his ambitions, claiming: "j'arriverais lisse et jeune dans ce pays mien et je dirais à ce pays… je lui dirais: Embrassez-moi sans crainte... Et si je ne sais que parler, c'est pour vous que je parlerais."[64] The use of subjunctive phrases emphasizes that these wishes exist in a hypothetical state, one contrary to reality. The poem situates the narrator's *in media res,* self-fashioning as a future political representative of the mute and the powerless. When he asserts, "'Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir,'"[65] he forges a link between his voice and the possibility of a universal emancipation to come. The masses are frequently presented as abject rather than agential, but the tension between those two states complicates both the narrator's desire to speak and the reader's impulse to reduce the poem to a celebration of black pride and black freedom.

The privileging of the "lyrical I" dovetails with the "great man" approach to historical and literary narratives. This perspective posits the exceptional individual's capacity not only to understand society but perhaps to change that society. Unlike the masses, his actions have real effects and, just as crucially, his interiority has real depth.

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[62] I am grateful to Ben C. Baer for drawing this to my attention.
[63] See for example Kalikoff, Hedy. "Gender, Genre and Geography in Aime Cesaire's Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal." *Callaloo*, vol. 18 no. 2, 1995, pp. 492-505; and Gennaro, Mara de. "A Return to *The Waste Land* After Césaire's *Cahier*." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 52 no. 3, 2015, pp. 479-509.
[64] "I would arrive sleek and young in this land of mine and I would say to this land… I would say to it: 'Embrace me without fear… and if all I can do is speak, it is for you I shall speak'" (13).
[65] "'My mouth shall be the mouth of those calamities that have no mouth, my voice the freedom of those who break down in the prison holes of despair'" (13).

The figure of the "great man" is especially prevalent in studies of marginalized cultures, and its allure is evident in much of the scholarship on the *Notebook*. Readers generally interpret the poem as a univocal text, one that reverberates with the narrator's vibrant language alone. Scholars have described the speaker's voice as "messianic" (McIntosh), "transcendental" (Garraway), and "prophetic" (Arnold). The point is not to dismiss this litany of terms, but to see how attending to the presence of the resonant crowd qualifies or alters our understanding of these descriptors. Scholars superficially engage with Césaire's crowd in order to further distinguish the narrator whom they view as, in the words of Beverley Ormerod, a "Redeemer." The poem seems to focus on staging his explicit desire to function as a mouthpiece for the people, but this desire is never fulfilled. The poem is about the self-revelation of a singular consciousness, true, but it is also about social strategies. The speaker wants to inspire, persuade, and fight for the masses. But to what extent does he want an audience and to what he extent does he want agents? As readers we detect the piecemeal construction of the infrastructure of a leader's will to lead. We can discern the monumental plans and designs for that political edifice, but we never see the culmination of what is being built or mounted.

In focusing on these aspirations, scholars have failed to notice that throughout the poem the narrator is represented not only as a speaker but as a listener. The distinction Jonathan Sterne draws in *The Audible Past* between the biological "faculty of hearing" and cultivated "practices of listening" is a crucial one.[66] Several decades before Sterne, Roland Barthes considered in his 1977 essay "Écoute" an array of human auditory modes, ranging from the animalistic and instinctual to the highly nuanced and trained.

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[66] Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past.* Duke University Press, 2003.

Hearing is a physiological fact and a bodily function while listening is a critical praxis mediated by changing socio-cultural norms. Film theorist Mladen Dolar goes further when he asserts:

> hearing is after meaning, the signification which can be linguistically spelled out; listening is, rather, being on the lookout for sense, something that announces itself in the voice beyond meaning. We could say that hearing is entwined with understanding … while listening implies an opening toward a sense which is undecidable, precarious, elusive, and which sticks to the voice. (148)

One might say that Césaire's speaker struggles because he is only "after meaning" at its most intelligible. Nevertheless, there are passages wherein he seems to be "on the lookout for sense." The narrator remembers "la carcasse de bois" that was his childhood home (6). He then summarizes the passing of months and seasons until he arrives at Christmas. He recounts the holiday cheer that awakens the inert town, even as fears mount "de-peur-que-ça-ne-suffise-pas, / de-peur-que-ça-ne-manque, / de-peur-qu'on-ne-s'embête" (7).[67] Unsurprisingly, he turns to aural imagery to describe how radically the festivities transform the island and its inhabitants. The revels take place in "une petite église pas intimidante, qui se laissât emplir bienveillamment par les rires, les chuchotis, les confidences, les déclarations amoureuses, les médisances et la cacophonie gutturale d'un chantre bien d'attaque et aussi de gais copains et de franches luronnes."[68] The entire village, he says, "n'est plus qu'un bouquet de chants, et l'on est bien à l'intérieur, et l'on en

[67] "about-not-having-enough, / about-running-short, / about-getting-bored" (7)
[68] "an unimposing little church, which would benevolently make room for the laughter, the whispers, the secrets, the love talk, the gossip and the guttural cacophony of a plucky singer and also boisterous pals and shameless hussies" (7)

mange du bon, et l'on en boit du réjouissant."[69] Tellingly, the holiday scene becomes submerged in sound:

> …et l'on rit, et l'on chante, et les refrains fusent à perte de vue comme des cocotiers:
>
> Alleluia
> Kyrie eleison... leison... leison,
> Christe eleison... leison... leison.
>
> Et ne sont pas seulement les bouches qui chantent, mais les mains, mais les pieds, mais les fesses, mais les sexes, et la créature toute entière qui se liquéfie en sons, voix et rythme.
>
> Arrivée au sommet de son ascension, la joie crève comme un nuage. Les chants ne s'arrêtent pas, mais ils roulent maintenant inquiets et lourds par les vallées de la peur, les tunnels de l'angoisse et les feux de l'enfer.
>
> …you laugh, and you sing, and the refrains flare on and on like cocopalms:
>
> Alleluia
> Kyrie eleison… leison… leison,
> Christe eleison… leison… leison.
>
> And not only do the mouths sing, but the hands, the feet, the buttocks, the genitals, and
> your entire being liquifies into sounds, voices, and rhythm.
>
> At the peak of its ascent, joys burst like a cloud. The songs don't stop, but roll now anxious and heavy through the valleys of fear, the tunnels of anguish and the fires of hell. (8)

Carrie Noland claims that this communal singing "dissolves into meaningless noise" (72). She fails to realize how and why this episode marks an important move beyond the intelligibly linguistic. The phrase *Kyrie eleison*—Lord, have mercy—is both a prayer of

[69] "turns into a bouquet of singing, and you are cozy in there, and you eat good, and you drink hearty" (8).

thanks and a plea. I do not think it a coincidence that within Christian liturgy this line is used in multiple litanies which employ a call-and-response. More startling are the next lines, which comingle affective extremes. Joy is not divorced from anxiety and fear; they inhabit the same hellish world. This musical layering brings to mind the sorrow songs interpolated throughout Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. More specifically, Douglass draws attention to the misconception that singing spirituals, among slaves, is proof of happiness. He writes, "It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy."[70] Césaire's narrator, however, still struggles connect the melodic cries which emerge in celebration and the cry of revolt for which he longs.

When scholars *do* acknowledge the poem's collective sounds, they dismiss them as "incomplete" and "unexpressive" (McIntosh 82). Some, like Malachi McIntosh, reference what is perceived as an "immediate gap" between the narrator's articulations and the crowd's "nonwords" (82). The narrator himself would agree with this assessment, because he continues to perceive that "cette foule désolée sous le soleil, ne participant à rien de ce qui s'exprime, s'affirme, se libère au grand jour de cette terre sienne." (3).[71] I do not find it productive to push against the literature simply by denying the existence of a discursive breach. Rather, I want to interpret this gap as a traversable acoustic space where intelligibility and noise coexist. I want to think of the seemingly non-communicative as both communicable and communal. The term "communicable" here functions in both senses of the word: as expression and as contagion. I draw attention to

[70] Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Webb and Chapman, 1846, 15.
[71] "desolate throng" as "not connected with anything that is expressed, asserted, released in broad earth daylight" (3).

this dual meaning because another dominant approach to the *Cahier*'s marginalized crowd relies on a misdiagnosis. Jennifer Wilks, for example, refers to the people's fragmented sound patterns as "aphasia" (816). Might one read their utterances not as a language disorder but as a dissonant reworking of speech? I posit that the crowd's paradoxical mute chattering is not a linguistic or cognitive rupture but a suturing of difference brought on by the sustained loss and trauma of the colonial. While the narrator's eloquent language has garnered sustained attention, no one has yet considered how his encounters with the crowd affect his speech. More specifically, I want to suggest that his repeated use of idiosyncratic, onomatopoetic words such as "voum rooh" and "eia" stem from his combined attempts to parse their language and to craft a language that will inspire political change. Both terms seem to function as necessary interjections in rituals meant to conjure a vision of black freedom. Take, for example, the following passage:

> voum rooh oh
> voum rooh oh
> à charmer les serpents à conjurer les morts
> voum rooh oh
> à contraindre la pluie à contrarir les raz de marée
> voum rooh oh
> à empêcher que ne tourne l'ombre
> voum rooh oh
> que mes cieux à moi s'ouvrent
> —moi sur une route, enfant, mâchant une racine de canne à sucre
> —traîné homme sur une route sanglant une corde au cou
> —debout au milieu d'un cirque immense, sur mon front noir une couronne de daturas
> voum rooh
> s'envoler

> "voum rooh oh

to charm the snakes to conjure the dead
voum rooh oh
to compel the rain to turn back the tidal waves
voum rooh oh
to keep the shade from moving
voum rooh oh
that my own skies may open

—me on a road, a child, chewing sugar cane root
—a dragged man on a blood-spattered road a rope around his neck
—standing in the center of a huge circus, on my black forehead
a crown of daturas
voum rooh
to fly off" ( )

A desperate question follows this section: "Mais qui tourne ma voix? qui écorche ma voix? Me fourrant dans la gorge mille crocs de bambou."[72] The narrator identifies the culprit: "C'est toi poids de l'insulte et cent ans de coups de fouet … cent ans de mes soins juste à ne pas mourir."[73] The chanting of "voum rooh" is an attempt to regain control over his voice and how it is used. When the colonial apparatus cannot transform colonized subjects into complicit agents, it "stuffs" their throats to stifle any protest. The onomatopoetic interjection connects the black child in the canefields to the black man in the lynching tree to the black spectacle on the white stage who will, ultimately, succeed in flying away "vers d'autres étoiles … l'heure où nul n'y pense."[74] Within the prose-poem, the speaker continuously attempts to rework the French language so that it might transmit and circulate his revolutionary thought. The possibilities and limits of language and voice are often the explicit subject of his meditations. He searches for "le secret des

[72] "But who misleads my voice? / who grates my voice? Stuffing my / throat with a thousand bamboo fangs" (21)
[73] "It is you weight of the insult and a hundred years of whip lashes … one hundred years of my effort simply to stay alive" (21)
[74] "toward the other stars … when no one expects it" (21)

grandes communications" which, for him, are linked with "grandes combustions" (12).[75] The narrator's reluctant listening inspires a different kind of experimental language, one not tied to his neologisms or use of archaic, botanical, and medical language. The crowd's sounds demonstrate how the blurring or effacement of linear syntax, phonemes, and morphemes need not erase linguistic expressivity altogether.

Although Césaire's readers appear reluctant to relinquish the "great man" narrative, the narrator's view of his role within the community does evolve beyond this paradigm. As the poem draws to a close, he no longer critiques the crowd for its inability or refusal to release a revolutionary cry. Instead, he wishes to be "l'amant de cet unique peuple."[76] He becomes aware of the extent to which his ego drives him, and he wants to learn how to rebel against "toute vanité" (37).[77] He asks the world, "Tenez, suis-je assez humble? Ai-je assez de cals aux genoux?" not, I think, ironically but with a sincere desire to know (41).[78] Césaire's famously enigmatic conclusion has puzzled scholars for decades, and many choose not to treat it in their analyses. McIntosh, for example, claims that the poem's ending reveals how the interwar emigrant intellectual depends upon the whiteness he derides to bolster his position above the masses. I, however, locate in these final lines the most significant piece of evidence for the narrator's radical about-face. When he extolls a desire to "lie ma noire vibration au nombril même du monde," he is cognizant of his inherent connection, rendered viscerally, to a collective.[79] By linking black vibration to the "navel of the world," he recognizes the power of resonance and the

[75] "the secret of great communications" and "great combustions"(12)
[76] "the lover of this unique people" (37)
[77] "resist any vanity" (37)
[78] "Look am I humble enough? Have I enough calluses on my knees?" (41)
[79] "bind my black vibration to the very navel of the world" (51)

world as a place primarily structured by the possibility of attunement (51). When he declares, “lie-moi, fraternité âpre / puis, m'étranglant de ton lasso d'étoiles / monte, Colombe / monte,” he is offering to sacrifice his ability to speak in order to rise with his community (51).[80] Up until this point the narrator has been preoccupied with his destiny as a mouthpiece for the masses. Moreover, he has observed and judged them in ways that imply a degree of critical distance. This conclusion suggests a willingness to abolish this distance.

A crucial marker of the narrator’s growing humility is his willingness to be strangled. This line at once conjures and dispels the horrific history of lynching as he bares his throat and vocal cords to a “lasso d'étoiles.” The poem’s ending contains the seeds of a decision to cast aside his ego. Only now does he realize that it may suffice to be a member of the “bitter brotherhood” without electing himself as its leader. Nevertheless, the speaker does not completely give up on the power of utterance, intelligible or otherwise, in the fight against colonialism. He tells us that in “le grand trou noir où je voulais me noyer l'autre lune / c'est là que je veux pêcher maintenant la langue maléfique.”[81] Rather than give himself up to the “great black hole” of death, he commits to wrangling with “the malevolent tongue” which, I want to suggest, first appeared unacknowledged in the poem’s opening dismissal of the police officer. By the poem’s end, the speaker learns that not every crowd is an audience for “this contempt, this freedom, this audacity” he so forcefully presents (5). The ending is in many ways tied to an earlier passage that follows the infamous tram scene wherein the narrator smiles at the

[80] “bind me, bitter brotherhood / then, strangling me with your lasso of stars / rise, Dove / rise” (51)
[81] “the great black hole where a moon ago I wanted to drown / it is there I will now fish the malevolent tongue” (51).

white women sneering at another black man and later acknowledges his cowardice and complicity. Here the narrator makes an imaginative leap to admit to the implied audience and himself:

> Je me cachais derrière une vanité stupide le destin m'appelait j'étais caché derrière et voici l'homme par
> terre, sa très fragile défense dispersée,
> ses maximes sacrées foulées aux pieds, ses déclamations pédantesques rendant du vent par chaque blessure.
> voici l'homme par terre
> et son âme est comme nue
>
> I was hiding behind a stupid vanity destiny called me
> I was hiding behind it and suddenly there was a man on the ground,
> his feeble defenses scattered,
> his sacred maxims trampled underfoot, his pedantic rhetoric
> oozing air through each wound.
> there is a man on the ground
> and his soul is almost naked (31-32)

Whether one reads the scene as the juxtaposition of two separate individuals or as a kind of psychic split within the narrator, the principle effect remains the same. The verse illuminates on the narrator's inherent weaknesses and the ways in which his thirst for radical political change, no matter how necessary, have led him to adopt "feeble defenses" and "pedantic rhetoric." Only when he sheds the artifice which creates an ever-growing rift between him and his people will he be able to fulfill the role he believes he can play. I want to suggest that Césaire's pupil Frantz Fanon unknowingly articulated the knowledge the narrator struggles to accept: "Or le fellah, le chômeur, l'affamé, ne prétend pas à la vérité. Il ne dit pas qu'il est la vérité, car il l'est dans son être même"

(51). “Now the fellah, the unemployed man, the starving native do not lay a claim to the truth; they do not *say* that they represent the truth, for they *are* the truth” (38, emphasis in original). This equivalence is what the narrator fails to comprehend in spite of or perhaps because of his colonial education. His critiques of the crowd as senseless, aimless, and inarticulate lose their potency by the poem's conclusion. The fact of their blackness and their living language within a system of racial dispossession and violence *is* a revolutionary cry in and of itself. Haun Saussy, referencing J.L. Austin, writes that “[t]he nominalism that would make crowd a mere designation in the mind links with the verbal magic that ‘does things with words,’ for to describe a crowd is, in a more than phantasmatic way, to summon it.”[82] Césaire’s crowd is not a silent specter but an intricately sounded one. The *Notebook*’s acoustic field is not an unmediated recording but an engagement with sound that amplifies invectives hurled at the colonial project.

[82] Saussy, Haun. “Crowds, Number, and Mass in China.” *Crowds,* edited by Schnapp and Tiews, Stanford University Press, 2006, 262-65.

Frantz Fanon and the BBC's Resistant Frequencies

It would be wrong to say that the principle of visibility governs all technologies of power.
—Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*

But it is wonderful that we do have the radio, because at least there's a chance that we are sharing this with others.
—Kamau Brathwaite, "Nation Language and Other Revolutions"

Broadcasting Empire, Broadcasting Revolution

In his acclaimed study *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1985), Jacques Attali characterizes the state as "a gigantic, monopolizing noise emitter, and at the same time, a generalized eavesdropping device" (7). His description draws attention both to the recapitulations of dominant narratives and to the need for surveillance and regulation. By establishing sound as essential to the ordering of difference and knowledge production, Attali reveals how noise becomes a measure of political power. In the early and mid-twentieth century communications technologies offered British and French officials new ways to disseminate and reinforce imperial values. Both empires tackled the administrative challenge of maintaining and monitoring links between the distant corners of their territories through several means, including censuses, surveys, and statistics. In the aftermath of World War II, however, they could no longer ignore their waning political power. England and France began deploying radio sets, relay stations, and shortwave receivers as defenses against the threat of dissolution in a period of increasing uncertainty. Their goal was twofold: to affirm the rights of the colonizers and to suppress the will of the colonized.

The emergence of commercial radio industries necessitated the development of new infrastructures to oversee licensing policies, frequency allocations, and technical standards. Broadcasts gradually became part of everyday life, even for groups who were not initially perceived as the target audience. Scholars such as Gerd Horten, Melissa Dinsman, and Priya Satia have analyzed the ways in which early radio technology was intimately connected to warfare and propaganda campaigns.[83] The threat of German manipulation motivated the building of local stations in the British West Indies, as did later fears of American neo-colonial economic involvement. Radio sets appeared in Algerian households only after the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) began pirating airwaves to spread news of the resistance. The Caribbean, where more than one island has been traded between the two imperial powers, and Algeria, subject to French rule for over a century, are compelling sites for the analysis of imperial transmissions. The radio was but one aspect of a larger sensory regime in both territories. But as global struggles for liberation began to gain traction, that same technology simultaneously facilitated projects of radical self-determination. The quotidian act of listening generated counterpublics whose interpretive practices disrupted the empire's cultural, political, and economic circuits. Even within the framework of colonial domination, all transmissions were subject to interpretation. As Joy Elizabeth Hayes notes, broadcast communication is "a social process or practice rather than a finished product."[84] In Algeria and the

[83] See Horten, Gerd. *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II*. University of California Press, 2003; Dinsman, Melissa. *Modernism at the Microphone: Radio, Propaganda, and Literary Aesthetics during World War II*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015; Satia, Priya. "War, Wireless, and Empire: Marconi and the British Warfare State, 1896–1903." *Technology and Culture*, vol. 51 no. 4, 2010, pp. 829-853.
[84] Hayes, Joy Elizabeth. *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920-1950.* University of Arizona Press, 2000.

Caribbean, the airwaves became a forum, however ephemeral, where race, nationality, and citizenship could be contested.

In 1970 the critic Kenneth Ramchand concluded that London "was indisputably the West Indian literary capital."[85] His grim observation was rooted in the fact that so many West Indian writers, during and after World War II, had moved to the city and successfully published. Several London-based publishers and literary agents aligned themselves with upcoming writers not only from the Caribbean but all colonized territories. It is worth noting, however, that West Indian voices were circulating in the air as well as on the page. In 1940 Jamaican writer and social activist Una Marson created a program feature for the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) General Overseas Service entitled *Calling the West Indies*. It allowed Caribbean servicemen based in London to send messages to relatives back home and raise morale during the war. Over a six-year period Marson transformed the show by organizing on-air readings of poetry and prose, cultural discussions, and literary criticism. Renamed *Caribbean Voices,* the weekly, thirty-minute program would eventually generate a transnational network of authors, critics, producers, and listeners dedicated to creating, curating, and consuming a nascent West Indian literature. Eight years prior in 1932, the BBC had launched its Empire Service department, but the corporation acknowledged it was "essentially British in character, likely to appeal to 'white' populations in the colonies."[86] Produced in London and transmitted to the islands from 1943 to 1958, *Caribbean Voices* was unique in that it specifically targeted West Indian audiences.

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[85] Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. Faber, 1970, p. 63.
[86] "Introductory Memorandum on Broadcast and the Colonial Empire," confidential memo prepared by British Broadcasting Service, 5 in "Broadcasting and Radio Distribution in the Colonies and Policy for Development of" (1935), CO 323/1338/5, NA.

Following Marson's departure in 1946, the Irish-born Englishman Henry Swanzy became editor and producer until 1954. His dedication to authors and staff was legendary. He aided struggling writers by arranging for work in the corporation's other departments and sharing his contacts in the publishing world. The show launched the careers of major West Indian writers including George Lamming, Samuel Selvon, Edgar Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris, and V.S. Naipaul, who later were dubbed the "Windrush Generation." Although the British grouped Caribbean writers under a single banner, these authors were heterogeneous in terms of their national origins, political views, and aesthetic projects. Swanzy's explicit requests for certain formal and thematic properties, what he referred to as "local colour," began to shape the submissions he received. He would come to lament this result, as it led to an excess of forced provincialism from writers attempting to appeal to his tastes. Because of Swanzy's largely positive reputation amongst his West Indian contributors and colleagues, scholars have been hesitant to criticize too harshly. However, this desire for Caribbean authenticity is clearly rooted in a kind of paternalistic exoticism, as Gail Low acknowledges. He not only claimed that such a quality must exist but also that he, a discerning Briton, could readily distinguish it from the inauthentic. Nevertheless, Swanzy's standards of taste were not the only ones that would shape the program.[87] He instructed his staff to distribute audience questionnaires throughout the colonies. Jamaican literary agent Gladys Lindo and her husband Cedric were largely responsible for collecting potential submissions and for relaying the survey feedback. These responses had recurring themes, and the issue of linguistic accents was foremost

[87] I want to note here that Hyacinth M. Simpson reads some hesitance in Swanzy, despite his enthusiasm for the show. Simpson writes that Swanzy "felt that the primacy given to the speaking voice over the printed page as necessitated by radio could undermine the literariness of the works broadcast" (13).

among them. While many listeners accepted or even preferred the use of upper class British accents, they reacted negatively to a Trinidadian reader attempting to ventriloquize a Jamaican character, for example. They took issue with the fact that vocal delivery might bear no relation to a text's specific geographical origin or setting.

While England was preoccupied with creating programs for its colonized subjects, France established Radio-Alger to reinforce an unblemished sense of national identity amongst its own citizens. An echo of transmissions from Paris, these shows offered occasional acknowledgements of Algerian culture in the form of native music, humiliating reminders of France's conquest, and references to the failed revolt of 1830. Aside from these interjections, Algerian social life was relegated to the margins, and broadcasts consisted of "Des Français parlent aux Français" (56).[88] Frantz Fanon's 1959 essay "Ici la voix de l'Algérie" appears in *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* and chronicles radio's complex reception in Algerian society.[89] He perceives the radio as a concrete manifestation of bourgeois values, alongside cars, villas, and refrigerators (53). But, perhaps most importantly, it was also a metaphorical tether to the metropolis, one offering a powerful version of reality that restored occupiers to their rightful place. Despite radio's wide distribution amongst the French, Algerian natives remained disinterested. Fanon's essay posits two causes for this initial apathy. The first addresses the significant economic divide within the colonial state: only members of the elite could afford these new commodities. The second is that French cultural norms meant that broadcasts were too vulgar for family consumption. Once he outlines these reasons,

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[88] "Frenchmen speaking to Frenchmen" (74).

[89] All French quotations are taken from Fanon, Frantz. *L'An Cinq, de la Révolution Algérienne*. Francois Maspero, 1959. All English quotations are taken from Haakon Chevalier's translation *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press/Monthly Review, 1956.

however, Fanon dismisses this "sociological approach" as too limited. A few paragraphs later, he weighs in with two alternative explanations that manage to be both broader in scope and more nuanced. Because the radio originated with the colonizers, natives could see no immediate use for it. And because it extended the colonizers' cultural and sensorial influence, the colonized could not objectively evaluate any potential merits. Whatever benefits this new technology might have offered, its primary function was as an exclusive system of language, messages, and transmissions. Fanon reminds us that a dominated population "ne participe jamais à ce monde de signes" (56).[90]

As a trained psychiatrist and Martinican native, Fanon aimed to be both an expert listener and an expert decoder of similarly obscure, internal sign-worlds. If one holds this view of his clinical duties, his interest in another colonized culture's improvised strategies for listening and deciphering becomes less surprising. Fanon extends his critique of racist colonialism by moving beyond what Martin Jay calls "the scopic regime" and addressing the role of sound. He suggests the isolated French settlers valued the sense of safety and serenity radio offered. Once the FLN co-opted this technology, however, the colonizers found themselves waging battle on land and on air. Radio became a subversive tool in the hands of the oppressed. Its serenity and safety were annihilated once the technology entered Algerian social life. The reporters who detailed the triumphs and losses of rebel forces at home and throughout the Arab world had no interest in offering listeners a false sense of security. Rather than placate fears, they had to draw civilians into the fight. Radio created a space for Algerian families that was simultaneously public and private. It brought them into intimate contact with the

[90] "never participates in this world of signs" (73)

resistance. Fanon's essay focuses on how listeners engaged with scrambled messages, revealing how such content, even when half-heard and half-imagined, threatened colonial power.

Fanon signals, again and again, 1954 as a marker in Algerian history. In this chapter, 1962 is of equal importance. In 1948 the British Nationality Act identified colonials as British subjects in the legal sense, but the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act severely restricted the entry of migrants and limited their rights. In that same year, the West Indian Federation dissolved and the Algerian War ended. Attali observes that "it is possible to judge the strength of political power by its legislation on noise and the effectiveness of its control over it" (122). In Algeria and the Caribbean, state-supported programming created transnational communities of listeners and, in doing so, remade the contours of political and intellectual life. However, the unanticipated subversive capacities of wireless communication undermined England and France's imperial missions. Radio's far reach influenced unintended audiences, and listening became a point of entry for social intervention. My analysis moves between a broadcast the metropole attempted to shape in its own image and a broadcast the metropole attempted to drown out with its own brand of noise. While research on popular culture and music in the latter half of the 20th century have been fruitful, different conclusions can be gleaned when scholars decouple the history of broadcasting from music history. The two programs in this study imparted ideals, warnings, and demands meant to educate and discipline the disenfranchised. In both cases no recordings have survived, and I rely on transcripts, correspondence, and other archival material when available. However, my argument centers less on the exact content of these broadcasts than on their reception, as well as the

politics which motivated and developed their audience's changing response. A comparative media history sheds light on how radio enabled new forms of individual and collective agency. While the producers and broadcasters whose voices emanated from the speakers were undoubtedly significant social actors, I want to suggest that listeners and their practices incited the most radical shifts in the increasingly tenuous relationship between empire and colony. Taking into account the centrality of sound in colonial encounters, I ask how radios were deployed as tools for governance and how listeners reclaimed this technology to articulate a will to nationhood.

Windrush on Wireless

Following the reign of interwar modernist innovators, it seemed that London was no longer the locus for experimental literature. Peter Kalliney explains that, in the midst of this decline, most English writers, critics, agents, and editors looked to the rest of Europe for new aesthetic models. However, Francis Wyndham, an editor at André Deutsch, drew attention to the growing West Indian literary circle based in London and identified the work of Naipaul, Selvon, Lamming and others as "unusual both in content and style," particularly when compared to their English peers (94). Wyndham's observations would not go unnoticed; throughout the 1950s West Indian writers met with notable success. Kalliney argues that most accounts of British postwar literary production fail to acknowledge the ambiguity that characterized the relationships between colonial writers and their English contemporaries. Collaborations, patronage, and reciprocation are overlooked in order to make a clearer case for the divide between colonial cultural institutions and anticolonial nationalism. Although Kalliney risks downplaying the

rampant racism which persisted in intellectual circles, he makes an important intervention. The experiences of late colonial writers working in an English milieu were complex in part because Britain's recovery from the war was a slow and staggered process. In addition, prior to the start of the war, ongoing labor exploitation had resulted in an eruption of strikes and uprisings throughout Barbados, Trinidad, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent in the late 1930s. As Delia Jarrett-Macauley notes, reformulating "British policy towards colonies where nationalist activism had been in ascendancy" was a delicate matter.[91] Imperial decline was an unspoken source of anxiety and anguish in the metropole. The emergence of Caribbean literature, including its anticolonial strains, temporarily bolstered London's modernist circles and their claims to cultural superiority. The world of new media provided yet another arena in which the English could position themselves as the arbiters of taste. As Anne Spry Rush observes, BBC personnel worked alongside the Colonial Office to develop not only infrastructure but the very "nature of programming" (149). In addition to providing and training staff, these officials helped determine the kind of content that would strengthen the bond between the British Empire and its colonies.

During the tenure of *Caribbean Voices*, roughly 950 poems, 600 short stories, and 10 plays were read on air. As Hyacinth M. Simpson notes, the BBC's authority both in the metropole and so-called periphery "meant that West Indian writing would be taken more seriously" if it were broadcast (3). However, the same cultural authority which boosted the signal for West Indian writers did so by scrambling messages to suit its own needs. Swanzy believed in the promotion of a literary tradition distinct from rather than

[91] Jarrett-Macauley, Delia. *The Life of Una Marson: 1905-65*. Ian Randle Publishers, 1998, p. 146.

derivative of British and American writing. Despite his commitment to supporting West Indian models, the program remained a conduit for the spread of metropolitan tastes and values in the colonies.[92] For instance, the show instituted a segment known as the Critics' Circle which primarily featured British writers such as Stephen Spender, Roy Fuller, and Arthur Calder-Marshall offering both enthusiastic and scathing critiques of new work by West Indian authors. While intellectual collaboration between English and Caribbean contributors was a mainstay of the BBC, it coexisted with the belief that esteemed Englishmen were the best judges of West Indian literature. West Indian writers, then, occupied a dual position as both object of critique and intermittent interlocutor. It is worth noting that some authors had the chance to defend their aesthetic choices on air as well as to share their perspectives on Caribbean literature more generally.[93] Nevertheless, these writers were constrained both in rebuttals to criticisms of their works and their own criticisms of other Caribbean texts. In the introduction to this chapter I referenced Swanzy's editorial preference for "local color" as an example of imperialist fetishization.[94] I locate a similar impulse in his insistence that the literary critiques delivered on-air should focus on structural and formal issues rather than abstract,

[92] It is worth mentioning that *Caribbean Voices* established a relationship with the spate of "little magazines" circulating in the postwar period. Unlike the radio show, these print outlets consistently carried explicit political sentiments about *autonomy* and "editors embraced Independence and Federation." The most well-known of these magazines included Trinidad (1929-1930), *The Beacon* (1931-33, 1939), and *Kyk-over-al* (x-x). Simpson describes this relationship as a symbiotic one.

[93] See chapter 2 "The Critics' Circle" in Glyne A. Griffith's *The BBC and the Development of Anglophone Caribbean Literature, 1943-1958*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

[94] Sarah Lawson Welsh writes about how even criticism of West Indian writing which might be considered "benign" was also condescending and still focused on such elements like tropical scenery.

philosophical issues that might verge on being political.[95] When he served as moderator for the Critics' Circle segment, he often drew the speakers back to close readings of the poems and prose at hand, remarking that the critics were "really at the carpenter's bench."[96] When he was not able to focus the group solely on questions of structure and craft, he edited out their extended commentary. In these instances, the archived scripts show lines and sections that have been crossed out, save a word or phrase spared for the semblance of continuity.

This reluctance to engage with the politics of imperialism and decolonization continued after Swanzy's departure. From 1954 to the program's conclusion in 1958, Trinidadian writer and long-time contributor V.S. Naipaul acted as producer.[97] In *Migrant Modernism* (2013) J. Dillon Brown contrasts Swanzy's "embrace of the ostensibly liberal aims of prewar literary experimentation" with Naipaul's strong preference for social realism, economical language, and depoliticized satire. Unlike Swanzy, he reaffirmed Caribbean literature as an extension of the English canon. At the same time, both producers believed that the program should not serve as a political platform. When Naipaul laments, "too often, I feel, a Caribbean Voice has been one of social protest,"[98] he raises questions about how West Indian artists countered and catered to British desires, aesthetic and ideological. Authors such as Lamming and Edward Kamau Brathwaite did not shy away from political and expressly anticolonial sentiment.

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[95] See Griffith pp. 46 and 49. In spite of this stance, Swanzy himself suggested that he was transferred to a post in Ghana for being too sympathetic to Caribbean nationalism. Griffith remarks that the official reason for his reassignment remains unsubstantiated (91).
[96] "Critics' Circle" No. 5, 12 October 1947; BBC *Caribbean Voices* program scripts (photocopied), University of the West Indies, Mona.
[97] He was later joined by Edgar Mittelhozer in the last two years.
[98] CV, 26 Dec. 1954

But even as they carved out space for their words, their participation also made them complicit actors. Despite its central role in the development of West Indian writing, the success of *Caribbean Voices* was necessarily a validation of the radio as an imperial tactic.

Only recently have scholars such as Gail Low, Glyne Griffith, and Rhonda Cobham begun to address the importance of *Caribbean Voices* as a literary platform. However, the spotlight remains focused on the show's producers and contributing authors—in other words, on individuals readily viewed as active agents. By expanding my focus to include the program's listeners, I offer a more nuanced understanding of the circulation of West Indian vernaculars within a medium that privileged British standard English. Laurence Breiner points out that the program was "much more hospitable in those formative days than any metropolitan publisher to the accurate representation of West Indian speech" (55).[99] This episode of Caribbean literary history laid the groundwork for discussions and debates about the role of language in the rise of cultural nationalism in the latter half of the 20th century in the British and French West Indies.[100] The radio show provided a unique forum wherein colonial subjects could make certain grievances heard and, to an extent, control the narrative. Although BBC staff were able to dictate the form and content of their broadcasts, they could not, as Rush reminds us, control their audience's

[99] Breiner goes on to assert that *Caribbean Voices* shaped an entire generation and provided "impetus behind the regional interest in orality and performance poetry after Independence" (55).
[100] For a useful overview, see Devonish, Hubert. *Language and Liberation: Creole Language Politics in the Caribbean*. Karia Press, 1986. One particularly influential framework is Edward Kamau Brathwaite's seminal *History of a Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (1984) and challenge the denigration of "non-standard" English. Brathwaite and other intellectuals argued that these vernaculars were not "broken" English (or French); they were independent and full-fledged Creole languages intimately connected to a people's lived experience.

composition (149). Furthermore, they could not control their audience's reactions. The BBC invited West Indian listeners to share their feedback on various programs and from 1941 to 1963 funded a part-time staff position for a West Indian representative. Swanzy worked with the Lindos as his sub-editors; they sifted through submissions to forward to Swanzy for final selection, promoted the program in different publications, and communicated local responses through monthly reports.[101] However, BBC officials did not anticipate the ways in which listener feedback could transform into listener intervention. The most significant criticism, in this author's view, was levelled not at the content of the broadcasts but the vocal delivery. Those who would have been the usual target of ridicule were now able to judge others for their inappropriate speech patterns. As Glyne Griffith puts it, listeners were cognizant of how a piece of prose or poetry written in a particular vernacular could be "compromised by inauthentic voicing of the text" (39). Listeners at home in Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, and other islands, though eager to embrace radios, contested the voice of authority presented to them.

In her 2014 article "Birth of a Station: Broadcasting, Governance, and the Waning Colonial State" Alejandra Bronfman sheds light on the intra-Caribbean broadcasting network that developed through the early 20th century as Haitians, Cubans, and Jamaicans collaborated in an effort to access a wider swath of transmissions. Despite England's tacit warnings about the risks of American cultural hegemony, broadcasts from the United States were also integrated into this technological network. Writing about Jamaica specifically, Bronfman makes it clear that quality reception was not guaranteed on the

[101] Extract Report from Jamaica Information Office 1942/3 (BBC Written Archives Centre, E1/1294/2); and 'Account of Activity by BBC, Kingston' 13 August 1947 in BBC WAC E1/1308/1.

islands. The inconsistency was due in part to the mountainous terrain as well as the encroachment of foreign stations on frequencies already in use. By the 1950s technicians had begun making the necessary modifications. Despite such complications, West Indians of all classes slowly gained access to radio programming. Although radio receivers were expensive, they were also not restricted to the private realm of an individual's home. Rather, those who possessed a radio propped them in windows or even carried them out in public, tuned into a program, and set the volume so that interested passers-by could listen in (Rush 155). Breiner notes that radio technology mitigated social distinctions marked by education by making literary culture more readily accessible.[102] Nevertheless, *Caribbean Voices,* like other programs, targeted the middle and upper classes.

Although Simon J. Potter's impressive *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (2012) concentrates on white settler colonies such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa, it clarifies the ways in which colonial ambitions shaped the BBC's global aspirations. Following World War II, British radio programming was divided into three parts: *Home Service*, *Light Programme,* and *Third Programme*. Together these formed what Kalliney calls "a cultural pyramid" that trained listeners to advance from the low ranks of popular culture to the highbrow (92). In their efforts to preserve high culture, domestic programs welcomed Caribbean authors who had been shaped by British traditions. This course of action, as Asa Briggs tells us, was meant to serve as a buffer against the threat of Americanization (51). *Caribbean Voices* was part and parcel of Britain's aspirations to edify rather than simply entertain. In the British West Indies, the rise of a "colored" middle class coincided with internalized notions of

[102] Breiner, Laurence A. "Caribbean Voices on the Air" in Susan Merrill Squier, ed. *Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture*. Duke UP, 2003.

respectability. The need to be perceived as respectable created strong cultural biases and affected listener expectations.

Delivering what Attali might identify as "the monologue of power" (4), *Caribbean Voices* offered selections of prose and poetry that clearly signaled, through vocabulary, syntax, and setting, an association with specific island territories. However, the show employed a range of speakers to deliver these recitations. Some were white British actors trained to speak in registers associated with social prestige. Others were West Indian expatriates, some of whom were also actors, who retained their native cadences. Rush writes that, in an effort to maintain credibility throughout the war, the BBC demanded news announcers sound authentically British. Though it often featured a metropolitan accent, *Caribbean Voices* offered many exceptions to that dictum. It is clear from the correspondence between the Lindos and Swanzy that audience reactions were influenced by class status. The Lindos received criticisms of West Indian commentators and readers whose "atrocious" voices seemed to signal a lack of education or refinement.[103] One correspondant compared their perspective to how British audiences would feel "if the Jamaican Broadcasting Station had a Londoner with a pronounced Cockney accent broadcasting to Britain."[104] Given the choice between "a good English voice and a poor West Indian," Caribbean listeners preferred hearing the English voice.[105] The Jamaican poet and educator John Figueroa noted that when one considers which individuals "are strongly praised as readers, one cannot help noticing they are either English or have very

[103] G. Lindo to J. Grenfell Williams, Memo, "West Indian Readers in BBC Programmes," 7 June 1948 (BBC WAC E1/1308/1).
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

'Oxford English' voices."[106] However, Swanzy himself observed that the privileging of this accent might also have had an opposite effect. Speaking of the Critics' Circle's survey of West Indian literary output for 1947, he explains the survey "isn't, of course, complete; one critic cannot do entire justice, but mainly, I believe, because there are a lot more writers discreetly keeping silent. Perhaps it is because they object to that Oxford voice..."[107]

Although the Lindos' memos indicate a preference across class, the middle class was by far the largest sector of their audience for much of *Caribbean Voices*' existence. The Lindos themselves were certainly part of that class, and their own biases most likely informed the comments they chose to emphasize. In addition, the BBC tended to pre-emptively shape or regulate the kinds of assessments they received by targeting specific establishments and contacts who represented middle-class values. These included local welfare organizations and branches of the British Council as well as educators, writers, and government workers.[108] However, even among listeners who imagined themselves as full and equal British citizens, this preoccupation with respectability and status remained in tension with the desire for diverse representation. At the same time middle-class values encouraged listeners to project themselves through an informed and authentic Briton voice, localized identities exercised considerable influence. The radio helped cultivate middle-class Caribbean norms, and, as a sonic medium, it also encouraged a degree of color-blindness (Rush 174). Nevertheless, radio's increasing popularity and accessibility

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[106] Figueroa, John. "The Flaming Faith of These First Years: *Caribbean Voices*" in *Tibisiri: Caribbean Writers and Critics,* ed. Maggie Butcher. Dangaroo Press, 1989, pp. 61.
[107] Swanzy, Henry. "Talk by Henry Swanzy," 11 Jan 1948; BBC Caribbean Voices script (copies), UWI, Mona
[108] R.A. Rendall to A.S.D. Memo, 2 August 1943, 'Notes Made During My Visit to Kingston' (BBC WAC E1/1294/2).

among the masses meant that the audience was no longer solely comprised of an elitist middle class. Their attendant values were no longer valorized above all others. This waning influence, particularly in the post-war era, signaled the parallel decline of the BBC's influence and, more broadly, Britain itself.[109]

Political sympathies varied amongst West Indian authors and listeners alike. However, there was a shared resistance to a reductive imperial stance that would categorize their homelands as interchangeable. In pushing for the recognition of vernacular diversity, they pushed for the recognition of their respective islands. Listener feedback did not only center on the social prestige of accents or on the problematic substitution of one accent for another. These critiques of voice were connected to larger concerns about disproportionate representation and conflicting conceptions of both inter-island and metropole-colony relations. A range of rivalries and loyalties characterized the region and challenged Britain's conception of the Caribbean islands as a unified region with one culture.[110] Over time the BBC became aware of cultural divisions because they affected their goals to establish a single, centralized West Indian radio network. Individual staff members compiled documents that detailed how inter-island disagreements would hinder any attempts to collect funds for a central transmitter, since each island would want to be the main site for this equipment.[111] There was a tendency for larger and more populated islands such as Jamaica and Trinidad to overshadow places

[109] In her chapter "A Bridge Between" Anne Rush details the economic reasons why local West Indian station managers became reluctant to air BBC programs. In particular, customs duties were reinstated after the war and station managers couldn't use local sponsors to pay for programs because the BBC wished to remain unaffiliated with any form of advertisement.
[110] See Rush's *Bonds of Empire* (2011) for an extended discussion of this issue.
[111] "Development and Welfare in the West Indies. Broadcasting" and "Summary for the Conference on Broadcasting 29th and 30th May 1941" (BBC WAC E1/1294/1).

such as St. Lucia and St. Kitts. While the BBC continued to encourage a cohesive sense of British Caribbeanness, they had to contend with listener anxieties about territorial bias. It became clear that the success of their programs depended on their acknowledgement of individual islands and local traditions. As Rush notes, integration was their primary strategy. They made certain to highlight specific participants and topics from a range of colonies while emphasizing the British West Indies as a single unit (194). Allowing for distinct Anglo-Caribbean accents on air may have complicated their mission to project a singular, cultivated British voice, but it also helped them to accomplish this crucial task.

Both listeners and radio officials had to navigate the relationship between diversity and unity in their conception of the Caribbean region. The task of reconciling the two perspectives was necessarily ongoing. Some West Indians readily acknowledged their ties to British culture and politics as the basis for cohesion among the various islands. Others acknowledged the same point and at the same time rebelled against the imperial state's superimposed notion of Caribbeanness. For example, in response to a newspaper poll a Trinidadian listener strongly objected to a cricket commentator's reference to Trinidadian players as West Indian.[112] This resistance co-existed with a growing ambivalence about the metropole/periphery relationship and often manifested in discussions of cultural events rather than in explicit political debates. This was in part because the BBC limited the latter; a call for revolution would never be broadcast. However, they made an exception for discussions about the potential advantages and disadvantages of creating a West Indies federation. The status of vernacular speech in these localized radiophonic communities was intertwined with what Griffith describes as

[112] *Daily Express* (Jamaica), 24 August 1950, 10.

Britain's emphasis on "political federation and regionalism rather than individual territorial nationalisms" (130). British officials believed a West Indies Federation would guarantee the welfare of the Anglophone Caribbean. West Indian politicians eventually established a federation in 1958, but this shared enterprise was short-lived. One primary cause is that Trinidadian and Jamaican officials were reluctant to bear the financial burdens of struggling colonies (Rush 170). The federation dissolved in May of 1962.

Griffith asserts that the literary flourishing enabled by *Caribbean Voices* subverted the federalist framework, because much of its content centered on the recuperation and preservation of "communal memories" specific to individual territories (80). These reserves of collective knowledge are markers of the cultural distinctions that developed against the backdrop of a shared colonial history. Though the BBC considered colonial subjects as British citizens, they did not readily grasp the notion that these subjects had radically different racial backgrounds and lived experiences from a middle-class Briton. In particular, the Empire Service department presented a version of imperialism that gestured towards inclusivity and egalitarianism.[113] These gestures primarily manifested as rhetoric rather than action. Take for example a 1942 BBC pamphlet in which T.O. Beachcroft juxtaposes Britain's mission with Hitler's Germany: "The Nazis think only in terms of possession; of colonies as something acquired by force; as lands owned outright by their imperial masters. … This is a conception of the Empire which has long been out of date within the British Commonwealth of Nations, and which in the minds of the great founders of Empire has never existed" (qtd. in Rush 162). Such

[113] Although the BBC itself employed a small number of West Indians as staff to create an image aligned with this ideology, these staff members held lower positions with the exception of figures such as Una Marson and Stephen Ablack.

a claim, however outrageous it may appear to a modern reader, served to paint Britain as an imperial power with moral authority. The realities of world war forced Britons to reevaluate their colonial audiences and the latter's perspective of their political motives (157). The radio then forced them to face Caribbean resistance to their conceptualization of the British West Indies as a single, unified culture. A key element in this resistance was the audiences' refusal of arbitrary and uninformed substitutions of one island accent for another. This refusal persisted as the initial preference for metropolitan accents amongst predominantly middle-class listeners waned. Throughout World War II and the post-war era, this widening network of West Indian radio listeners-turned-critics negotiated a political shift towards independence. Their complex reception of the *Caribbean Voices* program is proof that they were no longer content to articulate their identities solely through an imperial voice.

Bad Reception and the Nation's Consciousness

By the time Fanon traveled to Algeria in 1953 to work as *chef de service* at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital, the radio had become critical to the French settlers' continuation of civilized life in an "uncivilized" society. The sentiment "sans le pinard et la radio, nous nous serions déjà arabisés" makes plain how daily broadcasts assuaged their fears of cultural contamination (54).[114] For Fanon the year 1945, which brought the end of World War II and the massacres in Setif and Guelma, is a line of demarcation. Following these bloody repressions, which resulted in roughly 45,000 victims, Algeria was catapulted onto the international stage. The native population became cognizant of

[114] "without wine and the radio, we should already have become Arabized" (72)

global struggles for liberation, and the first widespread distribution of radio sets in Algeria occurred just as broadcasting stations appeared in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Algerian listeners were drawn to programs from the Arab world and beyond. They saw their own anxieties and aspirations reflected in the suffering and resistance of others. By 1951 news of civil unrest came from Tunisia, and in 1952 Morocco waged war for independence. When Algeria aligned itself with the Maghreb Front's anticolonial mission, radio sets finally had something valuable to offer. Fanon describes how natives had to counter the enemy's alternative facts with events, figures, and language gleaned from "un monde de vérité" (59).[115]At the start of the war the free press was their primary news source. Within months, however, local journals that offered objective reports or anti-colonial sentiments were censored.[116] Radio sets enabled not only the dissemination of news but access to "un monde où des choses se passent, où l'événement existe, où des forces agissent" (59).[117] Moreover, broadcasts were accessible to the illiterate masses in a way the local presses were not.[118] The lack of consistent news incited rumors both substantiated and otherwise. The Algerian native, Fanon writes, "donne alors à l'Européen isolé, l'impression d'être en contact permanent avec le haut-commandement de la Révolution" (61).[119] With an absolute commitment to the cause, all news had to be

[115] "a world of truth" (76)
[116] Fanon goes on to address the role of imported French newspapers such as *Le Monde, L'Humanité*, and *L'Express* for Algerians. The purchase of such journals, rather than ones produced in the colony, was tantamount to confessing one's solidarity with the revolution. Colonialist kiosk dealers eventually refused to sell them; Algerians eventually boycotted the local press.
[117] "a world in which things happened, in which events existed, in which forces were active" (76)
[118] It is important to note, however, that the classical Arabic employed in these broadcasts was not understood by Algerians of all classes.
[119] "gave the isolated European the impression of being in permanent contact with the revolutionary high command" (78)

good news. What some sociologists described as inexplicable fanaticism Fanon describes as a "conviction collective" that allowed individuals to forge the closest possible bond to the revolution (63).

Despite the growing social upheaval, Algerians were still slow to adopt the radio in the early 1950s. At the end of 1956, however, the emergence of *la Voix de l'Algérie combattante* (The Voice of Fighting Algeria) incited a rapid change. Fanon writes that all the radio stocks were bought in fewer than twenty days. Battery-operated receivers were necessary due to the lack of electrical grids in vast swathes of the country. Possession of a radio offered "le seul moyen d'entrer en communication avec la Révolution, de vivre avec elle" (67).[120] The technology lost its negative valence as the enemy's apparatus and, through its use of Arabic, French, and Kabyle, united the people against them.[121] The proof of radio's power was evident in France's efforts to prohibit sales: an Algerian could not make a purchase unless given a military or police voucher. Sets and batteries from Tunisia and Morocco were smuggled in and became as valuable to the political cause as weapons for the National Army. Fanon claims that hearing the combatant's voice allowed listeners to "l'incorporer enfin à la nouvelle respiration de la Nation" (69).[122] Here I wish to extend this observation by addressing a temporal dimension that remains latent in Fanon's text. Radio's popularity meant the independent nation's new life could commence even as the old one persisted. These projected voices allowed listeners to

[120] "[the sole] means of entering into communication with the Revolution, of living with it" (83)
[121] Fanon discusses how radio changed Algerians' attitude toward the French language. He writes about how broadcasters delivered messages in Arabic, French, and Kabyle and, in doing so, purged French of its negative connotations. Speaking French as an Algerian was no longer synonymous with internalized racism or treason. Moreover, Arabic was no longer perceived as a strictly sacred register. After 1954 both languages were delinked from their previous associations, mirroring radio's transformation.
[122] "incorporate it into the nation's new life"(85)

inhabit simultaneously the vivid present of the liberation as it developed on the ground *and* the postcolonial futurity they foresaw as the only possible outcome. The timing of the post in the postcolonial has never been clear to those who study it or those who live it.[123] As Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts in *Provincializing Europe*, we should remember that "historical time is not integral, that it is out of joint with itself" (16). Audio technologies affect one's experience of time, perhaps most clearly through their claim to "liveness." Liveness describes the simultaneous unfolding of a performance and the audience's reception; the notion carries with it the concomitant qualities of spontaneity and ephemerality.[124] Much of liveness's cultural value lies in how it allows consumers—who are co-present in time or space or both—to feel as though they are part of a larger community. Although the Algerian broadcasts could be interrupted, they could not be eradicated. These interruptions, and the static they gave rise to, ultimately compounded the quality of liveness. If, as Philip Auslander concludes, a technologically-mediated live experience is "a function of the technologies' ability to respond to us in real time," (3) then *la Voix de l'Algérie combattante* offers a counternarrative. The program's liveness is, instead, determined by the listener's ability to respond to the broadcast—or rather, the battle of the broadcasts—in real time.

Having gained expertise in previous wars, the French were well-practiced in "sound-wave warfare" (Chevalier 85). They were able to discern the precise wavelengths

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[123] See Hall, Stuart. "When Was 'the Post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti. Routledge, 1996, pp. 242-60; McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism,'" *Social Text*, nos. 31-32, 1992, p. 86; and Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the 'Post-colonial,'" *Social Text*, nos. 31-32, 1992, p. 103.

[124] See the dissertation's introduction for extended commentary. See also Philip Auslander's *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008), Andrew Crisell's *Liveness and Recording in the Media* (2012), and Karin van Es's *The Future of Live* (2017).

of broadcasting stations and jam the signals systematically. Algerians were informed via printed tracts to stay tuned for periods of up to two or three hours as the censored speakers migrated from wavelength to wavelength and relayed scrambled messages. Fanon describes the listeners as fellow combatants in this struggle as they sought to outsmart and outmaneuver the enemy. The primary operator of the radio set stood or sat with an ear pressed against the receiver, straining to hear. Described as a "privileged interpreter," this listener delivered the results to audience members and attempted to answer the litany of questions that would inevitably erupt (69). In many cases the group would reach a consensus about what had and had not been covered by the broadcast, since the interpreter could not be expected to parse everything. The "real task of reconstruction" inspired all to recall previous broadcasts, and with them, previous battles won (Chevalier 86). As David Marriott puts it, this audience demanded "a new kind of listening in relation to which the clarity of transmission is only of a kind of secondary importance, almost without consequence." Furthermore, Marriott interprets the jammed signals as "the conceptual equivalent of a stutter in the new speech of the nation, a jabbering that is now validated as the working through of a new historical eloquence." The aural reconstructions Fanon describes inspired listeners to collaborate in the creation of new information and strike another blow at the adversary's fake news. Like Fanon, I recognize that Algerians produced unsubstantiated accounts, statistics, and claims as they integrated the FLN's broadcast into their lived experience. I distinguish this crowd-sourced knowledge from the French colonizers' misinformation, because it was never directed at the French as a form of propaganda. Rather, these stories circulated amongst the oppressed in a manner closer to the oral preservation of myth or religious ritual. This

tactic brings to mind Michel Serres's suggestion that noise has both "a value of destruction and a value of construction."[125] If the natives' reassembled broadcasts grew in monumentality, it is only because the lengths to which the French settlers went to suppress the truth warranted it. The Algerians' accounts of the war are only outrageous if excised from the framework of colonial domination in which they arose. When juxtaposed with France's narratives and its attendant power to enforce such narratives, one recognizes this recourse to epic proportions as a necessary counterbalance. As Fanon indicates, what matters here is less the distortion of fact than the desire for the "participation en sous-mains, à l'essence de la Révolution" (71). Whereas the settlers manufactured knowledge, Algerians engaged in an act of radical translation. This act involved not only the transformation of static to speech but of their own roles, shifting from listener and newscaster to freedom-fighter and citizen of a sovereign nation.

Algerians' acceptance of the radio meant the introduction of multiple voices—"les amis; les complices des ennemis; les neutres"—into the home (80). The occupier's once domineering speech was no longer amplified above all others. Fanon argues that the broadcast's fragmented nature transformed listeners into co-creators of vital content. I wish to emphasize that the fragmentation which arose in the radiophonic context was unlike "cette impression d'incomplétude, d'inachevé, voire de trahison sur le plan de l'information" that Algerians had encountered in their censored newspapers (59-60).[126] The suppression of print journalism cut off knowledge of the colonizer's disintegrating power and thus paralyzed Algerians who wished to act. The crackling and hissing of an interrupted broadcast, however, actually encouraged a form of collusion. But why should

[125] Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 67
[126] "impression of incompleteness, of sketchiness, even of betrayal in the realm of news" (77)

the censorship of an audio format lead to such a different outcome? The answer, I believe, has three parts. The first has to do with the fact that radios reached a much broader swath of people. In the previous section I mentioned that West Indians who owned radios strategically placed them for passing locals to hear. This was also the case in parts of Algeria. While many family members and neighbors would gather indoors to listen to the clandestine transmissions, in the mountainous Kabylia region dozens of peasants would congregate around a single radio set. The second element that leads to co-creation concerns the nature of hearing. As the historian of technology Susan J. Douglas observes, it is not simply "the simultaneity of listening—not just of hearing the same things at the same time, but of doing the same cognitive work at the same time" that brings an audience together. Lastly, in his study of Fanon's essay, Marriott points out how "the denotative or referential functions of the linguistic sign here coexist with that which is absent, inaudible" (**#)**. This coupling of speech, static, and silence was possible on air, whereas censored publications were stripped of any unacceptable material *before* printing. In other words, there was no possibility of reading between the lines.

As the French blocked their pirated airwaves, the disembodied voice of the revolution persisted. This resulted in a complex interplay of continuity and interruption. The polysemic nature of static made it particularly well-suited for an environment structured by government surveillance and censorship. As John Mowitt puts it, "the more distorted, that is, less expressive the voice of the nation is rendered, the more clearly the nation's existence is, as it were, signaled" (95). That the official word of the revolution was often rendered unintelligible or inaudible was not a hindrance but an advantage. Fanon observes situations wherein, having failed to make contact with the voice, listeners would

intentionally tune in to a jammed frequency and search for truth in the static instead. Reassured by their own triumphs in the sound wave war, listeners believed France's collapse to be imminent. If Algerian listeners, wholly unremarkable but committed to the cause, could win their own battles, what force could stop their valiant comrades? This belief heightened the fervor needed to sustain the fight for independence. In a time of war, then, the failure of the message *is* the message. As Fanon observes, sonic warfare is a potent reminder of the colonizer's commitment to controlling—and if not controlling, then obliterating—the colonized. Fanon believed that continuous action was needed to fight against inhumane behavior. In this study, he repeatedly calls attention to an irrepressible will to nationhood. Because communal morale-building was not tied to a steady stream of intelligible dialogue, it was available to listeners at all times. Noise—whether from an interrupted transmission or an unused wavelength—became a continuous action, a well of sound from which listeners could draw knowledge, reassurance, and courage.

I want to suggest that, much in the same way Algerian families filled in gaps and invented details for censored, fragmented broadcasts, so, too, did Fanon address the aporias of colonial medicine through both his clinical practice and critical writings. He not only fills in blanks—he builds tools and techniques from the ground up. Undoubtedly the visual, particularly the visuality of race, is crucial for some of his most influential formulations, namely what he refers to as epidermalization. However, as Ian Baucom notes, much of Fanon's critiques are rooted in the staging of voices he has heard or imagined. A kind of static permeates his writing in the form of fragmented dialogue from overheard conversations and intertextual gestures. I posit that in these intimate scenes of

radio listening Fanon recognized a playing out of colonial conflict related to the kinds of encounters he witnessed at his clinic. Indeed, he makes no effort to separate these two spheres of observation. In his essay, he includes accounts of radio's changing status in relation to psychopathological among Algerian patients. He describes how the radio was initially perceived as a threat in hallucinations and delusions. After 1954 radio's incorporation into Algerian society as a positive link to the revolution meant that the same hallucinated voices were heard as friendly and even protective. Richard C. Keller demonstrates how Fanon's psychiatric practice has been overlooked in biographies and readings of his theoretical work. Listening, both in and out of clinical contexts, is vital to what for Fanon becomes co-constitutive tasks—that is, the reformation of Western colonial psychiatry and universal emancipation. Nick Nesbitt, writing on the Haitian Revolution's singular "contribution to humanity" (2), explains how the concept of an unqualified freedom that included peoples of African descent exceeded the limits of enlightenment thought. The world's first successful slave revolt took place on an island that shared the same French colonial history as Fanon's Martinique. His native land, however, never achieved independence and remains an overseas department today. The end of slavery in Martinique did eventually grant legal citizenship to its inhabitants. However, Fanon was painfully aware that this status was partial and limited. Political autonomy eluded Martinique, but Fanon discovered in Algeria a nascent resistance. His commitment to the establishment of full human rights for colonized subjects—through collective violence if necessary—shaped his political as well as his psychiatric tactics.

Keller reminds readers that colonial health workers were cognizant of their political function. The French army's *Sections Administratives Spécialisées* (SAS) had

orders to persuade Algerian patients of the benefits of colonial rule while also providing medical care. Patrick Ehlen details the changes Fanon instituted during his time at Blida: he offered patients regular consultations, integrated separate wards, encouraged relationships between patients and the nursing staff, and ended the use of straitjackets. The 2002 film *Frantz Fanon: Mémoires d'asile* brings to light additional reforms; interviewed nurses and patients discuss the introduction of a soccer field and concerts by Algerian musicians as well as the hospital mosque's reconstruction. Most crucially, Fanon took responsibility for failed treatments and responded by reevaluating his French-based therapeutic methods rather than blaming patients. David Macey, however, takes care to remind us of his adherence to accepted protocols, which included electroconvulsive therapy. Fanon did not reject medical practices wholesale but rather attempted to create "a therapeutic 'neo-society' in which patients could establish a multiplicity of social bonds, fulfill a variety of functions and act out a variety of roles" (Macey 322). The Algerians' interaction with radio technology created environments which facilitated similar opportunities for new roles and behaviors. "Ici la voix de l'Algérie" captures how everyday radio listening became entangled with the larger process of state-building for two competing audiences. At the same time, the essay raises questions about how Fanon himself has emerged as another voice of Algeria, specifically for an Anglophone audience.

Édouard Glissant observed that Fanon was the rare intellectual who crossed over from thought into action. A defender of "les damnées de la terre," Fanon has become a near-mythical icon in Western intellectual frameworks in the decades since his death. Henry Louis Gates' essay "Critical Fanonism" (1991) takes up the recuperation of Fanon

as a global theorist by those working in postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and cognate fields. This recuperation took Fanon beyond the Francophone sphere and transformed him into what Gates calls "a composite figure" or "ethnographic construct" (459). Cedric Robinson's "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon" (1993) also takes up his legacy and the ways in which contemporary theorists reference him as "a background device" or background noise in their own studies of colonial discourse. Recent scholarship by David Macey, Alice Cherki, and Matthieu Renault has helped to dispel the myths which run the risk of obscuring the complexities of Fanon's political, medical, and critical practices. In doing so, they also help to combat what Gates a phenomenon describes as such: "in the course of an appeal for the specificity of the Other, we discover that this global theorist of alterity is emptied of his own specificity" (459). One specific detail that is often lost or put aside in close readings of Fanon's writing is his linguistic fluency, or lack thereof. For many Anglophone readers and theorists, Fanon is the first or only entry point into the Algerian Revolution. Some critics have rightly criticized his position as spokesperson because he lacked knowledge of Arabic and Tamazight but nevertheless made far-reaching claims about the country's evolving sociolinguistics. Brian T. Edwards argues that, despite this ignorance, Fanon successfully decoupled the French language from France through a series of rhetorical moves that use Arabic to defamiliarize French.[127] While Fanon's role of privileged representative deserves further analysis, his position as a black Martinican native means that these critiques will necessarily differ from those that would be leveled at a white French settler. Fanon tells us that "il ne saurait y avoir, après la guerre, d'inadéquation entre le peuple et ce qui est

[127] Edwards goes on to state that, unfortunately, the act of translating his work into English has erased many of these subtle gestures (100-101).

censé l'exprimer" (82).[128] While Fanon is not explicitly referring to himself as intending to speak for the Algerian people, this statement acknowledges the inevitable gaps and imbalances that mark the path towards revolution and postcolonial nationhood. One productive approach might be to compare Fanon's interpretive stance to the jammed radio signals he describes. His readings of Algerian social life are distorted to some degree by his colonial education and outsider status—however much he resists this labeling. However, his sustained engagement with media practices on the one hand and medical practices on the other operates on multiple frequencies, offering different entry points to the analysis of colonial injustice and the fight for national liberation.

Resonant Collectives

A West Indian soldier, fighting for the British crown, is invited to broadcast a message home. A native Bajan tries to find the lilt and timbre as she recites a Trinidadian poet's stanzas. The first call to prayer (*adhān*) streams from multiple loudspeakers at dawn, reaching Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A throng of peasants nod their heads to a static-riven transmission, with little comprehension of high literary Arabic but a growing conviction at every utterance of "Istiqlal" (Independence).[129] The corporeal dimensions of citizenship have been well researched.[130] The descriptions above illustrate a

[128] "After the war a disparity between the people and what is intended to speak for them will no longer be possible" (96).
[129] This last example is taken from one of Fanon's footnotes on p. 73
[130] See for example Sheller, Mimi. *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. Duke UP, 2012 and Castronovo, Russ. *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. Duke UP, 2001.

specifically aural component of "the body of the nation." In their collection *Senses and Citizenships* (2013), Trnka, Dureau, and Park draw out the ways in which the perceptual constitutes the political by mediating between "lived experience, ideological formations, and political forces within which normative ideologies naturalize particular forms of belonging" (1). By way of conclusion I want to think about how the nation-state naturalizes and organizes itself around the body and around the capacity for hearing in particular. Modes of perception become connected to modes of exclusion and inclusion; more than that, perceptual models can serve to legitimize the exclusion and inclusion of specific groups. The question of how the auditory comes to bear on political life (or vice versa) has a particular urgency in this study of mediated listening. A discussion about citizenship—and the conferral and denial of rights and responsibilities it entails—also necessitates a discussion about its relationship to the nation-state and other forms of community. Anne Rush elucidates how the British attempted to represent itself "as an *egalitarian* imperial power that include all its peoples (native Britons *and* colonial subjects) as full members in a modern, democratic British family" (157). But as Iris Marion Young suggests, marginalized groups contest the notion that the formal conferral of rights guarantees equal citizenship. Despite the critical acclaim West Indian writers achieved, they and other Caribbean immigrants, taught to believe they were true British citizens, had to live with racism they had not anticipated. And although the intellectual elite sought to distance high culture from politics, the growing racial hostilities of the 1950s would eventually dismantle the alliances and advances made in earlier years. Colonial writing would, once again, become a largely niche product, barred from the

larger marketplace of ideas. As Gikandi writes, the empire's decline served to "nullif[y] the value previously invested in colonial subjects and spaces" (*Maps of Englishness,* 70).

In thinking about the conceptual terrain of aurality and citizenship, I'm reminded of Jennifer E. Telesca's claim that "[w]hat we see and hear, how we see and hear, according to whom and where condition the possibilities for the way people in crisis debate meaningfully about how they are governed" (339-40). Friedrich Kittler's declaration that "media determine our situation" attempts to displace the production of discourses and subjects onto the technologies themselves rather than the users' evolving relation to these artifacts. But the emergence of "media ecologies" in recent scholarship across the humanities and social sciences resists the idea of unilateral movement. Instead there is reciprocation, exchange, entanglement. [131] Widely considered passive consumers, listeners in these circumstances proved to be agents capable of critiquing and challenging the dominant colonial framework. The radio created a novel site for civic participation among the disenfranchised. It required sensory engagements that came up against the policing of citizenship status.

Carolyn Marvyn writes, "Media are not fixed natural objects; they have no natural edges."[132] This lack of boundaries and fixed procedures (or rather, the ability to enforce boundaries and procedures) enabled unforeseen uses of radio technology in colonial contexts. More specifically, radio listening reintroduced the question of political collectivities in a different light. Baucom, in his analysis of what he terms "tactics of

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[131] See for instance Michael Wutz, *Enduring Words*: *Literary Narrative in a Changing Media Ecology* (2009), Daniel Punday, *Writing at the Limit: The Novel in the New Media Ecology* (2012), Joseph Tabbi and Michael Wutz, *Reading Matters: Narrative in the New Media Ecology* (1997).

[132] Carolyn Marvyn, *When Old Technologies Were New*. Oxford UP, 1988, p. 8.

listening," argues for the importance of "diversity in unity" to Fanon. Rather than represent the listening Algerians as a homogenous group, Fanon makes legible a form of solidarity that does not deprive individuals of their distinct thoughts and behaviors. The ability to account for difference in solidarity is also crucial in the Caribbean where historical and events political have unfolded across vastly different timelines. The Algerian people acquired strength through the retelling and reshaping of a shared narrative. Listeners crafted forms of citizenry not dispensed by the state but forged together, outside of that juridical frame that had already failed them.

The early success of *Caribbean Voices* came on the heels of labor unrest throughout the Anglophone Caribbean. Lamming explains that the "expansion of social justice initiated by the labor struggle had a direct effect on liberating the imagination and restoring the confidence of men and women in the essential humanity of their simple lives."[133] As West Indian authors navigated London's metropolitan circles, their writing, regardless of any degree of political engagement, contributed to an overarching narrative of nationalism. This wave of new literature, resonating on multiple frequencies, became a symbol for the formation of distinct nation-states. By disrupting pre-conceived linguistic hierarchies, radio technology redefined national boundaries within the Caribbean region. As West Indian literature assumed a larger role on the international stage, authors and audience members pushed for the recognition of individual countries and cultures, in contradistinction to a British perspective that conflated all islands. *Caribbean Voices* paradoxically encouraged the growth of the very nationalism it sought to curb through a message of "egalitarian imperialism." In a 1937 lecture, American composer John Cage

[133] George Lamming, "Caribbean Labor, Culture, and Identity," Bucknell Review vol. 40, no. 2, 2001, pp. 22-23.

stated, “Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating” (3). An analysis of *Caribbean Voices* and *la Voix de l’Algérie combattante* helps us to think about how, while radios in these contexts are not social actors, listeners can behave toward them as if they are. Across the Atlantic and Mediterranean, listener feedback created cross-talk on every channel. The emergence of liberated nationhood became intertwined with new templates for listening. Two programs, the state-sanctioned BBC show and the state-censored Algerian broadcast, with opposing goals supported similar results: the ascendancy of nationalism and the fight for political independence in colonial territories.

Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Multimodal Ensembles

Dream Stories, Dream Sounds

In an interview, the Barbadian poet, historian, and cultural critic Edward Kamau Brathwaite gives an account of a dream:

"I come to Sycorax during my Time of Salt: death of Zea Mexican 1986, loss of Irish Town Library of Alexandria 1988, murder by Kingston gunmen 1990… just look at the dread frequencies of these catastrophes. My writing hand becomes a dumb stump in my head… I mean I can't write or utter a sound or metaphor. But Sycorax comes to me in a dream and she dreams me a Macintosh computer with its winking *io* hiding in its margins which, as you know, are not really margins, but electronic accesses to Random Memory and the Cosmos and the *lwa*. And she dreams me these stories … and shows me how to find *jo* to write them out on the computer. And the two together introduce me to fonts and the fonts take me across Mexico to Siqueiros and the Aztec murals and all the way back to ancient Nilotic Egypt to hieroglyphics—allowing me to write in light and to make sound visible as if I am in video. She abolishes, as I say, the traditional margin and the boundaries of books…"[134]

Earlier in this interview Brathwaite laments the public's lack of attention to his newer works. In the midst of his complaint he launches into a description of the dream that transformed his poetic practice. Shakespeare's Sycorax, exiled and dead before *The Tempest* begins, is reanimated.[135] The Algerian sorceress brings Brathwaite a computer and teaches him how electronic circuits can turn word processors into sound processors.

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[134] Dawes, Kwame. *Talk Yuh Talk: Interviews with Anglophone Caribbean Poets*. University of Virginia Press, 2000.

[135] Octave Mannoni's *Prospéro et Caliban: psychologie de la colonisation* (1950) claimed that Caliban symbolized native peoples' need to be subjugated by European masters. The book deepened the play's impact on colonized Francophone and Anglophone writers; Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and George Lamming, among others, challenged Mannoni's reading and argued that Caliban represented an anti-colonial figure of resistance in exile (see, for example, Rob Nixon's "Caribbean and African Appropriations of The Tempest" (1987)).

In doing so she connects him to private and public memory, to the ecstatic spirits or *lwa* of Haiti's syncretic religion vodou, and to the vastness of space. From the early 1990s onward the poet began to experiment with the page as performance, adjusting margins, typeface, font size, and justifications. He also incorporated scanned materials and computer-generated glyphs, at times heavily pixelated, of suns, moons, spiders, butterflies, boats, and human figures. These elements function as a method of transcription that helps readers listen and "make[s] sound visible." For Brathwaite, digital technologies are not a threat to earlier means of producing and consuming art. Rather, they create possibilities for recovering, preserving, and performing the oral traditions that undergird Caribbean cultural formation.

Sycorax brought Brathwaite to his "video style"; what brought Brathwaite to Sycorax? What he refers to as his "Time of Salt" is a cluster of tragedies. Just as sugar looms large in the Caribbean imaginary, so, too, does salt.[136] In one folktale (and its endless variations), consuming too much salt makes enslaved Africans too heavy to fly home. A common expression, "to suck salt," means to bear hardship and scarcity. To kill a *soucouyant*—a blood-sucking witch who sheds its skin at night—the victim must find and salt the creature's molted skin, rendering it unwearable. Brathwaite represents his private experiences of pain as world historical events. In 1986 he lost his wife Doris "Zea Mexican" Brathwaite to cancer. Two years later, Hurricane Gilbert destroyed most of his home, personal library, and extensive archive of his own work and others' in Irish Town, Jamaica—the "Library of Alexandria." And in 1990, three men broke into his house,

[136] See, for example, Edouard Glissant's *Le sel noir* (1960), Earl Lovelace's *Salt: A Novel* (1996), Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1998), Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads* (2003), Lorna Goodison's *Supplying Salt and Light*, and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996).

bound him, and robbed him. During the raid, one of the robbers put a gun to the back of his head and pulled the trigger. The gun was either jammed or not loaded; nevertheless, Brathwaite views this moment as an assassination. The near-death experience *is* a death experience. That he was struck by a "ghost bullet" makes no difference.[137]

Brathwaite's "passing" and subsequent revival deeply affected his aesthetic and political commitments. This chapter examines poetry produced before and in the aftermath of his Time of Salt. I contend that, despite the radical shifts in form inaugurated by his Sycorax video-style, he remains preoccupied with the relationship between written and spoken language. Colonial legacies of language are traumatic in two respects: on the one hand, slaves were denied access to formal education. Learning how to read and write was a punishable offense, and literacy was often acquired by fugitive means. On the other hand, when descendants of slaves were permitted into institutions of higher learning, their sound colonial education denigrated and erased their culture. Despite this troubled history, Brathwaite demonstrates that the relationship between oral and scribal methods need not be oppositional or antagonistic. He explores how the graphic medium of the page functions as a stage for aural encounters. His use of the term video not only signals the visual aspects of print culture but the visual coding of sound that can "abolish" the material borders of the bounded book. Rather than focus on poems that straightforwardly stage or dramatize storytelling—through the figure of the West African griot, for example—I turn to Brathwaite's embrace of jazz as an organizing principle and intellectual resource. It makes sense to take up music in relation to Brathwaite for two reasons. As Elaine Savory notes, "what is key to Brathwaite's language is its increasing

[137] His most recent collection is titled *The Lazarus Poems* (2017).

attempt to cease to be one language" (*Journey*, 126). His defamiliarization of English—using what he calls "nation language"—occurs simultaneously with his refamiliarization of it through an embrace of Caribbean vernacular forms. I posit that Brathwaite wishes to bring language closer to music because of the latter's ability to take us to "the very edge of semantic availability."[138] Moreover, black musical traditions, ranging from blues and bebop to calypso and reggae, have influenced his creative and critical work because they offer spaces of social and artistic liberation. Bebop and free jazz in particular are sites for formal experimentation in the realms of melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre. The range of techniques in Brathwaite's Sycorax video-style enacts parallel departures in style. While his typographic, orthographic, and hieroglyphic transmutations continue to create difficulties for potential typesetters and publishers, the challenges of his later work also create opportunities for interpreters of these audio-visual palimpsests.[139]

Musicians such as Charlie Parker, Bessie Smith, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, and John Coltrane were recognized as brilliant soloists *and* collaborators. Jazz as an art form does not negate the existence of the individuals involved in its creation or their diverse worldviews. Rather, this music subtly counters the belief that "only individuals compose" (Meyer 107). For Brathwaite, I argue, the jazz ensemble offered a social model for national and transnational networks of solidarity. These musical groups privilege cohesion as much as they do stylistic variegation. While histories of jazz may lionize particular figures, a rich strand of research undertaken by Ingrid Monson, Howard

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[138] Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 134.
[139] Matthew G. Kirschenbaum in *Track Changes* (2016) writes in footnote 55, "Publishers who take on the challenge of printing Brathwaite's work typically use scans of camera-ready proofs that he provides, resulting in a photo-offset process. But Brathwaite is also emphatic about the physical size of his books as an element in their presentation, and has often had to compromise to accept standardized dimensions…"

Becker, Alex Stewart, and others continues to foreground the complex interactions, processes of listening, and types of knowledge that circulate between band members. Brathwaite turned to black music in order to push against the ideal of poetry as an expressive mode of individualism. Instead, a poetic practice could serve to acknowledge, document, and contribute to marginalized communities. In the sections that follow I will first expand upon his concept of "nation language" to think through the significance of non-standard speech forms. Next, I will provide context for Brathwaite's interest in disseminating jazz throughout the Caribbean and analyze his six-part sequence "Blues" from *Other Exiles* (1975). Finally, I will study the video-poem "Duke" from a later volume entitled *Elegguas* (2010). The title plays on elegy, that poetic form so crucial in the history of Anglophone poetry, and West African rituals of mourning through its reference to Eleggua or Legba, the Yoruba god of thresholds and crossroads. I wish to demonstrate that this tragic period in Brathwaite's life is not a break but a hinge swinging backwards and forwards. His dedication to the written word is characterized by disarrangement as much as it is by fastidious arrangement. This chapter is a response to Meta Du Ewa Jones's call for research "that recognizes the oral and textual as imbricated, not disparate, elements" (66).

In the lecture transcribed and published as *History of the Voice* (1984), Brathwaite tells us that "[t]o confine our definitions of literature to written contexts in a culture that remains oral in most of its people proceedings is as limiting as its opposite: trying to define Caribbean literature as essentially orature" (49).[140] The term *orature*, coined by

[140] *History of the Voice* is concerned with orality and aurality not just in its content but its form. It is one of several works—including *Barabajan Poems* and *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*—that inhabits a curious generic space because of their origins as transcribed lectures and conversations, initially performed and interspersed with other recorded and live voices.

Ugandan literary theorist Pio Zirimu and expanded upon by Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, has proven useful for many scholars through its deconstruction of an assumed opposition between textuality and orality. These two categories are not only mutually enabling but co-constitutive. Ultimately Brathwaite seeks to reconcile oral and scribal forms by way of a musical turn. He infuses print with sound in order to ask how our performances and perceptions of sonic experience might generate political force. Jazz has something in common with Caribbean vernaculars in that standard forms of notation fail to capture their performance. These two kinds of readers typically engage in unacknowledged acts of translation, converting musical bars or written paragraphs from "straight" to swing. Brathwaite aims to reverse this process so that Western readers who once believed themselves to be fluent must face the limits of their linguistic mastery. This reversal is part and parcel of building a writing tradition rooted in a distinctly Caribbean repertoire.

Submerged Rhythms

History of the Voice (1984) offers a succinct definition of what Brathwaite calls "nation language": "Nation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage" (13). He acknowledges its lexical similarities to English while also stating that "in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English" (13). He anticipates the parallels his audience might draw to dialect and rejects the term. He argues that the word connotes "inferior" language and limits our understanding of expressive forms rooted in Caribbean peoples' lived experience and knowledge. While Caribbeans speak in nation

language, "[c]aricature speaks in dialect" (13). The non-standard Englishes he describes emerge from "the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there" as a consequence of genocide and slavery (13). Brathwaite concludes that nation language "may be in English: but often it is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues" (13). Here and throughout the piece he focuses on the unique sonorous qualities of vernacular forms. By using terms such as explosions, howls, shouts, machine-guns, winds, and waves he invokes a sense of volume and intensity, as well as an ephemeral, unpredictable, ever-evolving medium. He harkens to Martinican thinker Edouard Glissant, who also links Francophone creoles to machine-gun fire to highlight *not* speed, as one might assume, but rather a rhythmic pulse and staccato or detached delivery. For Brathwaite, the significance of these alternative rhythms lies in the fact that they challenge the dominance of English pentameter. Words such as howl and shout carry with them the idea of animals, human and nonhuman alike. Winds and waves draw on depersonalized nature more broadly, on the hurricanes and cyclones that shape and reshape the region. Not surprisingly, in this same lecture, Brathwaite famously asserts that the "hurricane does not roar in pentameters."

Finally, he makes a comparison to the blues. By allowing this sentence to stand on its own, but without immediate elaboration, he encourages his listeners and readers to take up this provocative juxtaposition themselves. In order to answer how nation language might be like the blues, we have to remind ourselves of the key characteristics of this musical genre. First, we might connect the two ideas using the "sound explosions" Brathwaite describes. Blues music incorporates field hollers, shouts, and chants; these

utterances necessitate shifts in timbre and tessitura, blurring the distinction between what is sung, spoken, and screamed. We should consider how, as Cheryl Wall writes, vocalists tend to "worry the line" by fragmenting a phrase with flattened pitches, repeated words, and sudden cries or moans. We must also regard form, wherein lies a similar reliance on the interplay of call-and-response and cyclical schemes. Repetition more broadly is crucial both in blues narrative ballads and the transmission of oral knowledge. Finally, we should be aware of parallels in terms of content that attends to the individual and collective experience of dehumanization, the illumination of black interiority, and the yearning for real freedom.

Even as Brathwaite gradually aligned himself with local Caribbean musical genres and rhythms, he did not abandon jazz. Instead he found ways to think about this imported black tradition alongside folksong, folklore, and local scenes. Calypso in particular, which commonly employed the dactyl as its primary metric form—offered an alternative to the dominance of the pentameter. In *History of the Voice* he writes, "It was only when I discovered that the calypso (*kaiso*) – that syncopated traditional music of ours, which was in fact a correlation of fragmented landscapes, that ancient and new musical form which was ours – would help me as a poet… that my own poetry began to move" (27-28).

Nation language, and much of our understanding of it, stems from lived experiences of and participation in oral traditions. This is one reason why, as Brathwaite states, an "encyclopedic body of learned commentary" does not exist. Nevertheless, in the time since his initial performance and later publication of *History of the Voice*, scholars have taken up his formulation in order to situate it among other Caribbean

theories of language and to analyze its development in a variety of Caribbean texts and performances. Brathwaite goes on to write that the Caribbean tradition of spoken word "is based as much on sound as it is on song" (17). He does not privilege vocal music, as one might expect. Rather, he points to a broader sense of aurality that underpins the continued proliferation of nation language. He claims that "the noise that it makes is part of the meaning, and if you ignore the noise (or what you would *think* of as noise, shall I say) then you lose part of the meaning" (17). His crucial parenthetical aside here recognizes the subjective nature of perceptual experience and implies, too, the social conditioning and cultural histories that inform the hierarchical sensory divide between desirable sounds and undesirable noise. Counterintuitively, he links sense *with* noise, going against the grain of noise's basic definition as meaningless sound. He ends this section stating, "When it is written, you lose the sound or the noise, and therefore you lose part of the meaning" (17). This observation does not signal a kind of resignation on Brathwaite's part. Rather than forsake textual inscription, he has spent nearly seven decades exploring and inventing techniques for recuperating this loss of meaning—this loss of noise—within written formats.

One significant aspect of nation language is its role in what he terms "total expression" (18). Perhaps evoking for some Richard Wagner's notion of Gesamtkunstwerk, Brathwaite's total expression is not only concerned with generic or medial synthesis. It is concerned with cultural syncretism, an impulse that both unifies and diversifies the Caribbean imaginary. Most importantly, total expression is concerned with communities, real and imagined. The oral tradition, he writes, "demands not only the griot but the audience to complete the community: the noise and sounds that the

maker makes are responded to by the audience and are returned to him. Hence we have the creation of a continuum where meaning truly resides" (19). Brathwaite contrasts orality with textuality by claiming that reading is a solitary act. The kind of storytelling he wishes to foreground involves living presences and ephemeral sounds. I would posit that the call-and-response format creates a continuum not only of meaning but of agency and responsibility (alongside what Emanuel Levinas calls "response-ability"). Oral encounters equalize—they depend as much upon the audience as the performer and, in fact, blur the line between these roles. Césaire's figure of the poet-politician as spokesperson has little claim in Brathwaite's framework. In order to counter what Brathwaite termed the "ego/alienation" model with the "gestalt/communality" model (*Roots* 108), he eventually revised his ideas of reading and its limitations. At the time of delivering *History of the Voice*, he had not yet considered how the book could also be a site for active participation rather than passive consumption. [Transition]

Brathwaite's sense of community has continued to ripple outward, expanding from one island to the Caribbean region to the African continent. Brathwaite had spent eight years in Ghana before returning to the Caribbean in 1962 and felt keenly that his passage had led to "obscure miracle of connection" (*Roots* 190). This connection had an impact on Brathwaite's literary voice, which he sought to free from the restrictions of Western standards. Moreover, the decolonial movement in the Anglophone Caribbean coincided the development of his writing career. In 1967 he published *Rights of Passage,* the first volume of his trilogy. One year prior Barbados had gained political independence. Individuals began joining together to undertake collective enterprises, including Caribbean literary journals with overtly political claims such as *Voices, Abeng,*

and *Jamaica Journal* (Donnell 20). Following a 1965 conference on Caribbean literary aesthetics at the University of the West Indies Brathwaite, Brathwaite and fellow writers Andrew Salkey and John La Rose began the Caribbean Arts Movement in 1966. Their five-year initiative was not limited to writers but included film makers, visual artists, and musicians.[141] As Peter J. Kalliney explains, the group rejected any bureaucratic or hierarchical methods for organizing themselves and instead operated as a forum for exchange and promotion.[142] In her article "A Sense of Community: Kamau Brathwaite and the Caribbean Artists Movement," Anne Walmsley asserts that, "for Brathwaite at least, one of CAM's main objectives was to counteract what he saw as a tendency towards individualism amongst his fellow Caribbean writers" (101). Although short-lived, the movement embodied for Brathwaite the possibility of collective achievement and a consciousness more rooted to a pre-colonial African model.

Music of a Free Man

As a teenager, Brathwaite sought to share his newfound interest in jazz with his community. In her article "'Traveling Miles': Jazz in the Making of a West Indian Intellectual," Donnette A. Francis offers a concise account of his efforts to spread bebop in Barbados. Because local newspapers did not review jazz records or performances, Brathwaite began a column in his school paper at Harrison College. In addition, he hosted two programs dedicated to avant-garde jazz on the college radio station along with

[141] It was at a CAM meeting on February 3, 1967 that Brathwaite first gave a talk entitled "The West Indian Jazz Novel." It is not taken up in this chapter as it relates specifically to the novel form, but it contains ideas that permeate other critical writings and later prose. He is particularly interested in the literary elements of the calypso form, West Indian writing, and jazz.
[142] Kalliney, Peter J. *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics*. Oxford UP, 2013, p. 249.

several of his peers. Brathwaite notes that "even as [he] was on the air people were phoning in, asking what was going on" (146). Like Francis, I wish to emphasize radio's dual role as an instrument for transmitting and receiving. Although Brathwaite was unable to continue the broadcast, he at least knew it had not been met with apathetic silence. In an interview with the poet-scholar Nathaniel Mackey, he recalls the specific responses his deejaying elicited: listeners "demand[ed] the incarceration of the perpetrators, the, as they saw us, cultural traitors. Instead of Mozart or Rogers and Hart we were playing, I think, 'Oop Bop s'Bam' or 'Shaw Nuff' or 'Ornithology,' certainly something hard by Dizzy and Bird, followed by Thelonious Monk" (#). Brathwaite had not attempted to introduce listeners to the jazz tradition gradually. Instead, he shocked them with the relentless, radical experimentation of contemporary bebop. Ralph Ellison put it succinctly: "bop sprang partially from the desire to create a jazz which could not be so easily imitated and exploited by white musicians to whom the market was more open" (Ellison, "The Golden Age," 212). Brathwaite's focus on the innovative work of Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Monk makes sense for several reasons. He wanted to challenge the cultural values the bourgeois middle class had inherited from Britain. Furthermore, he considered blues to be the musical expressivity of the black slave while jazz "is the music of the freed man," a mode perfectly suited to the "rootless, 'cultureless,' truly ex-patriate Negro." His description of the ex-patriate freed man does not simply apply to his own nomadic existence but to Afro-Caribbean populations as a whole. "Cultureless" remains in quote marks as if to signal a common misconception perhaps best articulated in V.S. Naipaul's claim that "nothing has ever been created in the Caribbean." Brathwaite links jazz's "collective blare of protest" with "its affirmation of

the life and rhythm *of the group*" (Donnell 336, emphasis mine). His attempts to spread this music to a larger audience is bound up with his belief in its intrinsically communal nature.

Scholars have critiqued Brathwaite's calypsonian and jazz poetics, arguing that the latter in particular fails to adequately recreate musical sound. Although his words are no substitute for Coltrane's music, they also do not aspire to be. As Louis James asserts, "The poems make no attempt to directly reproduce sound effects, nor do they give a conspectus of the achievement of jazz" (James 70). What Brathwaite is concerned with is the evolution of a distinctly West Indian poetic tradition, one informed by intersecting musical frames. "Blues" is a cluster of six short poems dedicated to influential figures in jazz. It is less a sequence than a deconstruction of the jazz ensemble. Despite an apparent focus on famous individuals, the poems read together the social networks in which these figures are enmeshed: their bands as well as their audiences. Each poem highlights an instrumentalist who functions as part of the ensemble: pianist, drummer, trumpeter, saxophonist, bassist. In fact, Brathwaite changed the titles of some of these poems when they reappeared in later collections. For example, "Piano" became "Basie" and then "Basic Basie" while "Interlude for Alto Saxophone" became "Trane." These titles are more overt homages to specific performers, but, I would contend, the role of the individual remains muted. When assembled, the poems often share or bleed into the same page. Their presentation and content invite readers to seek connections between them. The short series emphasizes how each instrumental archetype contributes to the dynamic of the whole band. My analysis will not attempt to span the entire sequence but instead focus on three of the six poems.

The first line of "Basie" imagines the jazz pianist and organist William James "Count" Basie as "[h]unched, hump-backed, gigantic" (12). The term gigantic reappears in the poem's final line, describing "brash boogie-woogie hordes" that "come burgeoning up from hell" (12). On first read this phrase would seem to represent Basie's take on the genre's distinct basslines. But it could easily apply to the audiences clamoring to fill up jazz clubs. Paul Griffith notes that this reference to descents into and ascents from the underworld echoes Ralph Ellison's underground Invisible Man, who strives to hear the full breadth and depth of Louis Armstrong's music by playing multiple phonographs at once (10). Brathwaite writes that "dissonance and discord vie / and vamp" in Basie's playing (12). The idea of vying and vamping—competing and repeating—is explicitly applied to Basie's piano style, which was famously marked by contrapuntal accents. However, Basie was also known for the unique organization of his band, which included two tenor saxophone players rather than one. This "split" tenor arrangement both emerged from and encouraged a streak of competition among bandmates. In the third stanza Basie's hands "beat / the beat until the whole joint / rocks" (12). Beating the beat seems not only to reference the piano's liminal position as both a stringed and percussive instrument but, perhaps, Basie's early preference for drums as an adolescent, despite his natural talent for piano. In an unexpected turn in the third stanza, the pianist's "subtle fingering exudes a sweet exotic / fragrance" (12). Brathwaite assures us: "you'll / recognize the odour if you listen well" (12). These three lines offer a synesthetic rendering that blends the audience's olfactory and auditory senses. Interestingly, Brathwaite chooses to conflate Basie's listening audience with his readerly one. That is, he references the imagined listeners using the second person pronoun "you" that applies

to both singular and plural subjects and simultaneously addresses the reader.

Kenneth Spearman Clark, also known as Klook, was a percussionist and bandleader whose after-hours jam sessions contributed to the development of bebop. In the third stanza Brathwaite envisions his drum set as “his throne of skin and symbol,” where “he controls the jumping rumble / using simple shock and cymbal” (12). The poet builds in assonance with simple and cymbal as well as the homophonous evocation of symbol, which appears just two lines earlier. The image and sound of the cymbal is all the more significant to readers familiar with Klook’s stylistic experiments. Rather than rely on the snare drum or hi-hat and bass drum to keep time, he used the ride cymbal. Doing so demanded more independence between the two hands and allowed for increasingly syncopated lines. Music producer Ross Russell notes the change in sonic color and feel that accompanied this style: "The vibration of the cymbal, once set in motion, is maintained throughout the number, producing a shimmering texture of sound that supports, agitates, and inspires the line men. This is the tonal fabric of bebop jazz" (qtd. in Gitler, 174). Russell’s comment also highlights the mercurial dynamic among the individuals who form a combo: support, agitation, and inspiration are just a few of the relational modes that shape their sound and interactions. Brathwaite describes how Klook’s playing “leaves you / prancing” and “patterning: giotto, ghirlandaio, chano pozo, klook…” (13). The second person pronoun that appeared in “Basie” surfaces here, interpolating two imagined audiences at once—Klook’s spectators and Brathwaite’s readers.

Moreover, while “Basie” touches upon a synaesthetic mingling of sound and scent, “Klook” evokes a sense of aurality coupled with visuality, albeit in a more subtle

manner. Giotto references the medieval Italian painter who broke away from the dominant Byzantine style to create art that represented realistic facial expressions and gestures as well as the natural weight and draping of fabrics. Giotto is a particularly apt reference because his use of perspective invites viewers to insert themselves within a scene as active participants, much in the same way Brathwaite seeks to involve listeners and readers. Ghirlandaio references the Italian Renaissance painter who instructed Michelangelo and many other apprentices in his workshop. His inclusion seems to echo Klook's influence on jazz drummers. Chano Pozo is short for Cuban jazz percussionist and composer Luciano Pozo Gonzalez, who was at the forefront of Latin jazz and major influence of Dizzy Gillespie. By listing these proper names in lower-case without pause or elaboration, he seems to equalize them. They are all part of a "patterning." Furthermore, this list appears immediately after the line "leaves you / prancing," and readers unfamiliar with these names might read them as dance styles. The kaleidoscopic effect that prancing and patterning produce leads directly into the third poem "Miles." The first line—"He grows dizzy"—functions not only as a reference to Dizzy Gillespie, whom Miles replaced in Charlie Parker's band, but as the natural result of prancing and patterning.

In a poem dedicated to the saxophonist John Coltrane, Brathwaite begins with an image of "the crowded bar" (14). This simple phrase not only evokes a jazz club packed with people but a musical bar or measure. The doubled meaning of a crowded bar is significant not only in light of Coltrane's popularity—which this poem seems to challenge—but also in light of his particular improvisational style. The critic Ira Gitler coined the term "sheets of sound" to describe Coltrane's use of densely overlaid strings

of arpeggios and scales. During his collaborations with Thelonius Monk and Miles Davis, he began employing rapid successions of notes that spanned multiple octaves. Moving deftly across the lowest and highest registers, the effect often mimicked that of a glissando. Coltrane's experimental style resulted in a destabilization of the common harmonic progressions at the root of hard bop.[143] In the second and third lines of the first stanza, Brathwaite writes: "he pours into the curved and silver horn / his old unhappy longing for a home" (14). Again, the poet plays with polysemy with his use of the word "home," which not only refers to a literal home but the "home" or tonic key of a composition.

Meta Du Ewa Jones coined the term "multiphonemics" to describe jazz poetry's performative layering of multiple meanings in a single word. She links it to one of Coltrane's hallmarks, wherein he plays several pitches simultaneously on the saxophone. Brathwaite's musician "wishes he could burn / his memories to ashes like some old notorious emperor / of rome" (14). The Italian city remains uncapitalized, inviting readers to read it as listeners might hear it: roam. This play on words is particularly meaningful in relation to the earlier lines of "longing for a home" and in relation to how Coltrane's dizzying cascade of notes forced the listener's ear to travel further away from the cycle of fifths harmonic movement to which they were accustomed. In addition, the reference to emperor seems especially apt considering the tradition of informally bestowing honorific and royal titles upon jazz musicians. While Monk was known as the "High Priest of Bop" and Davis as the "Prince of Darkness," Coltrane was known simply as Trane. Similarly,

[143] He eventually popularized a kind of harmonic progression alternately known as "Coltrane changes, "Coltrane cycle," and "Coltrane matrix." This kind of harmonizing relied on chromatic third relations and employed alternative chords above common jazz progressions.

the calypsonian tradition of the Anglophone Caribbean also employs soubriquets such as "Lord Melody," "The Duke of Iron," and "King Obstinate." This allusion to empire seems less concerned with the history of imperialism in the Black Atlantic and more concerned with the paradoxical scene Brathwaite has created. In this poem readers encounter a drawn and tired musician who believes that a crowded bar "holds all the fame and recognition he will ever earn / on earth or heaven" (14). This perspective is in tension with the simple fact that Coltrane achieved immense success during his lifetime and posthumously. When the figure "leans against the bar" once more at the poem's conclusion, Brathwaite illustrates not just a physical gesture but a manner of playing, of pulling and pushing the barlines of the score that attempt to demarcate and organize melody and rhythm.

Of the six poems in the blues sequence, "Trane" contains the most repetition. The opening image of the musician who "pours" an "old unhappy longing" into his saxophone resurfaces in the final line of the last stanza. The line "dancers twist and turn" also appears twice in the brief poem, beginning the second stanza and concluding the third. One key element Brathwaite takes from jazz is the genre's kaleidoscopic use of repetition. As scholars such as Walter Ong note, the transmission of oral cultures and knowledge relies upon degrees of repetition in form and content. Brathwaite articulates a particular relationship to repetition through his notion of tidalectics, an alternative to Hegel's dialectical process wherein two opposing sides are resolved by way of synthesis. The writer Wayde Compton, elaborating on Brathwaite's idea, remarks that "[r]epetition, whether in the form of ancestor worship or the poem-histories of the griot, informs black ontologies more than does the Europeanist drive for perpetual innovation, with its

concomitant disavowals of the past" (Compton 2001, 17). At the core of Caribbean life and the creative process is an ebb and flow. Brathwaite's repeated lines have subtle variations—"dancers twist and turn" first appears as an independent, declarative sentence and later as an adverbial phrase to describe the club. The musician initially "pours his old unhappy longing" into a "curved and silver horn" but later reintroduces the horn as a saxophone. Compton tells us that the idea is not "to preserve, but to repeat; and to celebrate repetition, knowing that you will mis-duplicate" (Compton 2003b). In other words, this marine movement of ebbing and flowing is not exactly cyclical. Brathwaite's particular use of repetition as inspired by jazz is bound up with the question of retention—the still living presence of African cultures in the Caribbean. Antonio Benitez Rojo, the Cuban thinker who theorizes what he calls the Caribbean meta-archipelago, writes of "a ritual language which, in its repetition, tries to interpret two performances of the impossible: to *be* a Caribbean person and to *be there* in the Caribbean" (241). Repetition, as embodied in Brathwaite's tidalectics, is at the heart of nation language as well, which is why he likens it to waves and winds and even the stutter of a machine gun. As one migrates from his early writing to more recent work, one finds that repetition remains essential to the development of his Sycorax video style. As Anne Reckin notes, the effect of these alternative book designs "is very different from the straight up-and-down-the-page, or front-to-back-of-the-book reading that is required" (3). These multimodal volumes are assemblages of moving parts; recurring words, symbols, and fonts can serve to clarify, multiply, and obscure a given perspective.

Witch, Mother, Switch, Other

Sycorax has long lived in the shadow of her son Caliban. Deformed and enslaved by Prospero, he remains a powerful figure in Caribbean literature and anti-colonial thought. Authors such as George Lamming, Aimé Césaire, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, and Brathwaite himself have reappropriated this island native, who uses his forced fluency in English to curse his master: "You taught me language, and my profit on't is I know how to curse." While Caliban still plays an important role, Shakespeare's unseen Sycorax has generally remained invisible. When she is taken up in postcolonial creative or critical texts, she typically represents the silenced Third World women erased from colonial histories. For Brathwaite, however, she becomes not only mother but machine and muse. Sycorax doesn't simply appear in Brathwaite's dream. She dreams *for* him, on his behalf, like a proxy-dreamer or a co-conspirator. Much in the same way his turn to jazz serves to de-center the individual, his conceptualization of the origin, content, and transmission of Sycorax video style involves the participation of another figure: the sorceress herself. His oneiric experience is remarkable in light of the deep, unrelenting isolation that characterizes dreaming. While dreams themselves may be populated with people both familiar and unfamiliar, the act of dreaming is embarked upon solely by the individual. For Brathwaite, however, Sycorax dreams up objects and stories; from these emerge new typographies that in turn become new topographies. We don't know how fonts become vehicles, but this form of travel seems an important parallel to the metaphors (highways, frontiers, cyberspace) we use to understand the otherwise formless internet. Fonts also evoke the many debates about language and orthography in the Caribbean.

Elsewhere Brathwaite writes that Caliban, who cannot perform his mother's magic, is a "primitive rebel." Lest you think his critique too harsh, he takes care to remind us, "but then, you see, colonial caliban is not supposed to get it right."[144] Brathwaite recognizes that Caliban's cursing is an attempt to use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house, a task Audre Lorde tells us is futile. Rather than rely on a curser, the poet follows the computer cursor's arrow to precolonial cultures of Ancient Egypt and Mesoamerica. By aligning himself with Sycorax, he circumvents this trap and develops an idiolect that combines voice, book, and imagined screen. In his more recent poetry, he relies on nation language not just to build a personal lexicon of grief but to articulate the historical specificities of Afro-Caribbean culture. Brathwaite dreams a dreamer who shows him the way. Banished to an island for an unspecified crime, Sycorax eventually claims it as her own by enchanting the land and its spirits. As a sorceress, she is not merely Prospero's opposite but his equal. Despite her physical absence, characters repeatedly invoke her memory. This gesture is both a reminder of the threat she once posed and an incantation to ward against her return. Sycorax persists in the cultural imagination because she embodies freedom and autonomy. She is both what came before the master and a master in her own right. Sycorax's domain is every island and, perhaps, every islander's dream.

In his 1963 essay "Jazz and the White Critic" writer Amiri Baraka argues that critics and historians have generally ignored jazz's social context. For him, their ignorance was tied to a refusal of black American intellectuality. The social dynamics in which this music was created were not external to it; the "dictates" of the African

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[144] Brathwaite, Kamau. "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Proem for Hernan Cortez." *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1985, pp. 453–476.

American's "social and psychological environment" could, in fact, be found in the music itself. In the landmark book of cultural criticism *Blues People*, Baraka asserts, "The catalysts and necessity of Coltrane's music must be understood as they exist even before they are expressed as music." Scott Saul distills Baraka's point well: the critic's most pressing task is not to appreciate Coltrane's scream but to ask, "Why does this man—and so many like him—feel compelled to scream in the first place?"[145] I wish to follow Baraka's mandate and ask *why* Brathwaite appears to be performing on the page, rather than simply appreciate it.

At first glance "Duke" is simply a celebration of the jazz pianist and composer Duke Ellington. I, however, detect a broader field of engagement, an impulse to not only represent but to somehow call forth the communal. In the first stanza the musician who able to "make of solitude / a silver thing" (16) is able to transform a personal and seemingly impenetrable feeling into a solid instrument. The implication is that this alchemical process continues as he changes this "silver thing" into a communal music. Although ostensibly focused on Ellington, the "old man" whose "hands are alligator / skins," I would claim the first stanza actually situates this lone figure in an invisible ensemble (16). Brathwaite's description of a piano deconstructs it and turns it into a sea of instruments, a "harp stringed keyboard" (16). It is within this milieu of harp, strings, and keys that he will turn solitude into a "silver thing," a phrase that doesn't at all describe a piano but certainly describes a brass instrument such as the saxophone or trumpet. Moreover, it is a call back to the much earlier poem "Trane," whose subject "pours into the curved and silver horn / his old unhappy longing for a home" (14).

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[145] Scott Saul, "Baraka's Blues People," *Harvard University Press Blog*, January 10, 2014.

The ambiguous second-person pronoun, both Ellington's spectator and Brathwaite's reader, reappears in the line "to love you madly" (16). Not only does an unidentified subject "love you" but they do so "with the wisdom of so many" (16). Here, he acknowledges that extraordinary musicians develop in a web of relations with teachers, collaboraters, mentors, and proteges, among others. This line also evokes the significance of collective memory and collective knowledge in the Caribbean and black diaspora more broadly. The implication is that knowledge and wisdom cannot be discovered in isolation. The line that follows, "& dish & clutter knife & clatter up," (16) seems to sketch quotidian elements of black domestic life in a highly compressed manner not unlike Gwendolyn Brooks. Nestled in the same short stanza, the "wisdom of so many" is intimately connected with the unspecified actors who must wrangle daily with a range of "dish & clutter knife & clatter up." Still, these people find time to flood the "dancehall bars" and even their own streets and "barrios" (16).

Periods of varying size separate different sections. What seems like a strange aside about his cousin Bigard cleaning a bathroom is perhaps linked to the suggestion of everyday scenes in the "& dish & clutter knife & clatter up" line. This particular page ends with the opening lines of the next section: "wet glass / of" is typed in small print (17). What follows is the large, bolded, pixellated block letters/text: "SUPA / NOVA HEADLIGHTS," (18) a reference to singer Bessie Smith's tragic and fatal car crash on September 26, 1937. We then see an unfamiliar, pixellated symbol in smaller type that consists of an unfilled circle hovering above what appears to be the letter C. This, in turn, is followed by the lines "Bessie / Bessie / Bessie Smith / the empress of our shattered blues" (18). Whereas in an earlier poem Brathwaite presents Coltrane's wish to "burn /

his memories to ashes like some old notorious emperor" (14), Bessie is not likened to an empress but declared one. A more familiar symbol—the ampersand—begins the second stanza begins: "& / you / smiling up front in the coach every morning / after the thousand & one / one night stands" (18). The "you" here seems less applicable to any reading or listening figure than it does to Smith herself. When she was eighteen years old, she joined a small traveling troupe and performed as a dancer rather than singer because the company was already known for the legendary blues singer Ma Rainey.

Smith went on to perform with a number of chorus lines; it's likely the number of her shows exceeds Brathwaite's "thousand & one / one night stands." The allusion to the Arabian Nights folk tales not only highlights the singer's role as Scheherazadian storyteller but contributes to the kind of mythos that limns contemporary histories of blues, jazz, and black social life. Smith built her reputation traveling along the circut of the black-owned Theater Owners Booking Assocation and later signed with Columbia Records. Her reception was complex—many circles considered her persona and style to be too "rough" or low class. Despite the elitism that shaped the judgements of white and black listeners, the media would eventually dub her the Empress of the Blues. She became the highest paid black entertainer of the 1920s and Brathwaite's "coach" is a reference to the custom railroad car she had built for her and up to forty troupers. After a line break, Brathwaite puts his readers in a metaphorical coach and outlines an itinerary. What follows is an italicized litany of cities and towns where African Americans encountered the most virulent racism: "Watts / St Louis / Selma Alabama / Chicago / Montgomery / Bus Boycott / Cairo / where they most nearly kill you / Sphinx / Pharoah / Memphis Tennessee" (18). The list is marked by an unexpected turn. Cairo, a city in

Illinois, doubles as Cairo, Egpyt; rather than note the American state, as he does with Alabama and Tennessee, he leans into the diasporic connection. Even in the aftermath of these race riots, "the happy-go-lucky locals / shout" (19).

As the poem draws to a close, Brathwaite reminds his readers: “it is not a question my friends / … of who shit. in with who in the shithouse” (19). The shithouse gestures back towards his cousin Bigard cleaning urine in a restroom. These mentions of human excreta mingle with references to empresses and pharoahs. "Duke" brings together Ellington, Smith, and other jazz greats such as the clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, singer Ivie Anderson, and drummer Sonny Greer. Through the invocation of extraordinary musicians, sites of racial violence, and human waste, the poem creates a constellation of black achievement and tragedy that shows how black culture is simultaneously denigrated and lauded. The same stanza that chides Brathwaite's "friends," which would seem to include his readers, for focusing on "who shit. in with who in the shithouse" ends with a moving meditation on what he sees as the aim of diasporic art and politics, which "is a matter of hope of the right to continue the dream / about our rightful place at the table” (19). The cyclical violence instigated against black Americans coexists with the veneration of particular individuals. Brathwaite's dream of liberation—of how we get there and how we stay there—is enabled by black music.

The ampersand begins to function in a manner similar to the multi-sized period marks that separate sections. What follows his assertion about black peoples' seat at the table is "the curtain psyching up / & the lights swimming down into the thunder of silence / & each time is that creak before birth / Jimmy Hamilton’s like carolina clarinet / leading us out of the silence” (20). The ineffable nature of music—our inability to

satisfactorily define or describe it with language—brings us to the edge of silence. But, as Brathwaite reminds us, music can also lead us out of it. The earlier litany of place-names and their violent histories is counterbalanced by a list of Ellington's popular compositions: "Afternoon of a Saxophone / Caravan / Perdido / Cottontail / Satin Doll / Sophisticated Lady / Transblucency / the creo / Creole Love Call" (20). Brathwaite is not content to leave Ellington in the spotlight and urges reader-listeners: "Let me hear it one more time / for"—and here there is a page break—"IVIE ANDERSONNNG" (20-1). Anderson, whose vocation becomes attached to her last name with an additional letter, was Ellington's first regular vocalist. In the poem her name is enlarged and printed with typographical flourishes. Another ampersand then allows Brathwaite to cut to a brief summer scene of "old men . cymbell children" sitting on stoops in Washington D.C. He then describes Sonny Greer ambling along railroad tracks and sidewalks "clickin sticks" and, perhaps, playing with those "cymbell children" (21). The wealth of references throughout the poem, but particularly in this section, illuminates a subtle thread in Brathwaite's listening practices. He deftly notes the distinctive character of individual instruments as well as the ways they can be used to imitate, challenge, or switch places with each other. His evocations of jazz vocalists such as Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Ivie Anderson, for example, inform his understanding of brass and wind instruments, which are similarly engaged in acts based on the controlled use of inhalation, exhalation, and vibrato. As Albert Murray argues, the blues and, by extension, jazz are structured by strategies of "reciprocal 'voicing.'" This term defines the ways in which singers are often found "playing with their voices as if performing on an instrument" and instrumentalists treat "their brasses, woodwinds, strings, keyboards, and percussion as extensions of the

human voice" (qtd. in Hayes Edwards, 33). This dynamic might manifest in several ways: playing in unusual registers; over-blowing; scatting. Brathwaite seems sensitive to this relationship, at once symbiotic and mimetic.

A large period and page breaks returns readers to a Ellington at the Cotton Club in Harlem. Yet another list appears to add to the previous dyptich. This one notes the different musicians Ellington collaborated with, some by proper name and others by soubriquet: "Gonsalves / Rabbit / Harry Carney / Cootie / Nanton / Woodyard / Blanton / Cat / the doo-doo doo-doo wah / of / Harlem Air-Shaft" (22). Brathwaite's list contains two note-worthy subjects. "Cat" is a slang term for a jazz performer or enthusiast; it was often paired with the adjective "cool." This signifier could refer to anyone; Brathwaite's inclusion of it widens the scope of Ellington's collaborative network not only to musicians he has worked with but all those he might have. Finally, the onomatopoeic "doo-doo wah" of a jazz club's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system expands the notion of ensemble beyond the human to include one's very environment. This brings to mind not only R. Murray Schafer's notion of the soundscape but the history of modern black music's deliberate use of non-musical sounds in genres such as rap and dub. Furthermore, the inclusion of Harlem's air shafts indicates, for the poet and musician, a sensitivity to and appreciation of the unpredictable variables that continiously shape one's aesthetic practice. Most significantly, the inclusion of an air shaft in a jazz ensemble (albeit, a deconstructed one) recalls Brathwaite's description of nation language, which includes wind, wave, howls, and machine guns. The language of a people is intimately linked to their environment; so, too, is their music. The list of musical collaboraters segues into a narrative sketch in three stanzas. An unnamed first-person narrator figures

him or herself as an everyman, claiming, “i am born upon the sidewalk / on the corner . in the precint” (22). Despite a fatherless and impoverished upbringing, this section culminates in a mother’s reassurance. She says, both to her child and to the reader, that none of us could ever be “too poor / to hear a pride a Ko-Ko trombone lion roar” (22), referencing a little known Ellington piece. In the fourteen lines that take us to the poem’s conclusion, Brathwaite uses spare but vivid language to suture African American and Caribbean soundscapes. From “Caribbean stilt dance” and Carnival masquerades to “Buddy Bolden’s golden Strayhorn horn” and Jelly Roll Morton’s “Black Bottom Stomp”—all are contained in one musician’s hands “striding through the keyboard sidewalks alleyways & ages,” through space and time (23). It makes sense that this list is more fragmented than his earlier examples. In some ways it is a re-enactment of the cultural cross-pollination that continues to shape the black Americas.

The Talking Anti-book

The jazz saxophonist and composer Ornette Coleman said, "There is a music that has the quality to preserve life." For Coleman and Brathwaite both this music was jazz in all its permutations. I have traced Brathwaite’s repeated and refracted use of aurality in order to construct a “bridge of sound” (*Arrivants* 162) that spans his traumatic Time of Salt and decades of poetic practice. His commitment to musical exploration becomes a way to reconcile the tensions between the place of oral and written traditions in the Caribbean and the black diaspora more broadly. In his essay “Wringing the Word,” Nathaniel Mackey observes Brathwaite’s poetic use of “images of hyperaudition” (738).

He reminds us that the latter's writing should be understood in terms of its superimposition of aesthetic modes and perceptual faculties: textual, visual, aural. Music, and the listening and performance processes it enables, is not only a vehicle for formal poetic innovation but for a political vision. The jazz ensemble embodies Brathwaite's belief that individual talent is not enough to build a living and generative tradition rooted in Caribbean society.[146] As he explores in an early essay "Jazz and the West Indian Novel," it is the community that gives voice to the individual artist, not the inverse.

Brathwaite writes in *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* that "it was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master and it was in his (mis-)use of it that he perhaps most effectively rebelled" (237). Nation language is in many ways a continuation of that rebellion. If we take tidalectics into account, nation language can also be figured as repetition and anticipation. From the beginning of his writing career, Brathwaite departed rhythmically and metrically from classical English versification. He did so in order to destabilize the ideological hold of a dominant form of English. As David Scott writes, "a rationalist-colonialist historiography… seeks to deny that Afro-Caribbeans can speak other than through the idiom of Europe" (117). The development of his Sycorax video style further destabilized the authority of "proper" English through what he calls the "use of computer fontage to visualise his sense of dream & morph & riddim drama—videolectic enactment." The slippage between the embedded word videolect and the linguistic term idiolect—a form of language unique to an individual—is an important one. Brathwaite's spelling, syntax, and punctuation are idiosyncratic, but only to a point. His lived experience Caribbean

[146] Brathwaite is open about the connection between his writing on this subject and T.S. Eliot's famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

vernacular modes fuels his non-standard use of English. In *A Creole Experiment* Melanie Otto notes that the video style "effectively creolizes the Technologies of the Western World" (12). His writing distorts "a basic font logic in order to create new possibilities for listening" as well as "a democratic space for voices relegated to the bottom of intra-lingual hierarchies" (12). Brathwaite locates in jazz an exemplary space that allows for a mix of registers. Moreover, jazz models a valuable relation to tradition. Older ideas about and approaches to composing melody, harmony, and rhythm are not passively received. Rather, musicians make audible an active engagement with tradition that ultimately fuels the invention of the new.

He discovered, first in radio technologies and later in digital ones, new ways for artists and their communities to tap into and amplify what he calls the "underdrone of the poet's/artist's culture" (*Barabajan Poems*, 21). But even before Sycorax revealed to him video style, he transformed the colonizer's language in order to represent the poetic and political communities to which he belongs. As his work has continued to evolve, he has sought to expand these communities by treating his readers as participants within an ongoing conversation consisting of poetry, prose, audio recordings, historical research, interviews, and personal correspondences both newly composed and excavated from neglected archives. The computer has allowed him to continue this pursuit by offering control over elements typically beyond the purview of a writer. The typographic, orthographic, and pictographic changes in Brathwaite's later work, alongside paratextual and intertextual references, culminate in what he calls an "audioglyph." His audioglyphs allow us to see and hear alternative visions of the African diaspora. In Elaine Savory's words, he disrupts "the very concept of the page," creating volumes that can function

both as a “book” and “an antibook” of “inspired orature noted on paper like a musical score” (756). Savory’s claim about the book/antibook is sharply observed. However, her reference to musical scores fails to account for Brathwaite’s deep attachments to precisely the kinds of music that challenge the presumed accuracy of Western musical notation. Much in the same way that the traditional book form cannot sustain the Caribbean literary imaginary, the score struggles to reproduce jazz performance practices. Brathwaite seeks to bridge the gap between oral and written traditions so that Caribbeans might access both rather than being denied one. By writing in nation language and staging encounters with black music Brathwaite draws our attention to the sonorous relations that not only circulate among African diasporic communities but compose them.

Misperforming Voice in Wyclef Jean and Edwidge Danticat's Refugee Narratives

Fleeing Sound

> The bottom line is we'd like our immigrants to be disposable, to work when we need them, then disappear when we don't.
>
> *We don't want them to have children* because we worry that their children will crowd our schools and we'd rather have them taking care of our own.
>
> *We don't want them to get sick* because we worry that they'll fill up hospital beds alongside the other forty-five million uninsured Americans, at our expense.
>
> *We don't want them to get old,* at least not within our borders, because we don't want them to have to touch the diminishing Social Security funds that many of them have been steadily contributing to. (Edwidge Danticat, "Out of the Shadows")

In her June 2006 article "Out of the Shadows" in *The Progressive* Edwidge Danticat describes the xenophobic stance present in certain sectors of American society. Her statement lays out three imperatives—don't have children, don't get sick, and don't get old—all of which underpin what Michel Foucault calls biopower, that is, the mechanisms of power concerned with administering life. This regulatory regime is unequally enforced, and populations excluded from the protective bounds of citizenship are repressed in ways that directly affect biological processes related to reproduction, infant mortality rates, and life expectancy. The issue of disposability goes hand in hand, even if implicitly, with replaceability. As soon as one immigrant's laboring capacity is exhausted, another can assume his or her place with no discernable difference in treatment or outcome. Racial and ethnic distinctions are elided into a general sense of alterity. Disposability also ties into a notion most commonly evoked in relation to new technologies: built-in obsolescence. The most vulnerable humans are viewed as tools

with limited lifespans, not users or creators in their own right. Nevertheless, they do procreate; but the children whom one might view as ready replacements for disposable parents, are, in fact, undesirable. This is tied to old and entrenched fears about hypersexual others who produce hordes of offspring that threaten to overtake the "true" native population. Moreover, first-generation children raised in the host country will have advantages—citizenship by juris, linguistic fluency, the ability to move fluidly between cultures—their parents do not. These differences enable them to overcome the limited role their "kind" is supposed to fulfill. These children are better able to care for their elderly parents, whom the state casts as parasitic once they are no longer able to work. As Danticat observes, "They want your sweat, they want your good years, but they want it cheap… It's inconvenient that people want to stay" (32). In 2007, just one year after this article, Danticat would go on to publish her memoir *Brother, I'm Dying.* The book served to strengthen her platform, which she used to sharply criticize American immigration policy as a system that sustains racial capitalism through bodily subjugation and precarious labor.

Danticat, who is easily the most influential Haitian author in the United States and perhaps the Anglophone world, acknowledges that the success of Haitian musician Wyclef Jean laid the groundwork for her reception. Danticat published her first book *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in 1994, the same year the '90s hip hop trio known as the Fugees, or the "Refugee Camp," released their debut album, *Blunted on Reality*. The group consisted of Wyclef Jean, fellow Haitian rapper and producer Pras, and African American R&B singer and rapper Lauryn Hill. The Fugees revised the term *refugee* and its negative valence by claiming the word and removing its prefix. Régine Michelle Jean-Charles

writes that "[a]t the time of their debut, the 'boat people' image dominated public perception of Haiti" (838).[147] As Alexander Weheliye argues, "fugee" foregrounded disenfranchised identities and diasporic dimensions not limited to Haiti or black America. In doing so, the group drew attention to the plight of refugees globally. Although the group coined a neologism, they may not have realized its linguistic significance. Stemming from the Latin *refugere*, *re* translates to "back" and *fugere* to "flee." By excising the prefix, these artists removed any sense of direction or location from the action it once delimited. Refugees flee back—that is, they are forced backward and away from their own countries in order to escape natural and man-made catastrophes. But refugees also flee back in the sense that so often their hope is to return to their homeland. Without the "re," their itineraries are no longer pre-determined.

While the trio's debut received limited commercial acclaim, it built momentum towards their hugely successful second album *The Score* (1996). This in turn spawned solo careers by two members—Hill and Jean. In 1997 Wyclef released his first album titled *The Carnival* to critical acclaim.[148] In addition to producing eight studio albums, he also gained attention when he made a 2010 bid for the Haitian presidency. This bid was ultimately denied when he failed to meet residency requirements. Although his transnationalism allowed him to reach a level of stardom that would have been otherwise inaccessible, it also restricted his ability to participate in Haiti's political scene as head of state. Danticat herself observes that many Haitian Americans reconceived their own experiences in the U.S. using two temporal markers: "before Wyclef" and "after

[147] Jean-Charles' reference to boat people is a salient one. I am interested in how this capacious term has been mobilized against different groups at different historical junctures—Vietnamese, Cambodians, Haitians, Cubans, and Syrians, to name a few.
[148] The full title is Wyclef Jean Presents the Carnival Featuring the Refugee All-Stars.

Wyclef."1 Such distinctions point to how his ascension in popular culture affected public opinion of Haitians. Prior to his celebrity, Haitians in the United States who demonstrated national or ethnic pride faced an overt and particularly American strain of anti-Haitian sentiment. Jean-Charles notes "[t]he extent to which Wyclef conflates his own identity with representations of Haiti" (Jean-Charles 835). I agree with Jean-Charles that he is an important figure for Caribbean studies, despite the lack of scholarly attention he has received. I would add, however, that his tendency to elide his own beliefs, interests, and voice with that of the Haitian masses makes it all the more necessary to situate him in a broader conceptual field and to counteract his self-insertion in a longer narrative of "great men."

Wyclef and Danticat are perhaps an unusual pairing: much of his music is dedicated to the source material common in contemporary R&B and hip hop—namely sex, wealth, drugs, and violence—while Danticat is heralded in elite literary circles. For all his braggadocio, however, Wyclef also makes astute observations about the Haitian immigrant experience. Take, for example, this line from "Da Cypha" (2000): "Fresh outta school, picked on 'cause I'm bilingual / I barely spoke English but the gun language was universal." Here Wyclef acknowledges the derision he faced for being a non-native English speaker; he also notes that the language of gang violence was one readily available, growing up as he did in disadvantaged communities. In another song titled "Slums" (2017) Wyclef dedicates his verses "to all my refugees around the world." He begins by stating: "Statistically I ain't even supposed to be here," a line which acknowledges his individual insertion into the generalized realm of statistical analysis. In theories of biopower, statistics emerge as a key technology aimed at the comprehensive

measurement and regulation of social groups by the state. Later, he raps, “Yeah, them the homies I know / They either deported or they ain't comin' home.” The alternative to deportation, then, is death. Moreover, the cause of death remains ambiguous. Gang violence, police brutality, domestic violence—all of these are possibilities. And they are all statistically more probable when the subjects in question are black, predominantly male immigrants. In his book *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003) Brent Hayes Edwards, like Paul Gilroy before him, posits black musical forms as that which participates on a metaphorical and literal level in the practice and politics of diaspora. Attending to the Haitian diaspora, Wyclef and Danticat point specifically to the refugee as a subaltern figure who represents a new category of forced migration and social alienation. Diasporic thinking and diasporic belonging counter the logic of disposability that characterizes the state-sanctioned violence of both dictatorial regimes and exclusionary democracies.

In this chapter I bring together Danticat’s prose and Wyclef’s music to analyze their misperformance of voice. I argue that rather than reinforce the link between sound and semantics, Danticat and Wyclef actually disrupt it at strategic moments. These deviations from normative social, political, and aesthetic frameworks manifest in two arenas: technological mediation and legal deliberation. In both Danticat’s memoir and Wyclef’s album readers encounter human voices modulated by technology. Danticat’s uncle uses an artificial larynx to replace his lost voice. Wyclef turns to electronic effects derived from American hip-hop and Jamaican dub music such as microphonic bleed-through, reverb and delay to alternately multiply his voice or to situate it in a chorus of other “non-standard” voices. Moreover, both artists partially set their narratives in spaces

where a person's juridical status is debated and determined. They foreground voices that claim (or seek to claim) protections afforded by universal human rights while critiquing the limits of this discourse. A courtroom and a detention center would seem to imply radically different procedures and expectations for evaluating an individual's criminality. The former is said to guarantee due process and judgement by a jury of one's peers. The latter functions with little transparency or accountability and relies on pre-emptive penal incarceration practices. Wyclef and Danticat demonstrate how *both* systems routinely fail to uphold their own explicit regulations and thus victimize individuals perceived as non-citizens who have already experienced some form of trauma. Marin Blazevic and Lada Cale Friedman, in defining misperformance, state that it can advance strategies of political resistance. They also acknowledge a misperformance might simply be the failure to accomplish anything (12-13). However, they remain open to interpreting failure and the representation of failure as a "cultural counter-act" (19). Danticat and Wyclef's misperformed voices raise important questions about intelligibility, but the failures that come under real scrutiny are the failures of the U.S. government in its inhumane treatment of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

Danticat and Wyclef ask that we revise our understanding of the U.S. as a neo-colonial power whose reach extends to the Caribbean and beyond. My work proceeds in concert with Robert Young and Derek Gregory, whose interventions have reoriented postcolonial critique from the Eurocentric first wave of critical insights to a U.S.-centered second wave that acknowledges the modes of new imperialisms. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees initially focused primarily on refugees in Europe following World War II. In doing so, it largely ignored the crises of displacement and

forced migration occurring through decolonization in the developing world. Like the colonized, the figure of the refugee functions in opposition to the citizen. As Carrie Hyde argues in *Civic Longing: The Speculative Origins of US Citizenship* (2017), even before the inauguration of a centralized legal definition of citizenship there were always figures that fell outside this category. Slaves, expatriates, and traitors were all considered variations of "negative civic exemplars," and their exclusion was crucial to the formation of citizenship as a modern legal invention. Danticat and Wyclef's continued self-reference as immigrants and refugees signals a gap between cultural and juridical meanings of citizenship. They remind us that the legal conferral of citizenship does not necessarily alter one's self-conception or public opinion. In light of the current political administration's stance on certain migrating subjects, I believe that returning to these works allows us to better interrogate the extralegal dimensions and the affective experiences of that tragic phenomenon known as a refugee crisis.

By focusing on the misperformance of voice in these refugee narratives, I am able to offer an alternative method of inquiry, one that does not rely on what Susan Sontag recognizes as the emotional trade of photographs and Saidiya Hartman identifies as the terrible spectacle of mastery. Having access to non-white subjects' performance of suffering is not the exception—it's the norm. An approach rooted in sound, then, helps one to circumvent a certain degree of complicity. Danticat and Wyclef can offer insight into the dehumanization of Haitians without simultaneously participating in the visual practices that contribute to a sense of superiority in Western consumers. Sontag reminds us that "photographs of victims" "are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate" (6). She goes on to argue that such "[p]hotographs objectify:

they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed" (80). Wyclef and Danticat locate in the human voice the basis for a set of strategies at once aesthetic and political. The end result: You can own her memoir. You can own his albums. But that is the extent of your buying power.

I have divided the rest of this chapter into three sections. First, I will situate Danticat's memoir in the context of Haitian immigration to the United States and offer a close reading of her uncle's exposure to state sanctioned violence. Next, I will analyze how and to what ends Wyclef exploits musical and cognitive dissonance in his remix of the Cuban folksong "Guantanamera" and the fictional trial interlude that follows it. I will then conclude with some remarks on how foregrounding the figures of the refugee and asylum seeker may transform the task of postcolonial studies as a whole.

Containing Voices, Detaining Bodies

Certain immigrant groups are forced to shuttle between the two poles of detainment and disposal. In the late 1960s, 70s, and 80s thousands of Haitians fled to the United States, Canada, France, and other Caribbean islands in the wake of Francois Duvalier's devastating dictatorship. Despite a U.S. policy initiated in October 1980 which labelled Haitians as undesirable economic refugees, immigrants continued to arrive until President Aristide's election in 1990. In 1992 President Bush ordered the Coast Guard to turn away boats of Haitians without screening. And in 1993 the Supreme Court ruled that deportation was legal.[149] The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant

[149] Walcott-Hackshaw, 73.

Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) “made it even more difficult to gain asylum in the United States.” “Congress barred asylum for most persons who did not apply for it within a year of entering the United States. It also created a new system of ‘expedited removal,’ under which airport immigration inspectors (and, later, land border officials) could summarily deport, without hearings, many foreign nationals who arrived in the United States without valid passports or visas” (Kenney and Schrag 2008: 3). These policies illuminate the limits of Western democratic nationalisms which, despite explicit disavowals of colonialism and slavery, continue to limit access to modes of citizenship. Just as importantly, they obscure America’s constant involvement overseas. The U.S. 19-year occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, punctuated by uprisings and massacres, is one example; its invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1916, which led to an eight-year occupation, and a second invasion in 1965 is another.

Danticat's memoir takes up the three mandates laid out in her article: don’t have children, don’t get sick, don’t get old. It chronicles the medical treatment, detainment, and death of her uncle Joseph, the passing of her father, and the birth of her first child. When Danticat was four, her parents immigrated to the United States, leaving her and her younger brother in the care of her uncle Joseph and his wife until the age of twelve. Early in the memoir she shares her memory of his "voice being crisp and distinct: deep and resolute, breathy and jingly when he was angry, steely..." (34). She employs a litany of adjectives in an attempt to give readers who have never met the man a sense of his vibrant range. His voice is particularly significant in light of his vocation as a local preacher. What follows Danticat’s description is a moment of crisis: "one day in November 1977, while preaching a lengthy sermon to commemorate the church's

anniversary, my uncle's voice began to quiver, then squeak. He shrieked like an adolescent boy at one moment, then could only moan the next" (35).With an aching throat and gums, he visits an incompetent dentist whose solution is to remove every tooth and install dentures. He seeks the help of additional doctors and local herbalists, but no one can identify the cause of his diminishing voice. Overhearing a broadcast from the station Radio Lumière, Joseph learns of a team of American doctors and makes his way to Bonne Fin in southern Haiti. There, one of these visiting physicians discovers a laryngeal tumor. Following a biopsy, they discover it is malignant.

The biopsy leads Joseph to reflect on the significance of voices, particularly, it seems, for diasporic communities. "If you had one, you could use it to reach out to your loved ones, no matter how far away. Technological advances could help... But if you had no voice at all, he thought, you were simply left out of the constant hum of the world" (38). The next morning a translator, speaking on behalf of the doctor, indicates that the cancer will require a radical laryngectomy. In this scene, Joseph overhears the person in the hospital bed next to his. This unidentified patient "had a small transistor radio, which was tuned to the same station where he'd first heard about the American doctors. The station had a charter studio on the hospital premises and the sound was coming through loud and clear (38). During the broadcast, Joseph hears "among the lists of announcements about missing people and lost objects a voice saying, 'Reverend Joseph Nosius, please come home. Your family is worried about you'" (39). Joseph had been unable to reach his wife Denise or his son following an attack on his church by local paramilitary gangs known as the Chimères. On first glance this line foreshadows the second painful separation Joseph and his family will experience when he is sent to the

detention center. Although Danticat's prose is clear, there is nevertheless room for syntactical ambiguity in the juxtaposition of the words "lost objects a voice." This phrasing reminds us that the voice itself can be a lost object; but the voice can also be that which helps us navigate among the “missing people and lost objects” which accrete, largely invisibly, in detention facilities.

Joseph struggles to share his diagnosis with his wife, parishioners, and family members. During a phone call to Danticat’s father, she writes that he “pressed his lips as close as he could to the mouthpiece to whisper these three words: ‘Fre, map mouri’” (41). The memoir takes its title from this bleak confession. Before his scheduled surgery Joseph suffers an attack: “They tried to put a breathing tube down his throat, but the tumor was blocking his airway. So while racing towards Kings County Hospital, they performed a tracheotomy, drilling a hole in my uncle’s neck to insert a tube there so he could breathe” (42). Though this emergency procedure is successful, Joseph’ condition continues to decline. Not long after his diagnosis, Danticat’s parents send for her and her brother—they have made enough financial progress to reunite their family in the United States. Danticat feels ambivalent about this development; her sense of estrangement, particularly from her father, grew over their years apart. More specifically, she points to the perceived lack of intimacy in their written correspondence. When he parents first left she yearned to hear the sound of their voices, but calling cards proved too expensive for regular use. As the plane to New York takes off, she thinks to herself: “I only remember wishing as we soared into the clouds that my uncle had cried... forbidding us to go. He should have blurted out, in his old voice, the sudden revelation that I was really his daughter and that he couldn’t live without me” (109).

The procedure results in total removal of Joseph's voice box. After his recovery, Danticat writes, "Unlike anyone else, I could now doubly interpret my uncle, both from silence to voice and Creole to English. Sitting next to him in the packed waiting room of the ear, nose and throat clinic, with the glossy posters of decaying necks and lungs looming over us, I saw his cancer come to life in the men and women around us. Some, like him, had had radical laryngectomies and couldn't speak at all. Others had had partial laryngectomies and spoke in breathless whispers by pressing fingertips along various points along the neck" (129). The rotting anatomical parts not only foreshadow her uncle's fate—they remind us of Haiti's association with zombies and the transmutation of a syncretic religious figure to a Hollywood obsession. This same "harmless" obsession has played a part in more explicit political discourses that cast Haiti and other nations as pathological, as infectious, and as necrotic. Rendered in this way, one can see why Haiti and other islands have been described as "in the West but not of the West." The threat of disposability re-emerges in Danticat's description of how her uncle's cancer has spread, literally and metaphorically, among other Haitians.

Soon after the operation Joseph attempts to speak, but no sound emerges. The doctor, holding the voice box, positions it over his throat. Danticat remembers that "the machine buzzed, letting out a clamor of static." The doctor adjusts his hand position of and asks Joseph a question about his last meal. Danticat writes, "The sound of the word emerging out of his own body in a robotic monotone seemed to shock [her] uncle" (130). The doctor informs his patient through a translator—who is another kind of voice box—and states, "'this is… an artificial larynx, something that can amplify his whispers and allow people to hear and understand him'" (130). I want to note that the doctor feels the

need to specify both hearing *and* understanding. In doing so, he implicitly recognizes that the two are actually discrete acts. It is not uncommon to encounter scenarios in which one is heard but not understood. Danticat's intimate kinship with her uncle evolves as his illness does so that she eventually experiences a rare reversal: she comes to understand him without hearing him.

In Haiti Joseph faces constant danger because of an ongoing battle between United Nations peacekeepers and the chimères — Haitian gang members. After his church is destroyed and a second attempt is made on his life, an 81-year old Joseph flees to the United States seeking sanctuary in 2004. He requests asylum at Miami Airport but is arrested and placed in expedited removal proceedings. U.S. government officials perceive Joseph's petition for asylum as a vocal misperformance that is perceived as an imminent threat *despite its immediate failure*. They detain him despite his valid multiple-entry visa, which they disregard rather than consider as additional support for his claim. Danticat and her family are left panicking about his disappearance. 48 hours later a female U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer leaves a voicemail that Danticat feels does not reflect the gravity of the situation. She expresses an awareness that the message could have been scripted instead. This awareness might even be a wish on her part. There are two perspectives here: on the one hand, a script would signal not only a sense of formality but perhaps respect for the parties involved. It would characterize the state as an organized and calculating entity, rather than one operating according to arbitrary whims. On the other hand, a script brings up the idea of ventriloquism, which would serve as a reminder that while Danticat's distress feels unique, there are countless

others—from El Salvador, Cambodia, Somalia, Syria—who have been or will soon be in Joseph's position.

The officer simply says, "Ms. Danticat, we have your uncle here." She then asks Joseph to state his name. What is important here, too, is that the woman's unscripted voicemail leaves no identifying information. Danticat is unable to seek her out specifically as she and later a lawyer try to negotiate her uncle's release. She is forced to interact with new people, unfamiliar with his case and unsympathetic to their suffering. Joseph remains imprisoned in the Krome Detention Processing Center in Florida. While in the custody of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, he has little contact with his family and his blood pressure medication is confiscated. When he collapses during his "credible fear" interview and begins vomiting, the medic on duty announces, "He's faking." His artificial larynx, covered in vomit, becomes unusable. The state dismisses his deteriorating medical condition, old age, and familial connections. Their refusal of treatment costs him his life: he dies in a Florida hospital, most likely in shackles, the following day.

Joseph is not recognized as an individual at risk. Rather, he is perceived *as* risk, to U.S. borders and U.S. sovereignty. His plea for asylum is pre-emptively deemed insufficient; his experiences do not qualify as systematic persecution. The U.S. simultaneously recognizes the rights of refugees while criminalizing the search for asylum. The asylum seeker is, as David Farrier puts it, one who "introduc[es] crisis into territorial concepts of belonging" (4). At the same time, the seeker is positioned between one state that has caused their displacement and another state which might serve as the solution to said displacement. The act of seeking asylum acknowledges a nation's

sovereign right to refuse entry. Nevertheless, asylum seeking destabilizes this territorial power "by presupposing a right to sanctuary that supersedes the nation's founding prescriptions" (5). Joseph's vocal misperformance is two-fold and, unlike that of Wyclef Jean, largely unintentional. His language barrier is compounded by his artificial larynx. These elements, along with his old age, all mark him as an undesirable migrant. Moreover, his request for asylum, deemed illegitimate, contains a kind of cognitive dissonance in that it both "challeng[es] and acknowledg[es] sovereign power in equal measure" (6). The state's response to an ethical demand that is simultaneously a contestation of their power is to, in fact, defer responding. Detention centers place subjects in what Foucault might call a heterotopic space, where unwanted bodies accumulate in isolation from larger society. In delaying its response, the state seeks to absolve itself of moral responsibility for non-citizens even as the asylum claim puts a new biopolitical reality in motion. In other words, the figure of the asylum seeker asks us to think about how a subject can be incorporated into the host nation explicitly as an excluded, temporary element—as a detainee. The asylum seeker also asks us to think about the slippage between a claim and a request, and how the law seeks to undermine the presuppositional authority of the former with the conditionality of the latter.

How to Testify on American Soil

Wyclef has continued his band's recuperation of the term refugee and countered the notion of undesirable immigrant through his solo discography. For the album *Sak Pasé Presents Welcome to Haiti: Creole 101* (2004), the title is figured as an introductory

seminar; if his bandmate Lauryn Hill was concerned with her own miseducation,[150] Wyclef turns it on his audience, making his task to educate us in Haitian Creole culture. *Sak pasé* is the ubiquitous Haitian greeting, falling somewhere between "How are you?" and "What's up?" in register. Moreover, Wyclef figures himself not just as a teacher but as military leader through his portrayal in elaborate uniform on the cover. No doubt this is meant to evoke revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. His cover for *Carnival Vol II: Memoirs of an Immigrant* (2007) displays an image that is somewhat of a trope: the new arrival with suitcase in hand, perhaps the only object he is able to bring with him to the new country. The image includes the subtle outline of a carnival mask in the background above the silhouetted cityscape. The simplified but evocative itinerary of his 2009 album *From the Hut, To the Projects, To the Mansion* emphasizes his negotiation of home and host countries via the quintessential dream of upward mobility. It also includes a new nom de plume—Toussaint St. Jean—that provides yet another explicit reference to the revolutionary leader.

His most recent release, *Carnival III: The Fall and Rise of a Refugee* (2017), inverts an idiom typically applied to empires—the rise and fall—to posit Wyclef's ascendancy even as he preserves the refugee label. He sets up these social inversions, even if unintentionally, through the allusive titles of his first and third albums—carnival and masquerade respectively. Wyclef seems to channel Mikhail Bakhtin when he raps, "When you're rolling to the Carnival, anything can happen / It's all about survival man, anything can happen." His continued evocation of a carnival aesthetics twenty years after his solo debut is particularly salient when one considers the peasant origins of this

[150] Her first and only solo album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998), received massive acclaim.

cultural practice in much of the Caribbean. Despite the increased commodification and exportation of carnival to locales associated with large Caribbean populations such as London, Brooklyn, and Toronto, carnival remains a source of social cohesion and political subversion. Régine Jean-Charles notes that "[i]n deploying the carnival trope he presents another Haiti, one opposed to the spectacular images of degradation commonly associated with the island" (842). Misperformance operates on two levels here: by emphasizing the cultural wealth of Haiti, Wyclef shifts away from the scripts of poverty, corruption, and suffering expected of him. In addition, Wyclef foregrounds the performative risk and transgression at the heart of a diasporic carnival tradition, based as it is on the articulation and reimagining of sociopolitical conflicts through music, dance, wordplay, and costume.

Across his albums, one finds a mix of genres and styles— including reggae, hip hop, *son cubano*, soul, funk, and various Haitian traditions such as *kompa* and *rara*. His raps often mediate the differences in style and register that emerge through such extensive admixture. Throughout his career Wyclef has continued to collaborate with and pull samples from Caribbean, South American, and African American artists. On his first album Wyclef collaborates with Celia Cruz on a remix of the Cuban folksong "Guantanamera." The lyrics are commonly based on verses written by Cuban poet and independence hero Jose Martí. But the song also functions as a vehicle for improvisation, allowing for the content to veer from turbulent romances to social critique. The most popular version of the song centers on a man in love with a peasant woman who eventually abandons him. Rather than begin with remixed material, Wyclef chooses to preserve a snippet of Cruz's original chorus. Cruz enthusiastically introduces herself and

her collaboration with Wyclef with a reference to *azucar*, or sugar. This term, an equivalent to "yeah, let's go!" is undoubtedly intended to evoke the girl's sweetness, but it also carries with it the entire history of plantation slavery, of cane-workers and their slashed backs, of the blood spilled for a spoonful of sugar in an Englishman's teacup. The cognitive dissonance that the word sugar might conjure is later echoed in the music itself. Wyclef deliberately misperforms the musical transition, leaving it disjointed in terms of tempo, instrumental texture, and vocal range. The sudden deceleration is unexpected, and the key change is also unusual because nothing in the melodic or harmonic structure prepares the listener's ears.

The shift between songs lacks a musical pivot, the most common kind being what musicologists call an applied dominant. While Celia's song migrates to a major key half-way through the chorus, Wyclef's version does the opposite and primarily remains in a minor mode. His version is punctuated by percussive, horn-like interjections. More conventional is his use of call and response during his shout-outs to different New York boroughs and neighborhoods. The quintessential DJ scratching between the last line of Cruz's smoothly delivered refrain and Wyclef's first verse seems to suggest that the cultural and historical connection between Haiti and Cuba might be best understood as a series of record scratches. These islands, like all Caribbean islands, have had distinct political and economic developments; nevertheless, they are united by a shared history, namely, the genocide of indigenous Amerinidians, the enslavement of African peoples, and the indentured servitude of South and East Asians. The Haitian and Cuban Revolutions, their successes and failures, 155 years apart, are momentarily bridged by a needle in the historical record's groove.

In addition to this musical moment, I want to attend to the content of several spoken interludes which narrate an ongoing fictional trial. The unusual interpolation of a legal trial in Wyclef's first album highlights its tragic absence in Danticat's memoir. Though the trial itself is intended as a humorous injection—Wyclef is accused of being a Don Juan and a "bad influence" on women and children alike—it signifies in a new way when analyzed in the broader context of the legal and extralegal treatment of Haitian refugees. As Gillian Whitlock explains, "The recognition of legitimate claims of fear and persecution is fundamental to determining refugee status as established in the Convention of 1951, and such claims… are made in and through testimony" (178). Speaking of the broader immigration debates which emerged in reaction to the 2005 Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Control Act, Danticat notes:

> The policy has separated families, it has sent people back to die who had very real asylum claims, but which were never investigated because they were turned around right at sea. So for Haitians, the nightmare part of the U.S. policy towards immigrants, the worst manifestation of it, is when people are not even given a chance to make their claim. (33)

In the first interlude Wyclef's lawyer identifies his first witness, rapper/singer Pablo Diablo:

> Lawyer: Your honor, I would like to call my first witness to the stand. All the way from East L.A., your honor, Pablo Diablo.
>
> Pablo: Hey! *Mira mami*, Guantanamera. Hey, my lovin' is for everyone, man. Do you know it reminds me of the summertime in the bungalows of Spain, all night in the park. Eh, you would hear your music. It would be on the eighth floor, but the *bongos* they reach up there, man! We used to keep the whole neighborhood up. (*Singing*) Guantanamer—oh!

> Lawyer: Thank you, Pablo, for nothing. Jesus Christ, what a moron. No further questions, your honor. (Wyclef Jean, "Pablo Diablo (Interlude)," *The Carnival*)

Pablo fails to contribute any relevant testimony. His exaggerated accent evokes the Mexican male stereotype of a "*cholo*" gang member and drug dealer. His vocal delivery is in line with the other over-the-top speech acts sprinkled throughout the other interludes. The frustrated lawyer dismisses Pablo as an idiot. Nevertheless, the lawyer himself also speaks with an exaggerated accent, one associated with New York Italian-Americans. It is as though the courtroom itself, and thus the judicial process, is a farce or a failed performance. Both witness and prosecutor fulfill essential roles, but neither of them is in on the joke. It is worth noting that, throughout the eight interludes, the presiding judge never speaks. Listeners cannot make their own judgements on his or her vocal delivery, nor can they glean any sense of his or her opinion of the unfolding case. Even in the context of superficially light-hearted banter, the judge's silence is damning.

Pablo's testimony does nothing to advocate for or denigrate Wyclef's character. However, I believe we can read Pablo's seeming digression in two productive ways: First, it is a commentary on unreliable narrators, that is to say, witnesses who are heard as unreliable before they ever speak because of their racial or ethnic background. Pablo can amplify his accent on the stand, because the jury already views and hears him as a caricature. Second, it is a sly evocation of the U.S.'s relationship to another imperial entity—Spain—and the U.S.'s role in continuing that empire through its creation of Guantanamo Bay Detention Center. Pablo references the song "Guantanamera" but is abruptly silenced once he utters the word. An additional effect of this sudden cut-off is that the word Guantanamera, rather than end with the "a" that grammatically signals a

woman from Guantanamo, ends with an exclamatory "oh!" which both indicates surprise and a change in gender. Although the song and the remix describes a young man's desire for an alluring peasant girl, one cannot shake the allusions to Guantanamo Bay, which only in the 2000s gained significant media attention for its inhumane practices and liminal position as a U.S. carceral complex on Cuban soil. Moreover, this site became a detention facility for Haitians who fled after military forces overthrew President Aristide in the early 90s. The last Haitian migrants were released in 1995. Is it any wonder that the song Guantanamera falls between this failed testimony and a song entitled "Apocalypse"? French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan calls the human voice "l'altérité de ce qui se dit" or "the alterity of what is said" (qtd. in Nancy). French theorist Jean-Luc Nancy, elaborating on Lacan's formulation, describes the voice as "what, in the saying, is other than what is said, in a sense the non-said." So, what is the non-said that remains embedded in Pablo's tangential, off-key refrain? Here is my gloss: Empires are never fully dismantled. Their remnants live on. Why should I, a "moron," testify on behalf of a man you have already condemned?

Rise of the Refugee

To be sure, there are many ways in which Danticat and Wyclef make themselves accessible to Western audiences and privileged consumers. In other words, they often perform as expected. They have succeeded in no small part because their art reaffirms key tropes and thematics of the narrative blueprints used to bolster, circulate, and, most importantly, fund human rights as an ethical obligation. Moreover, white Western audiences have chosen them, implicitly and explicitly, to act as the spokespeople for their

country. While both artists use their numerous accolades and large platforms to level political and social critiques, they remain inescapably caught in a web of complicity as token representatives for a nation of roughly 11 million people. Misperformance, as a form of vocal labor, pushes up against the bounds of global capitalism, but this does not mean it is always resistant or radical in nature. On the contrary, it is just as often an ambivalent engagement with the problem of human agency. The key, then, is that even at its most ambivalent, the misperformed voice remains unassimilable to European regimes of power. Furthermore, I want to suggest that alongside Wyclef and Danticat's seeming conformity and transparency we can locate the voice's illegible trace, one that exists in excess of language. Readers see this in the moments of silent understanding between Danticat and her uncle. Listeners hear this in the moans and shouts that permeate Wyclef's tracks. These fraught sensory encounters are containers for a wealth of political contradictions and ambivalences. Vocal labor does not entice readers and listeners directly; only by not being immediately noticed can it continue to circulate. These literary and musical works are eagerly consumed despite their misperformance, not because of it.

In 2003 Aihwa Ong asserted that for the 20th century the refugee was the ultimate ethical figure. Danticat wrote her memoir in part because she feared that "people might think that even the current demonstration has one face or one nationality or one color, but that's not true" (33). In her writing she rightfully points to the widespread repercussions of inhumane policies and loss of political and social freedoms that mark vulnerable populations. My research acknowledges the refugee as a figure who is only just beginning to garner sustained attention in studies of race, globalization, and transnationalism. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and discourses

which have followed offer a universal framework that obscures the conferral and denial of refugee status as a political tool. More specifically, the granting of such status became an important anti-Communist tactic by the US during the Cold War. The decades between 1945 and 1985 were defined by the movement of two million admitted refugees, 90 percent of whom had fled from Communist countries. This number plummeted when, between 1956 and 1968, roughly 250,000 asylum seekers gained entry to the United States. The number who came from non-Communist nations was less than a thousand. As Emma Shaw Crane notes, some scholars have observed a transformation in refugee policy with the 1999 resettlement of 12,000 Somalians in the U.S. They have argued that this paradigm is no longer "defined not by a Cold War political agenda but by what Besteman calls 'an ethic of humanitarianism.'" But, as Crane goes on to explain, Salvadorans fleeing civil war and anti-Communist death-squads were often denied asylum throughout the 1980s.The limits of such an "ethic of humanitarianism" are perhaps most strongly felt when one considers the largely unacknowledged role of American militarism in the creation of displaced peoples. The historical and contemporary phenomenon we call the refugee crisis has brought issues of national sovereignty, border control and the rule of law to the fore in national and international political debates. These debates, however, are marked by a distinct lack of engagement with the imperial projects and colonial legacies that have shaped contemporary geopolitical borders.

In attending to representations of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, I wish to take up what Simon Gikandi has termed the "redemptive narrative" of "postcolonial cosmopolitanism." Forced dispersal remains a threat to the social lives of non-Western

peoples, even as debates and discussions proliferate about the rise of human rights as a universal, moral duty alongside the volatile nature of private interest and investment in non-Western countries. Postcolonial attempts to center the marginal migrant subject might actually compound the effects of marginalization by valorizing their dislocation. The trend in much writing on movement and trajectories across territories we associate with the global Anglophone and global Francophone worlds is a celebration of cosmopolitan mobility. In recent decades scholars have also sought to destabilize itineraries that reassert the hierarchical structure of colonial peripheries and European metropoles. However, as Farrier reminds us, “it is often too readily assumed that a celebratory cosmopolitanism can include all categories of the displaced” (5). The refugee, then, describes the limits of postcolonial discourse in relation to new globalized formations while also indicating one way this work might advance.

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