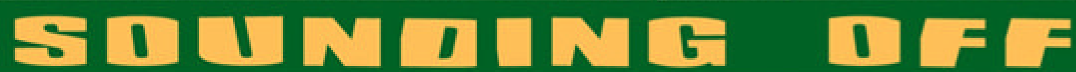


## Rhythm, Music, and Identity in West African and Caribbean Francophone Novels

JULIE HUNTINGTON

Sounding Off

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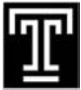

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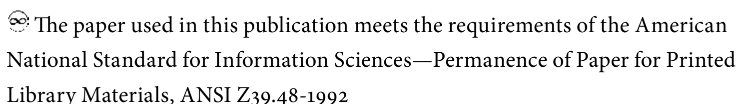
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*To my parents, Ann and Kim Huntington,*
*to my grandparents and great-grandparents,*
*stars forever . . .*

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* * *

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Sounding Off

# Introduction

The act of silent reading is a curious process consisting of multiple interior openings and exterior closings. As we open our books, open our eyes, and open our minds to enter the imaginative space of the text, we close ourselves off from the people around us and limit our interactions with the space we inhabit. To the eyes of an observer, the silent reader appears generally silent and still. Even so, as the reader's eyes flit across page after page, the observer may notice changes in the reader's emotional responses and facial expressions, as a brow furrowed intensely in concentration relaxes into a smile or an eyebrow raised in uncertainty eases into an understanding nod. Unable to access the sights, sounds, and sensations experienced in the imagination of the silent reader, the observer experiences a sense of disconnect that can only be reconciled by drawing the reader's attention away from the text.

It was during the summer I spent in Keur Momar Sarr, a small village in northern Senegal, that I fully realized the complex nature of the silent reading process, the ways in which it connects readers to imagined communities in other places and other times while momentarily separating them from the people and circumstances in their respective heres and nows. Prior to my departure, I spent the year reading the works of legendary Senegalese writers like Ousmane Sembene, Aminata Sow Fall, and Mariama Bâ, trying to get a sense of what I was about to experience, particularly regarding Senegalese linguistic and cultural practices. As a student of French, I wanted to know how French, the official language of Senegal, operated in relation to the country's six

national languages,[1] as well as how the official language was perceived by Senegalese citizens. As I read, I was struck by the sounds evoked in many of the novels. In addition to the unfamiliar sounds of untranslated words transcribed from African languages including Wolof, Bambara, and Arabic, my ears perked up to evocations of the sounds of West African drumbeats, folktales, and songs as well as representations of the sounds of heartbeats, footsteps, and dance steps. As a reader, I found myself listening to the books as I read them, not in a word-for-word subvocalization way, but in a manner by which I tried to anticipate the noises, languages, rhythms, and musics I would encounter and experience during my time in Senegal.

I was so excited to learn more about Senegalese music that upon my arrival in the village, I asked my hosts, Mama Gaye and Ndeye Fatou, who the musicians in the village were. After giving the matter some thought, they informed me that there were no musicians in the village. On that first night, gathered around an abundant platter of *ceebu-jën*,[2] I was surprised and confused by their response. How could there be no musicians in the village? Registering my apparent disappointment, Mama Gaye directed me to go out the next day in search of Natou Fall, a popular radio DJ at the Keur Momar Sarr radio station, one of a growing number of rural radio broadcast centers in Senegal.[3]

The next morning, using the limited Wolof I knew, I set off in search of Natou Fall. It didn't take long to find her. She lived at the other end of

1. Senegal's official language policy is explained in the New Constitution approved in 2001: "La langue officielle de la république du Sénégal est le français. Les langues nationales sont le diola, le malinké, le poular, le sérère, le soninké, le wolof et toute autre langue nationale qui sera codifiée" (Government of Senegal 2001, Article 1). (The official language of the republic of Senegal is French. The other national languages are Diola, Malinké, Pular, Serer, Soninké, Wolof, and any other national language to be codified.)

2. Often called the national dish of Senegal, *ceebu-jën* (*ceebu* = rice; *jën* = fish) is made with fish, vegetables, and rice (and is very delicious!).

3. Created in 1996 through a joint initiative between the Senegalese government and the Agency of the Francophonie, the rural radio program established rural radio diffusion sites in Bakel, Bignona, Joal-Fadioiuth, Keur Momar Sarr, and Koumpentoum. The stations broadcast programs in local languages to keep people informed about current events and social problems on local, national, and international levels. They also offer instructional and entertainment programming according to the needs and desires of the local community. As Mbangnick Ngom affirms, the rural radio stations are successful in that they connect residents of different villages in the region, notifying villagers about social programs, regional development, and special-interest group meetings (Ngom 2004). According to Abdoulaye Sidibé Wade, Catherine Enel, and Emmanuel Lagarde, rural radio can also play an important role in information dissemination about health (Wade, Enel, and Lagarde 2005).

the village in a compound just off the main road. As she welcomed me into her home, I was introduced to the five generations of women who lived there. Natou was a member of the middle generation—a mother and grandmother, a daughter and granddaughter. Aside from the women and children, there were only three men living in the compound. With difficult economic conditions in the village, most of the men worked in the nearest cities—Louga, Saint-Louis, or Dakar—or abroad in countries like Italy and France. In spite of the hardships she and her family faced, Natou always welcomed me into her home with a smile and, more often than not, a heaping bowl of food. During that summer, I became her homonym. In this respect, she gave me her name, and people in the village began referring to me as Natou. I would spend afternoons with Natou and her family, drinking tea and chasing the shade beneath the large tree in the courtyard of the family compound. It was here, in her home, that and I learned so much from her about music and about life. I also learned that there *were* musicians in the village—that everyone in the village made music in one way or another, even though they weren't designated as such in the cultural context of Keur Momar Sarr.

It's been many years since that summer in Senegal, but even so, when I return to the works of Sembene, Sow Fall, and Bâ, I hear familiar sounds resonating from the pages of their novels, and it brings back memories of experiences I shared with friends and strangers in another place and another time. But it's not just their books. There are other novels written by writers from other places and other epochs filled with vibrant rhythms, musics, and sounds that convey comparable resonant sensibilities. As a reader and a critic, I am intrigued by these texted[4] sonorities, in particular, by the multiple questions and possibilities they present. Why do writers translate, transcribe, and transpose[5] sounding musical, rhythmic, and otherwise noisy phenomena in their books? What are the linguistic, aesthetic, sociocultural, and political implications of this process? But most importantly, what can we as readers learn from listening to the books we read?

Although the role of music and orality in novels has been the subject of critical inquiry (e.g., Fox 1995; Kazi-Tani 1995; Julien 1992; Melnick 1994; Tro-Deho 2005), literary scholars tend to place emphasis on the human

4. In this study, I am proposing the verb designation "text" and its derivative forms "texting" and "texted" to characterize the multiple processes of translation, transcription, and transposition that authors implement in presenting musical, sounding, and otherwise noisy phenomena in the frame of a written narrative.

5. Transposition is the double process of translating information from one language to another and transcribing oral information into a written form. In "The African Writer as Translator: Writing African Languages through French," Kwaku A. Gyasi provides numerous examples of transposition from the works of Ahmadou Kourouma, Chinua Achebe, and Henri Lopès (Gyasi 2003).

voice, and more specifically, the messages contained in the songs and stories performed by singers and storytellers. Little emphasis is placed on the role of musical instruments, the sounds they produce, the feelings they evoke, and the messages they communicate. Even less emphasis is placed on the everyday noises represented in the novels, the contextual cues they provide, and the commentaries they sometimes offer. It is my aim to rectify this critical oversight, at least in part by exploring the connections among resonant representations of sounds, rhythms, musics, and languages in a selection of francophone novels from West Africa and the Caribbean. My design is to elaborate upon current theories about rhythm and music in novels as I investigate the aesthetic and linguistic functions of texted sounding phenomena and consider their implications in sociocultural and political domains. The novels selected for this study are Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembene's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu: Banty mam yall* (*God's Bits of Wood*); Ivoirian writer Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les soleils des indépendances* (*The Suns of Independence*); Senegalese writer Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes* (The Call of the Arenas); Guadeloupean writer Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon* (*Between Two Worlds*); Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* (*Crossing the Mangrove*); and Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique* (*Solibo Magnificent*).[6]

Before beginning a discussion of rhythmic and musical phenomena in the novels selected for this study, it is important to consider multiple definitions for the terms "rhythm" and "music." Moreover, it is necessary to address the question of why rhythm, often considered as a component of music, is regarded as a category in its own right for the purposes of this study. The separate designation is attributable to the problem of defining what rhythm is and what rhythm is not in domains of lived experience and across academic disciplines. In this respect, in considering the questions, *What is rhythm?* and *What is music?* artists and critics from multiple academic disciplines, sociocultural contexts, and linguistic backgrounds provide different definitions for the two terms, and subsequently envision divergent relational configurations between the concepts of rhythm and music.

This problem is conflated when discussions of rhythm and music take place outside of North American and European cultural and critical

6. The English titles given are those of the published translations. As of press time, *L'appel des arènes* had not been translated into English. Unless otherwise specified, all translations of quotations are mine. In citing the works selected for this study, I employ the following abbreviations: *BBD* for *Les bouts de bois de Dieu*; *Soleils* for *Les soleils des indépendances*; *Appel* for *L'appel des arènes*; *Ti Jean* for *Ti Jean L'horizon*; *Mangrove* for *Traversée de la mangrove*; and *Solibo* for *Solibo Magnifique*.

contexts, or even beyond the divides that separate disparate socioeconomic classes. As Kofi Agawu points out in "African Music as Text," many African musical pieces have been oversimplified or misread by Western critics and anthropologists, who have tended to assert strict categorical separations between functional and contemplative forms of art (Agawu 2001, 8). Such strict divisions effectively create a taxonomic hierarchy that places Western contemplative or art music above the diverse ordinary and extraordinary musics created in non-Western cultures and by working-class citizens around the world. For Agawu, the terms "contemplative" and "functional" are far from mutually exclusive. Rather, analysis of "the social or 'extra musical' context[s]" of formal and informal performance pieces adds meaningful dimensions to an individual's reception, perception, and interpretation of the musical piece in question (8). As Agawu later affirms, some of these same critics fail to recognize the complex nuances readable through an understanding of African music as "text" or even as an "activity of meaning construction . . . essential to all participants" (8). He further points out the exoticization tendencies that traditionally dominate Western or Northern criticisms and commentaries of non-Western musical phenomena, calling for a reenvisioning of how critics from various academic disciplines interpret music locally and globally. Perhaps Agawu's holistic approach to understanding African and other "otherized" forms of non-Western music will inspire critics and listeners to challenge the relevance of the binary categorical divides used in many Western critical frameworks that essentialize and polarize categorical notions including but not limited to Occidental versus Oriental, oral versus written, or contemplative versus functional, and to simultaneously open their ears, minds, and bodies to a broader understanding of the multiple forms and functions of rhythm and music in the world.

This problem is further complicated by linguistic and sociocultural factors that influence peoples' understanding of what is referred to in English as rhythm and music and in French as *rythme* and *musique*. As Charles Keil points out, in many Sub-Saharan African languages, there is no direct translation for the word "music" (Keil 1979, 27), and as Kofi Agawu indicates, there is often no exact equivalent for the word "rhythm" (Agawu 2003b, 21). This is not to say that the concepts of rhythm and music do not exist in African musical contexts, but rather that they are referenced and described using different terms. This explains why, on my first night in Keur Momar Sarr, when I asked my hosts, Mama Gaye and Ndeye Fatou, who the musicians in the village were, they informed me that there were none. Confused by their response, at the time, I was unaware of the linguistic and cultural differences at work.

Although French is the official language of Senegal, many Senegalese

citizens do not speak French,[7] particularly in rural locations like Keur Momar Sarr. In rural areas, people tend to speak their maternal languages at home with their families. Some of these languages, including Mandingué, Bambara, and Balanta, are minority languages that are not represented by the Senegalese government as national languages. For those minority language speakers who do business outside of their villages, a vehicular language is often utilized for the purposes of communication and commerce. Generally speaking, Wolof is the preferred vehicular language in northern Senegal (the part of Senegal north of the Gambia), and Dioula is the preferred vehicular language in southern Senegal (the part of Senegal south of the Gambia), although other languages like Serer, Pular, Malinké, and Soninké are preferred in specific subregions. Although French remains the official language of secondary and university education, in recent years, the Senegalese government has encouraged a shift away from French to Senegalese languages in elementary education, particularly in rural areas where residents are less likely to speak French.

In Keur Momar Sarr, there were Pular-speaking and Wolof-speaking families, but Wolof seemed to be the primary vehicular language in the village. I lived with the Gaye family and spent much of my time with Natou Fall and her family. Although different members of the families represented multiple ethnic groups (Gaye is a Lebou name,[8] Fall is a Wolof name, and Sarr—the family name of Natou's husband—is a Serer name), they all spoke Wolof at home for one reason or another. By contrast, the Sow family, who lived across the street from me, was Pular-speaking. Although some of the Sow family members—particularly Sokna, who had completed high school in the city and dreamed of attending a university—easily transitioned between French, Wolof, and Pular, many of the women in her family only spoke Pular.

On that first night, as I inquired about the music and musicians of Keur Momar Sarr (in French), I failed to realize that Mama Gaye and Ndeye Fatou were processing my question as Wolof-speakers in a Senegalese cultural context. For them, the French word *musicien* or the English equivalent *musician* translated as the Wolof word *gewel*, a word used to characterize professional musicians in Senegal—who traditionally belong to a specific social caste (*gewel*) and are regarded as "socially and ethnically distinct" from nonhereditary musicians (Cogdell DjeDje 2000, 142). Although there

7. Whereas 80 percent of Senegalese citizens speak Wolof as a maternal or foreign language, about 15 to 20 percent of Senegalese speak French. Although this information is published in book form (see Leclerc 1992), the most up-to-date information is available on Leclerc's Web site, *Aménagement linguistique dans le monde*, at http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl.

8. As a group, the Lebou are typically Wolof speakers.

were, in fact, many nonhereditary musicians and music-makers in Keur Momar Sarr—including Mama Gaye and Ndeye Fatou themselves—there were no members of the *gewel*, or *griot*, social caste residing in the village at the time, which is why they responded as they did to my question.

The *gewel*, or *griot*, social caste is present in other West African regions as well, but referred to using different lexical terminology. For instance, among the Malinké peoples Kourouma describes in *The Suns of Independence* and the Bambara peoples Sembene portrays in *God's Bits of Wood*, the term *jali* (or *jèli*) is preferred. Nonetheless, this does not prevent non-*gewel* or non-*jèli* from performing what could be referred to or received as music by singing, dancing, playing instruments, beating out rhythms on drums and other everyday objects, or even engaging in public musical performances. In fact, as Ruth Stone points out, in certain regions of Mali, home of the Bambara characters of *God's Bits of Wood*, nonhereditary musicians, or non-*jalolu* (plural for *jali*), "play a particularly important role in the traditional making of music" (Stone 2000, 118).

This brings us back to the problem of musical terminology as a cross-cultural phenomenon, particularly with respect to non-Western musical philosophies, theories, and practices. Oftentimes, the Western (also referred to as Northern, Occidental, or Continental) lexicon proves insufficient in characterizing Eastern (also referred to as Southern, Oriental, or World) music lexicons. Rather than endorsing a hegemonic one-size-fits-all approach to international music practices and theories, it is important to recognize the different ways of designating and describing music and musical phenomena in a variety of linguistic and sociocultural contexts. In *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, Kofi Agawu emphasizes this point, insisting on the need to examine the nuances of multiple African lexicons when discussing African rhythmic, musical, and performance phenomena: "[T]he need to understand African musicians on their own terms and in their own languages, and to attempt to excise layers of European assumptions that might have impeded our understanding of African musical practice remains pressing" (Agawu 2003b, 21).

Francis Bebey presents a similar opinion in *African Music: A People's Art*, characterizing what Agawu refers to as "pressing" as one "crisis" among many: "The tendency to neglect the study of vernacular languages is another of the crises facing the African musician" (Bebey 1975, 122). When the issue is examined from the lexical frameworks of West African languages such as Wolof, Bambara, or Malinké, it becomes readily apparent that languages like English and French offer no ready equivalents for African musical terminology. On this note, Bebey suggests that although the Duala people of francophone Cameroon "have adopted the word

*musiki* from the French *musique*, they also have their own words to define specific forms, such as *elongi* (song) or *ngoso* (chant), but these can by no means be considered generic terms" (12). In another example from Senegal, the Wolof term *mbalax*, used to designate specific styles of what Ruth Stone describes as "percussion-based music, mixing Cuban rhythms with *kora*-based traditional melodies, sung in a high-pitched style" (Stone 2000, 360), remains untranslatable in English and in French. Among other examples, the *bara* Sembene prominently presents in *God's Bits of Wood* (which Sembene simply defines as a "Bambara dance" [*BBD,* 28]), and the *bàkk* Sow Fall repeatedly evokes in *L'appel des arènes* (which Sow Fall defines as "poems declaimed by wrestlers" [*Appel*, 27]) are not interchangeable with existing English or French musical terminology.

The untranslatability of culturally specific songs and dance beats is equally apparent in Creolophone-Francophone texts and contexts. Throughout *Solibo Magnificient*, for example, Chamoiseau repeatedly incorporates the names of Caribbean songs and dances—including *lafouka*, a Creole term used to describe a partner dance driven by the hips in which dancers dance in close proximity to one another (*Solibo*, 60), and *zouc*, a Creole term for "party" used to define an Antillean musical genre characterized by a transmusical blend of Caribbean rhythms and lyrical stylings combined with African guitar styles and American funk (*Solibo*, 55). With rhythms and lyrics born out of the Caribbean islands, dances and genres like *lafouka* and *zouc* are significant in that they convey a local cultural aesthetic performed in the space of the islands and around the world. As Jocelyne Guilbault points out, *zouk* (an alternative spelling for *zouc*) and other traditional Creolophone genres are significant in that they are typically sung in Creole languages, which have "been totally rejected or at best ignored for generations" (Guilbault 1993, 11). In view of contemporary Creole language policies and practices, Guilbault adds, "It is only recently that public use of Creole has not been scorned" (12).[9] Although, as Guilbault suggests, the Creole lyrics and rhythms of *zouk* "seem to have brought Creole speakers together one way or another," she opens the genre to larger questions of identity (202). As such, Guilbault sets forth what she

9. In 2000, France passed the Loi d'orientation pour l'outre mer (Orientation Law for Overseas), which states: "Les langues régionales en usage dans les départements d'outre mer font partie du patrimoine linguistique de la Nation. Elles bénéficient du renforcement des politiques en faveur des langues régionales afin d'en faciliter l'usage" (Government of France 2000). (The regional languages in use in the overseas departments form a part of the linguistic patrimony of the Nation. They benefit from the reinforcement of policies in favor of regional languages which facilitate their use.) Whereas in the past, students in Guadeloupe and Martinique were not allowed to speak Creole in schools, today many Antillean schools are promoting Creole language and cultural activities in their curriculum.

refers to as "the ultimate challenge," asserting that it "remains to agree on the definition of the Antillean/Creole identity that is being promoted through *zouk*" (202). By interweaving the vibrant sonorities of Caribbean dance beats and songs into their novels, writers like Chamoiseau, Schwarz-Bart, and Condé are taking up this challenge, creating transpoetic spaces in their novels in which individual and collective identities are (re)negotiated and (re)configured.

Such inconsistencies—lexical, cultural, or otherwise—render it difficult to make sweeping generalizations about African and Caribbean musical practices, further emphasizing the need to consider sociocultural and linguistic factors when exploring texted rhythmic and musical phenomena presented by West African and Caribbean writers. Agawu insists on this premise in "Defining and Interpreting African Music," in which he addresses linguistic and sociocultural factors in local and global contexts in view of the conceptualization and ensuing problematization of the term *music*. Although Agawu emphasizes African musical practices in his discussion, his ideas extend conceptually to embrace the musical phenomena of interlinguistic African Diaspora communities in the Americas and the Caribbean.

> Like all acts of naming, the blanket application of "music" betrays an exercise of power; it is those who construct or manipulate metalanguages who are positioned to exercise linguistic, political, or institutional power over those whose lived realities form the objects of research . . . The lesson . . . is not to interpret the absence of a ready equivalent for "music" as a deficit or lack, but to recognize—indeed celebrate—the many nuanced ways in which thinking African musicians talk about what they do. (Agawu 2003a, 2)

As Agawu explains, the lack of a direct translation for the English word "music" in many Sub-Saharan African languages opens the field of sonorous possibilities rather than limiting it. For this reason, whenever possible I choose to privilege terms presented by the writers in West African or Caribbean Creole lexicons, but nonetheless apply the broader term "music" in discussing "musical" phenomena in general. Even so, at this point, the question of how to define music remains.

In approaching this question, ethnomusicologist John Blacking's conception of music, as "sound that is organized into socially accepted patterns" (Blacking 1973, 25), reminds us that the reception and perception of musical phenomena is open to interpretation. While at first glance, Blacking's definition seems to provide a fluid and adaptable working model that recognizes the specificity of variable sociocultural factors, there are still lingering questions, particularly in view of the following criteria:

What constitutes a social group? Who is involved? And, how many people must conceptualize and endorse a sounding pattern as "music" before it is widely acknowledged as such? Must a social group be representative of a culture or subculture at large, or can one person define sonorous arrangements, however haphazard, as music? Can two?

Somewhat ambiguous and open to interpretation, Blacking's definition is particularly intriguing when coupled with John Cage's ideas about the everyday noises that can be experienced as music or incorporated into the production of musical performance phenomena. What Cage describes as possible music or components thereof—"The sound of a truck at fifty miles per hour. Static between stations. Rain" (Cage 1961, 3)—much like the sounds of respiration, the noises of footsteps, and the sonorities of people working, defies the social conventions prescribed in Blacking's model, insisting instead on the importance of the individual subjectivities of the composer and/or listener rather than the collective acknowledgment of a social group. For Cage, music, or at least what is referred to in English as "music," lies in the ears and the mind(s) of the creator(s) and the beholder(s).

In addressing the multiplicity of possible conceptualizations of the term "music," it is crucial not to limit the scope of this investigation to questions of what music is or what music is not. Rather, it is important to take note of the multiple manifestations of musical phenomena and the possibilities therein, while simultaneously recognizing and respecting the fact that what resonates as music to one set of ears may not be received as such by another. Regardless of whether such discrepancies are attributable to linguistic, sociocultural, or individual aesthetic factors, the problematization of the term "music" exposes the need to regard texted musical phenomena through alternative categorical lenses.

This is where the term "rhythm" enters the critical equation. Inextricably bound to studies of linguistic, musical, poetic, and biological phenomena (among others), rhythm, like music, is defined inconsistently by different people. Perhaps this is why, when linguist G. Burns Cooper poses the question, "What is rhythm?" he parenthetically responds to himself with the phrase "(Who's asking?)" (Cooper 1998, 16). Although equally problematic, the term "rhythm" is useful in that it can be applied to the domains of both music and literature, bridging the divides that often separate the visual work of reading from the aural work of listening.

In *Éléments de rythmanalyse* (*Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*), Henri Lefebvre goes so far as to combine the activities of seeing and listening, deeming them both indispensable in assessing the reception and interpretation of everyday rhythmic phenomena:

> Rythmes. Rythmes. Ils révèlent et ils dissimulent . . .

> Aucune caméra, aucune image ou suite d'images ne peut montrer ses rythmes. Il y faut des yeux et des oreilles également attentifs, une tête et une mémoire et un coeur. (Lefebvre 1992, 52)
>
> [Rhythms. Rhythms. They reveal and conceal . . .
> No camera, no image or series of images can show its [everyday] rhythms. Equally attentive eyes and ears are necessary, a head and a memory and a heart.]

For Lefebvre, such quotidian rhythms are perceptible in music and in texts, but also in marketplaces, on street corners, or in any physical setting or geographical location. Experienced as "la temporalité vécue," or "lived temporality" (33), for Lefebvre, rhythm presents itself in everyday moments and in everyday ways—not just in the texts people read, not just in the music people listen to, but in the events and noises that shape their experiences as autonomous subjects in relation with the world. Since, in discussing sonorous texted phenomena, this study explores musical material not only as produced by human voices or musical instruments, but also the commonplace rhythms created by people, their bodies, their tools, and their environments, it is appropriate to consider rhythm as an entity in itself—both as a component of and as a complement to music. As such, in the interest of tolerating categorical and aesthetic ambiguities and of respecting multiple theoretical and sociocultural perspectives on rhythmic and musical phenomena, the terms "rhythm" and "music" are treated as distinct yet overlapping designations throughout this study.

In considering the roles music and rhythm play in the aforementioned novels, it is important to explore the ways in which music is represented in contemporary francophone narratives. Whether characterized by the sounds of traditional African instruments such as the *balafon* (a type of wooden xylophone) and the *kora* (a type of string instrument often characterized as a cross between a harp and a lute), traditional Caribbean instruments such as the *tambou bèlè* (a large tam-tam played with the hands and feet that provides the base rhythms in traditional drumming ensembles) and the *tibwa* (two wooden sticks used to strike the side of a drum or a horizontally situated bamboo chute on elevated supports), Western instruments such as the guitar and the clarinet, or human voices and body movements, sounding rhythmic and musical phenomena recognizably factor into the structure of the novels selected for this study and many others as well.[10] A musicality resonates from the spaces of these texts, evoking

10. Although Francophone novels comprise the focus of this study, some Anglophone examples include: Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, and American writer Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, among others.

a multiplicity of cadences, voices, and sonorities that evoke the rhythms of songs and dances and everydayness, the soundtracks as it were, that accompany the lives of characters representing diverse peoples from different parts of the world. Implicitly and explicitly inscribed in the frame of the novel, this musical presence audibly resounds at multiple levels, filling perceptive and imaginative ears with intricate layers of rhythmic polyphony.[11]

In addition to multiple texted representations of harmonies, euphonies, and cacophonies, vocal and instrumental polyphonies comprise meaningful dimensions in the novels selected for this study. Through the incorporation of vocal and instrumental polyphonies, writers create sounding forums in which the sonorities of multiple realities and imaginaries coincide and interact, creating spaces for communication and collaboration that impact the negotiation and configuration of autonomous identities. Although typically evoked to describe simultaneously resounding melodic components produced by human voices and other nonpercussion instruments, in some instances, the term "polyphony" can be used to characterize the multiple pitches and tones produced by idiophones (self-sounding percussion instruments) and membranophones (drums). In *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm*, Simha Arom explains instances of "polyphony by way of polyrhythmics or hocket . . . created by the interweaving, overlapping and interlocking of several rhythmic figures *located on different pitch levels* in a specific system" (Arom 1991, 307). Although his model of "polyphony by way of polyrhythmics" deals primarily with aerophone horns and whistles, it is also conceivable for pieces performed on idiophones such as the *balafon* and the *mbira* (a type of hand piano), and membranophones such as the *tama* (or "talking" drum) that are tuned to different pitches and tones. As musicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia observes, "Limited manifestations of polyphony (many-voiced or multi-part music) occur in African instrumental traditions" (Nketia 1974, 122). In describing such traditions, Nketia cites Malinké xylophone music, a genre associated with the Malinké characters Kourouma presents in *The Suns of Independence,* as one such prominent example of polyrhythmic polyphony (123). As we will later observe, these percussive polyphonic moments are

11. Evocations of musical instruments play an important role in francophone poetry as well, particularly in the works of Senegalese poet Léopold Sédar Senghor (see "Que m'accompagnent koras et balafong [guimm pour trios koras et un balafong]"), Guyanan poet Léon Damas (see "Ils sont venus ce soir"), and Senegalese poet David Diop (see "Coups de pilon"). In their works, each poet incorporates the resonant sounds of musical and working instruments in promoting local linguistic, sociocultural, rhythmic, and musical aesthetic values while evoking the problematic histories of slavery and colonialism, and protesting the injustices of discrimination and racism.

meaningful in that they ignite dynamic interactive sounding spaces in which social identities are performed and negotiated.

In *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Songs, Music and Culture*, Brenda F. Berrian equally acknowledges the polyphonic possibilities of polyrhythms in Antillean instrumental music, particularly in her discussion of membranophones. In describing the primary percussion components of Martinican folk music, the *tambou bèlè* and the *tibwa*, she notes, "the first is for the rhythm, and the second for the melody" (Berrian 2000, 212). By recognizing the multiple layers of interwoven percussion-driven rhythms and tonalities in multiple genres of Antillean music, Berrian approaches percussion music as a complex spectrum of interacting sonorities complete with melodic potential, rather than as a linear series of rhythms. Using conventional musical notation, the former would be transcribed both horizontally and vertically, visually representing the richness and depth of polyphonic rhythmic music, whereas the latter would be transcribed horizontally but not vertically, visually suggesting the absence of melodic components. Rather than limiting drummed music to simple horizontal transcriptions, some Antillean musicians have tried to resolve this problem by including scripted onomatopoeia to accompany their rhythmic musical notations. For example, in *Notes techniques sur les instruments tibwa et tanbou dejanbe* (Technical notes on the *tibwa* and *tanbou dejanbe*) produced by the Danmyé-Kalennda-Bèlè Music Association of Martinique, onomatopoeia representing drum sounds are included in the musical score in the same manner as vocal lyrics. The transcriptions—which include *bang bang tin tin*, *be doum be doum*, and *mache asou i tann* for the *bèlè* drum, and *tak pi tak pi tak tak tak* for the *tibwa*—provide drummers not only with a sense of the rhythm, but also with a sense of the drum tones and sounds the composer has in mind (Musique Danmyé-Kalennda-Bèlè de Martinique 1992, 57, 54).

For the purposes of this study, the term "polyphony" is appropriate in characterizing the interplay among the multiple overlapping tones, sonorities, and cadences produced not only by human voices and musical instruments but by percussion instruments, human body movements, and everyday objects presented in the texts. In discussing *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Solibo Magnificent*, and *Crossing the Mangrove*, it is important to examine the polyphonic and polyrhythmic aspects of the texted sonorous phenomena and the intermingling rhythmic and musical elements, specifically in view of their intertextual and extratextual implications.[12] Before assessing the

12. It is important to note that the analysis of polyphony and polyrhythms in Francophone literature has prominently figured into the critical body of work on the poetry of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor (see Kubayanda1982).

multiple roles music and rhythm play in these novels, it is important to define and explain the theoretical concepts that are incorporated throughout this text. Chapter 1, "Rhythm and Transcultural Poetics," lays the theoretical groundwork for discussions of transpoetic transcultural phenomena, specifically as manifest within the frame of the novel. The first part of this chapter deals with notions related to rhythm and music in the novel, approaching questions concerning the definition of rhythm, the function of rhythm, and the ways in which writers text rhythm and music. The motifs of texted rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy elements are further explored, particularly in view of how texts resonate to readers on sonorous (auditory) and/or meaningful (interpretive) levels. Focusing attention on the familiar sounds of footsteps, heartbeats, and drumbeats, and those of the quotidian sonorities produced through working, dancing, and other forms of music making, multiple aesthetic, linguistic, political, and sociocultural aspects of transpoetic transcultural phenomena in critical and literary texts are analyzed and interpreted. Further attention is directed toward examining the significance of drums and drumming, particularly in view of how texted sounding drumbeats function as allegorical devices and transpoetic mechanisms. In this capacity, the ubiquity of drums and drumming not only transforms the structure of the novel, filling it with a sense of rhythmic sensibility and vibrant musicality, but also bursts hegemonic hierarchies operating outside of the texts, changing the ways in which writers and then readers negotiate, configure, and interpret autonomous identity constructs performed both inside and outside the frame of the text.

After considering rhythmic transpoetics in light of reader reception theories that address questions of individual subjectivities and cultural specificities, the notions of *transculture* and *transcultural space* are addressed in the second part of chapter 1. In examining what constitutes transculture or what occupies transcultural space, it is important to respect the equivocal nature of the terms, to appreciate the pure and possible in-between-ness, above-ness and across-ness that the prefix *trans* designates. Nonetheless, in discussing these concepts, we must insist on devising precise definitions that resist the tempting traps of ambiguity, yet still accurately reflect the complexities of the terms. A consideration of diverse theoretical approaches accompanies the discussion of transculture and transcultural space, with particular attention being focused on the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (the Rhizome), Édouard Glissant (the Relation), and Paul Gilroy (the Black Atlantic). In discussing these theories, the primary focus involves a consideration of questions of identity in connection with the concept of transcultural transpoetics, namely: How do writers and readers reconcile autonomous individual identifications with preexisting

collective identity constructs? What roles can rhythm and music play in this process? How does the work of transcription influence the formation and transformation of texted rhythmic and musical elements? And, how do linguistic, political, sociocultural, and aesthetic criteria figure into this rhythmic and musically centered identificatory model?

Although each writer, much like a composer or a musician, creates a distinct texted soundscape in each of his or her respective works, points of correspondence and commonality connect the texts in spite of spatial and temporal contextual differences. The organization of chapters in this book is intended to maximize such points of congruity, specifically in light of prominent themes presented in each novel. Although the rhythmic and musical motifs provide the principal focus of this study, particularly in the discussion of texted transpoetic transcultural spaces since they provide a *fil rouge* (a guiding thread; literally, a red thread) in all of the novels, it becomes important to provide a basis for distinction among the works. As a means of highlighting such stylistic and operative particularities, the works are considered in relation to central themes—advocacy and social activism, journeys through space and time, and death and mourning—which respectively serve as the themes for chapters 2, 3, and 4.

In chapter 2, "Rhythm and Reappropriation in *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*," we will explore texted rhythmic and musical elements in Ousmane Sembene's and Ahmadou Kourouma's classic literary works. Published in 1960 and 1968 respectively, *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence* both confront questions of language, identity, and authority in the eras immediately preceding Senegalese and Malian independence (as portrayed by Sembene), and following Ivoirian independence (as portrayed by Kourouma) in the aftermath of French colonialism.[13] Focus is directed toward analyzing multiple written representations of rhythm and music in Sembene's and Kourouma's works. Moreover, the possible connections among the scripted sonorities of songs, dances, and other everyday cadences are explored, specifically in regard to the lexical localization strategies and stylistic musicalization techniques that both writers employ as an effective means of conveying local sociocultural and aesthetic conventions. After comparing Sembene and Kourouma's views on language, orality, writing, and the Francophone establishment, focus shifts toward questions of resonance and representation in view of socially committed writing, political reappropriation, and identity configuration in the postcolonial era.

In chapter 2, I also define and discuss the notion of *instrumentaliture*,

13. The official date of Senegalese independence is August 20, 1960; of Malian independence, September 22, 1960; and of the independence of Côte d'Ivoire, August 7, 1960.

a new term presented in this book that I define as a phenomenon through which the sonorities of instrumental music and the sounds of everyday instruments and objects are presented in the frame of written literature. Much like *oraliture*, a process through which oral genres are translated and transcribed in written literature, instrumentaliture designates the space of the text as a transpoetic space, in which written, oral, and musical styles intermingle. Nonetheless distinct from oraliture, instrumentaliture is significant in that it creates a space for communication and exchange that lies beyond the confines of oral and written languages. Breaking free from the binary tendencies that attempt to distinguish categories such as oral and written, Occidental and Oriental, and traditional and modern by placing them in opposition to one another, instrumentaliture occupies an in-between classificatory zone, allowing for increased negotiation, communication, and exchange across geographical spaces and historical epochs. The implications of such identificatory possibilities become especially interesting when staged in the frame of a transpoetic transcultural literary text. In addressing questions of identity as examined in novels by Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau, instrumentaliture provides a significant component—in function and in form—for assessing the implications of the designation of the text as a transpoetic transcultural space.

In chapter 3, "Rhythm, Music, and Identity in *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*," texted rhythmic and musical motifs and the theme of real and imagined journeys through space and time are explored in view of questions of identity as elicited by Senegalese writer Sow Fall and Guadeloupean writer Schwarz-Bart. Published in 1973 and 1979 respectively, *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon* both consider questions of language, culture, history, and identity in postcolonial Francophone contexts. In spite of the disparate geographical and temporal settings, in both novels, the protagonists embark on important identificatory journeys, traversing real and imaginary spaces, and subsequently confronting questions of collective and individual identification at home and abroad.

In discussing *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*, it is important to consider the inventive identificatory models Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart present in the prose of their respective novels. Since both models develop a reassessment and reinterpretation of tree-based identificatory systems, they are examined in view of the organic and abstract relational configurations discussed in chapter 1: Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome, Glissant's Relation, and Gilroy's Black Atlantic. Moreover, these models are also explored with regard to the notions of the transpoetic and transcultural, which is accomplished through the analysis of the texted rhythmic and

musical motifs that are prominently featured in *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*.

In chapter 4, "Music and Mourning in *Crossing the Mangrove* and *Solibo Magnificent*," we continue our examination of transpoetic transcultural phenomena as expressed in francophone novels, this time focusing on the negotiation of identity through music and mourning. In Chamoiseau's and Condé's works, published in 1988 and 1989 respectively, readers are immediately confronted with the death of a mysterious figure whose identity is posthumously reconfigured through interrelated processes of music, memory, and mourning occurring throughout the frame of the narrative. Nevertheless, Chamoiseau's and Condé's identificatory investigations are not limited to negotiating posthumous identities for the deceased characters. Rather, through the work of remembering and the music of mourning, Chamoiseau and Condé approach questions of identity not only in view of the dead—Solibo Magnificent in *Solibo Magnificent* and Francis Sancher in *Crossing the Mangrove*—but also in view of the living. As characters in *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove* assemble fragments of collective and individual memories in mourning and investigating the mysterious deaths, they are simultaneously compelled to confront questions of identity in twentieth-century Antillean cultural contexts. In analyzing Martinican-born Chamoiseau's and Guadeloupean-born Condé's respective texts, attention is focused on rhythmic and musical representations as elicited through the tasks of memory and mourning. Significant in function and in form, such rhythmic and musical manifestations, operating in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text, engage characters and readers in an ongoing process of communication and exchange through which collective and individual identities are questioned, negotiated, and (re)configured by autonomous subjects in a relational context.

In discussing the selected ensemble of works, considerations of texted representations of percussive performance traditions and innovations comprise a meaningful part of the rhythmic and thematic analysis. In assessing the roles of percussion instruments in *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Crossing the Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnificent*, it is important to note that, although the characterizations of percussive devices, drums, and drumming display similar tendencies from one text to another, their rhythms distinctly resonate in each work. Furthermore, despite the presence of multiple metaphors and common functions, the drum resists classification as a universal signifier. Fluid rather than fixed, the drum is an emblem of possibility, manifest in its capacities for communication and interaction. The allegory of the drum can be expanded in considering the roles sounding elements

play in literary texts. Through the exploration of representations of the rhythm, music, and otherwise noisy phenomena in the novels selected for this study, we will establish transpoetic, transcultural, and transmusical links that connect the texts in ways that transcend the limits of historical, sociocultural, linguistic, aesthetic, and geographical contexts and criteria. Serving as points of transaction, communication, and exchange, these links provide a basis of commonality, but in no way connote or support the limits of homogeneity.

Through the incorporation of prominent rhythmic and musical structures in their texts, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Chamoiseau, and Condé establish the frame of the novel as a transcultural transpoetic space. Simultaneously functioning as aesthetic and linguistic devices, texted rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena can reinforce or provide alternatives to lexical localization strategies, aiding writers in positioning themselves among the diverse and divergent voices of the global Francophone community. Opening a zone where transcultural exchange and communication take place and in which autonomous identities are affirmed, these writers create vividly sonorous texted worlds filled with vibrant rhythms, musics, songs, and dances. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, we examine the rhythmic and musical soundscapes of Sembene's, Kourouma's, Sow Fall's, Schwarz-Bart's, Condé's and Chamoiseau's novels, analyzing how each writer imbues his or her text with audibly resonant potential. More importantly, however, we explore how and why these sounding techniques play such a significant role in each of the novels, addressing, in particular, the question of what happens when the freedom and possibility of rhythm and music resonate from within the textual interface of the novel.

The main objective of this study is to establish a framework for the designation of transpoetic and transcultural phenomena in a selection of Francophone novels from West Africa and the Caribbean. In shaping the argumentation, critical components from a variety of academic disciplines including anthropology, musicology, philosophy, and literary criticism are considered. Texted representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena are further examined as presented in each of the selected novels. Whether manifest in quotidian biological, mechanized, and musical rhythms, or sonorous melodies, euphonies, polyphonies, and cacophonies, through the course of this analysis, my aim is to explain how such sounding components significantly contribute not only in promoting local aesthetic values and cultural sensibilities in the works of Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau, but also how they open resonant spaces for autonomous identity appropriation and configuration from within the transpoetic transcultural space of the text.

Simply put, in their works, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau designate forums for sounding off. That is to say, they infuse their works with intricate layers of sounding phenomena as produced by human voices and human bodies as they interact with the sounds of nature, instruments, and machines. Charged with intensity and emotion, sounding off is a way to respond to injury, injustice, and inequality in an attempt to make one's voice heard among many. Although typically associated with the voice, sounding off also manifests itself in other sonic ways as conveyed through the sounds of instrumental music and body movements, among other things. More than a narrative technique or aesthetic device, sounding off is an art through which writers air their grievances concerning socioeconomic and political dominance hierarchies and/or their frustrations in dealing with aesthetic and cultural conventions. They do this not only through the messages conveyed by the transcribed or transposed voices of themselves or their characters, but also through texted incorporations of the rhythms and sonorities of local languages, songs, dances, and noisy quotidian phenomena. Beyond aesthetic and thematic considerations, sounding off has important political and critical implications as well. As writers translate, transcribe, and transpose resonant sounding phenomena into the frames of their texts, they succeed in creating alternative spaces for identity configuration and negotiation, ones that lie beyond the limits of Western critical paradigms. In doing so, they activate a necessary critical shift that effectively decentralizes the discussion of identity in postcolonial and contemporary global frameworks, displacing the purported authority of the Western critical tradition and opening the conversation to multiple possibilities and perspectives among local and global networks. Moreover, writers like Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau invite their readers to participate in the critical dialogue, to sound off in turn by responding with their own noisy acknowledgments, questions, and reactions. Perhaps this book represents my own way of sounding off in response to the calls set forth in *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Crossing the Mangrove,* and *Solibo Magnificent*.

# 1 / Rhythm and Transcultural Poetics

Rhythm and rhythmic processes underlie everything we do. Resonating from inside of us and all around us, rhythms shape the experiences of our day-to-day lives, both conscious and unconscious. In our bodies, physiological rhythms regulate our heartbeat and respiration. When we are in good health, they keep our organs functioning at an appropriate pace. Planetary rhythms regulate and contextualize our experience of time, of the seasons, of days and nights. While geographical and sociocultural factors influence our perception of time and our performance therein, the rhythms of our languages frame our subjectivities. And then there are the rhythms of music and dance, the rhythms of stories and poems, the rhythms of work, the rhythms of travel, the rhythms of noisy randomness . . . so many rhythms, distinct and overlapping, that pattern our experience of everyday and extraordinary phenomena.

Whether we like it or not, we each fall into our own set of rhythms. Influenced by physiological, biological, linguistic, and sociocultural factors (among others), rhythmic contexts condition our behaviors and experiences. These rhythms fluctuate as we move through time and across distances, but also as we gain knowledge of new languages and cultures. This is why traveling to a faraway foreign destination can be particularly disorienting to travelers.

For starters, the geographic displacement involved in traveling positions us in an unfamiliar location with different natural rhythms. Consider, for example, the first time I traveled from New York City to Accra, Ghana, in May 2006. When I left New York, it was springtime, with average daytime

temperatures of around 67 degrees Fahrenheit (19 degrees Celsius).[1] The sun rose at around 5:45 a.m. and set at around 8:00 p.m. From what I observed, New Yorkers appeared to be enjoying the warming springtime temperatures and the longer hours of daylight. When I arrived in Accra, it was near the start of the rainy season, with average daytime temperatures of around 88 degrees Fahrenheit (31 degrees Celsius). The sun rose at around 5:45 a.m. and set at around 6:00 p.m., roughly the same time it usually does throughout the year. With the rainy season off to a slow start, the Ghanaians seemed to be looking forward to some relief from the intense equatorial sun and to the cooler temperatures of the rainy season.

Such seasonal and climatic differences were apparent from the moment I stepped off the plane. At around 6:30 p.m., it was a hot and humid (balmy by local standards) night in Accra. It was already dark outside. At the time, I remember making a mental note to try to get up early the following morning to maximize my available daylight. That, of course, was only the start of the adjustments I began to make as I slowly acclimated myself to the natural, linguistic, sociocultural, and other everyday rhythms in Ghana.

In traveling from New York City to Accra, I also found myself adapting to a different pace of life. New York City dwellers (and in particular, Manhattanites) operate at a more frenzied pace than Accra residents do. They tend to hurry through the streets as they go about their business. Their lives are ruled by appointments, schedules, watches, and clocks. Generally speaking, they don't like to be delayed or kept waiting. As a nonnative, I was struck by the sense of urgency that seems to dominate everyday transactions in New York City. At lunchtime, for example, working people are often limited to a one-hour break during which they are expected to complete the round-trip from their workplace to their lunch spot and also find time to eat somewhere in between. Perhaps this is why some of my tensest moments in New York occurred at lunch counters between noon and 2:00 p.m. I distinctly remember one episode at a lunch counter in the West Village on a day when I decided to pay in cash—with bills and change. As I fished around in the bottom of my handbag for the correct change, I could feel people in the line behind me beginning to tense up. After about ten or fifteen seconds, some of them began to sigh audibly, check their watches in frustration, and make exasperated facial expressions to show their annoyance at what they perceived as a lackadaisical pace.

In Accra, people are just as serious about their day-to-day business, but they tend to go about it in a more laid-back and patient manner. Delays in transportation, communication, and transactions are frequent and even

1. These figures are adapted from the World Meteorological Organization averages available through their Web site at http://www.wmo.ch.

expected in Accra. Even so, an *Enye shwee,*[2] or "no worries," attitude—through which patience, acceptance, and perseverance are valorized—prevails. This cultural tendency toward calmness and patience in the face of delays and adversities is reinforced not only through contemporary social norms, but also through popular proverbs and traditional symbols.[3] Among the Ashanti people of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, the symbol of the moon (*osram*) represents faith, patience, and determination. The moon's symbolic properties are represented in a popular Ashanti proverb, "Osram mifiti preko ntware oman" (The moon does not go around the world hastily). The proverb reminds people to be patient and persistent in their day-to-day lives. Another Ashanti proverb reminds Ghanaians not to get upset about mishaps and annoyances like transportation delays and power outages: "Kotoku tew a na mmati adwo" (When the bag tears, the shoulders get a rest).

Although similar proverbs exist in American culture—such as "Haste makes waste" and "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade"—American individual and corporate desires to be the first, the best, the richest, and the fastest are presently trumping the relaxed rhythms prescribed by these proverbs. By contrast, these proverbs and corresponding symbols maintain relevance in contemporary Ghana through frequent representations in Ghanaian media and popular culture. In this respect, they are commonly incorporated into television and radio broadcasts as well as in advertising campaigns. In 2007, during the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Ghanaian independence, the *adinkra* symbol *Gye Nyame* (Except God) comprised the zero in the fiftieth-anniversary logo. Inspired by an Ashanti proverb used to explain the origins of the world and spirituality, the *Gye Nyame* symbol served as a powerful reminder of Ghanaian cultural values throughout the yearlong celebration.

Returning to questions of quotidian rhythms in contemporary Ghana, particularly in view of the values of patience and persistence, Ghanaian patience is put to the test every day on the streets of Accra—in the cars, taxis, busses, and tro-tros[4] that transport people from one part of the city

2. I would like to thank Armstrong Appiah for his Twi language help. In addition to *enye shwee*, Appiah suggested another related phrase that conveys a similar philosophy: *Emma noha wo*, which translates as "Don't worry," or "Don't let it bother you."

3. For a discussion of the importance of proverbs in African contexts and suggestions for how to incorporate proverbs in American contexts, see Jackson-Lowman 1997, 75–89.

4. Philip Briggs provides a great working definition for tro-tros in his travel guide to Ghana: "Pretty much any passenger vehicle that isn't a bus or a taxi." He adds: "Tro-tros cover the length and breadth of Ghana's roads, ranging from comfortable and only slightly crowded minibuses to customized, covered trucks with densely packed seating" (Briggs 2004, 67).

to another. Although busses and tro-tros typically service regular routes in and around the city of Accra, they don't always keep to a regular schedule. Most of the time, busses and tro-tros set off for their target destinations only after they have filled all of the available seats in the vehicle. So, unless you are the last person to board a bus or a tro-tro from its departure point, it is safe to say you will have to wait a while—anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours depending on your departure time and target destination. The process is even more complicated for people who are waiting to board public transport vehicles at points along the route. People seeking rides at later stops can board only if there is enough space in the vehicle, that is to say, unless enough of the original passengers have disembarked before reaching the desired point of embarkation. During my time in Accra, it didn't take me long to wise up to the math and probability of such equations, particularly when stuck waiting at early stops along public transportation routes. I remember one day in particular when I had difficulty securing a place in passing tro-tros and busses. I was returning from the STC bus station on the west side of the city in a busy, traffic-congested area. Since there were many of us trying, patiently but assertively, to find seats in passing vehicles and few seats available, I found myself waiting upward of a half hour—with no success. As the traffic rumbled by and people noisily clambered for seats in the packed public transport vehicles, I could feel my American impatience mounting. Rather than give in to frustration, I found it useful to follow a group of enterprising local students on a fifteen-minute walk in the direction of Nkrumah Circle, a popular stop-off point where I was able to secure a seat with relative ease. *Enye shwee!*

In demonstrating some of the natural and sociocultural factors that influence the expression and reception of rhythm in different geographic locations, I have only begun to scratch the surface. Similarities and differences in local rhythmic patterns reveal themselves through a variety of everyday activities including, but not limited to, greetings, shopping, food preparation, social interactions, and work and leisure activities. Moreover, rhythmic patterns in music, languages, and quotidian sonorities also play important roles in the individual and collective experiences of everydayness. Such resonant rhythmic phenomena frame our perceptions of and reactions to ordinary and extraordinary events. In this respect, we are shaped by the melodies, euphonies, cacophonies, and dissonances that fill our ears and resonate within us each day.

Rather than study the impact of music and sound in society as an ethnomusicologist would, or the influence of rhythm and language in context as a sociolinguist would, It is my aim to investigate the significance of texted sounding phenomena in literature, specifically in novels. In the novels selected for this study—Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*, Ahmadou

Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence*, Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes*, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*, and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent*—writers prominently incorporate resonant rhythmic and musical phenomena into the frames of their narratives. Infusing textual realms with the multiple sonorities of footsteps, heartbeats, and drumbeats along with those of dancing, working, and other forms of music-making, these writers create texted representations of rhythms, music, and sound, and in doing so, establish resonant narrative spaces in which questions of identity are considered through multiple lenses and subjectivities. Commonly overlooked in contemporary literary analysis, particularly with respect to the novel (some noteworthy exceptions include Brown 1957; Delas and Terray 1988–91; McCarthy 1998; and York 1999), these rhythms play an important role not only in enhancing the distinct narrative voice of each individual writer and in shaping the vibrant sonorities of his or her texted universe, but also in developing transpoetic spaces in which sociocultural, linguistic, and aesthetic conventions are shattered, and transcultural communication, negotiation, and exchange take place.

In exploring the possibilities of rhythm and transpoetics in novels, many technical and theoretical questions arise, particularly in regard to the representation of rhythm and music in the text. The principal questions—Can one write rhythm, and, if so, how does one write rhythm?—are interesting in that they concern literary and musical scholars alike. Musicologist Jacques Chailley deemed the question "Peut-on écrire le rythme?" (Can one write rhythm?) so important that he made it a chapter title in his book *La musique et le signe* (Music and the Sign).

In response to Chailley's question, literary scholars including R. A. York and B. Eugene McCarthy would certainly reply, "Yes, one can write rhythm," but they may not be able to agree as to precisely how rhythm manifests itself in the frame of the novel. Although York acknowledges that literary studies of rhythm can address "rhythm in the sense of temporal sequence and proportion," in *The Rules of Time: Time and Rhythm in the Twentieth-Century Novel*, he focuses his analysis on "certain patterns of symbolism" (York 1999, 16), rather than insisting on the linguistic or musical aspects of rhythm in the novel. From the outset, York points out the possible shortcomings of his endeavor, particularly in view of the methodology used in the study: "The integration of these [techniques] is not rigorous; it may be that future researchers will find a more systematic frame of study" (17). Admitting the limitations of his inquiry, York challenges future researchers to develop more methodical approaches to examining rhythm in the frame of the novel. Nevertheless, he subsequently posits the difficulty of this task and postures the reader as a prospective

impasse to the definitive rhythmic analysis of novels: "[I]t may be that the reader's subjectivity is inescapable and that no fully rigorous analysis is possible" (17).

Literary scholar B. Eugene McCarthy offers a different methodological approach in addressing questions of rhythm in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In his analysis, he primarily examines rhythm and repetition in Achebe's language rather than focusing on symbolic motifs as York does. Exploring the connections between Nigerian Igbo orality and English writing, McCarthy proposes "a way of reading and of understanding the novel through the concept of rhythm, within the oral tradition" (McCarthy 1998, 41). Although, for the most part, McCarthy avoids discussing symbolic rhythmic motifs in his inquiry, instead focusing on the linguistic and stylistic dimensions of Achebe's narrative, at one point in his assessment, he mentions the importance of drumming, drummers, and drumbeats in view of rhythmic representations in *Things Fall Apart*. In the aforementioned passage, McCarthy describes the drums of Achebe's novel as "the rhythmic pulse of the heart of the clan, sounding insistently behind the action" (48). Focusing on the symbolic and operative significance of the drum in these sections of his analysis, McCarthy later observes: "We watch the people drawn in every sense together by the drums . . . Rhythm is central" (48). By including the sonorities of multiple drumbeats in his discussion, McCarthy effectively expands his field of rhythmic inquiry, establishing a resonant point of correspondence between linguistic, symbolic, and musical rhythmic elements. Although not explicitly explained from the onset, on a practical level, McCarthy's work encourages a broad understanding of the term "rhythm" as applied to explorations of rhythmic phenomena in novels, opening the domain of rhythmic inquiry to a multiplicity of resonant possibilities as expressed in language, music, and symbolism.

As philosopher Henri Lefebvre affirms in *Éléments de rythmanalyse* (*Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*), the question of rhythm is *transdisciplinary* in nature, requiring examination from a variety of perspectives and academic disciplines (Lefebvre 1992, 35):

> Le *rythme* réunit des aspects et éléments *quantitatifs*, qui marquent le temps et en distinguent les instants—et des éléments ou aspects *qualitatifs*, qui relient, qui fondent les ensembles et qui en résultent. Le rythme apparaît comme un temps réglé, régi par des lois rationnelles, mais en liaison avec le moins rationnel de l'être humain. Aux multiples rythmes *naturels* du corps (respiration, coeur, faim et soif, etc.) se superposent non sans les modifier des rythmes *rationnels,* numériques, quantitatifs et qualitatifs. (17–18)

> [*Rhythm* brings together *quantitative* aspects and elements, that mark

> time and distinguish instants—and *qualitative* aspects, that link, that found the groups and that result from them. Rhythm appears as a regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in connection with the least rational of the human being. On the multiple *natural* rhythms of the body (respiration, heart, hunger, and thirst, etc.) are superimposed not without modifying their *rational*, numerical, quantitative, and qualitative rhythms.]

In considering Lefebvre's characterization of rhythm and rhythmic analysis, it becomes apparent that rhythm is not exclusive to the domain of music, nor is it confined to the realm of audible sounds. For Lefebvre, the ideal rhythmic analyst attempts to experience rhythm with all of the senses in a moment of "lived temporality" (33). Every note, every sound, every noise has its importance as does every smell, every taste, and every sensation. Following this protocol, that of opening oneself up to the totality of the experience of rhythm, Lefebvre suggests that the rhythmic analyst "parviendra à 'écouter' une maison, une rue, une ville, comme l'auditeur écoute une symphonie" (35) (will come to "listen to" a house, a street, a city, like the listener listens to a symphony). Expanding upon this idea, it becomes clear that the rhythmic analyst should equally be able to *listen* to a novel.

Like Lefebvre, linguist Henri Meschonnic views rhythmic analysis as a vast domain with seemingly unlimited possibilities. In *Critique du rythme* (Critique of Rhythm), Meschonnic problematizes the term "rhythm," in keeping with poet Paul Valéry's assertion: "Ce mot 'rythme' ne m'est pas clair. Je ne l'emploie jamais" (Valéry 1915, 1281). (This word "rhythm" is not clear to me. I never use it.) After an exhaustive examination of etymological, dictionary, and encyclopedic definitions, Meschonnic considers varying interpretations of the term "rhythm" as well as multiple definitions in the fields of linguistics, poetics, music, literature, and philosophy, among others. Nevertheless, rather than proposing his own definition for the concept, Meschonnic challenges critics to go beyond the limits of conventional definitions when considering rhythmic phenomena: "La critique du rythme implique d'excéder la définition du rythme" (Meschonnic 1982, 172) (Criticism of rhythm involves exceeding the definition of rhythm). For our purposes, Meschonnic's assertion is important in that it encourages us to explore rhythmic phenomena and possibilities from multiple perspectives and approaches—in music, in literature, in everydayness, in everything.

Upon accepting the possibility of listening to a novel in a manner that goes beyond the vocalization or subvocalization of written words, it is important to consider ways in which readers come to perceive the sounds that resonate from a given text, or, more precisely, the ways in which authors

succeed in writing rhythm and music in their texts using written language as their only tool. With regard to the processes of reading rhythm or reading music, Pierre Plumery has developed an interesting methodology of classification in that he separates the *hearing of the eye* or the *reading ear* from *the hearing of the ear itself* (Plumery 1987, 20). For the purposes of this study, Plumery's categorization is useful in that it acknowledges the possibility of imaginative hearing in the otherwise silent spaces of texts, whether they be written musical scores or literary texts such as novels. Although he admits that the *reading ear* hears differently than the *listening ear*, Plumery argues that this unconventional type of listening is significant in that it presents new possibilities to the reader and writer alike.

> L'oreille entend autre chose et autrement que ce que l'oeil peut écouter et voir dans les textes que nous lisons. Qu'advient-il d'un texte quand nous le mettons en posture musicale, quand nous le considérons à partir des fonctions musicales qu'il peut remplir et non uniquement à partir des fonctions habituelles de signification de communication? (21–22)

> [The ear hears other things and in a different way than that which the eye can hear and see in the texts that we read. What becomes of a text when we put it in a musical posture, when we consider it from the musical functions that it can fulfill and not exclusively from habitual functions of signification and communication?]

For Plumery, the act of listening to a text allows the reader to go beyond the typical experience of independent silent reading. No longer confined to the limits of signs and signification, the reader is able to transcend the notion of text as communication, and consequently develop more sophisticated or intuitive interpretations of a written text. Without using the term expressly, Plumery promotes the notion of *transpoetics* presented in this study, and in doing so, favors the consideration of written texts in a manner that respects their resonant potential. Plumery's assertion about the reading ear is significant not only in that it recognizes the possibility of *listening* to a text, but also in that it insists on this process as a means of escaping the limits of semiotics and structuralist thought.[5] In this respect, for Plumery, there is not one single meaning, purpose, or intention for any given text;

5. Structuralist criticism in literature, largely shaped by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theories, considers literary texts as being encoded with linguistic information. Semiotics, a process by which sign-systems made up of signifiers and signifieds are examined to assess meaning in literature, comprises an important component of structuralist criticism. Binary oppositions also play an important role in structuralist thought and often figure into structuralist literary analysis (see Saussure 2002; and Barthes 1970).

rather, there are infinite possibilities accessible though the opening of the imaginative hearing ear.[6]

Much of what Plumery has to say about the act of reading as a listening experience, an active process through which the reader constructs an imagined sonorous universe with multiple meanings and limitless possibilities, connects with what Meschonnic suggests in describing reading as a process of *lecture-écriture* (reading-writing) (Meschonnic 1970, 176). Designed in part as an alternative to Martin Heidegger's notions of reading as a labor-intensive process through which the reader seeks to determine the intentions of the writer as manifest in the text (Heidegger 1971), Meschonnic's model proposes the act of reading as an active creative experience through which the reader develops a text that goes beyond the black and white of the written page. As such, with *lecture-écriture*, each reading experience is a singular event situated in a specific moment in time and in space. No matter how many times the process is repeated, no matter how many times a text is reread, the end result is never the same. Inevitably unique with each repetition, much like a musical or theatrical performance, for Meschonnic, the act of reading is a singular event, producing different outcomes with each *lecture-écriture*.

In assessing the role of rhythm and music in the texts selected for this study, Meschonnic's ideas about *lecture-écriture* are significant, not only in that they acknowledge the resonant and boundless possibilities of a written text, but also in that they contribute to the disintegration of the binary modes of categorization that, stubbornly persistent, continue to dominate contemporary criticism across multiple academic disciplines. Blurring the boundaries that attempt to polarize writing and reading, oral and written, traditional and modern, and Occidental and Oriental, among countless others, the process of *lecture-écriture* enhances the potential of a written text in that it directs attention toward the spaces in between and beyond any two categorical poles. Rather than insisting on the concepts associated with the binary poles themselves, the *lecture-écriture* approach favors the nebulous territory that occupies the in-between and beyond spaces of limiting polarized constructs, encouraging the reader to recognize the text as a domain of multiple meanings and possibilities. These *trans*, across, or in-between spaces play important roles not only in shaping the reader's reception or perception of a written text, but also in providing writers with a subversive expanse in which conventional dominance hierarchies (political, economic, linguistic, or otherwise) are rejected in favor of

6. Jean-Pierre Martin has written about the importance of "listening to" twentieth-century French writers: "La bibliothèque idéale de l'écrivain est aussi une sonothèque. Donc, écoutons-les écrire" (Martin 1998, 11). (The ideal writer's library is also a sound library. Thus, let's listen to them write.)

alternative schemas that promote autonomy in creation, communication, and identification.

In addressing questions of identity presented in the novels selected for this study, rhythm and music play an integral role in asserting the significance of the conceptual *trans* spaces. Instrumental in this configuration is the allegory of the drum. A ubiquitous presence, drums, drumming, and drumbeats are not limited to the implicit rhythmic structure of the novel. Rather, the sonorities of multiple drumbeats resonate through integral representations of music and dance as well as portrayals of the subtle quotidian rhythms that comprise and accompany work and chores. Although the rhythms of drumbeats are perceptible throughout these novels, at certain moments, the signifiers *tambour* (the general French term for drum), *ka* (a Creole term for drum), and *tam-tam* (a French term for African traditional drums), as well as numerous interlinguistic synonyms, are explicitly evoked as a means of representing important social and symbolic functions of drums and drumming in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Although the sonority of drummed polyrhythms traverses each of these novels, the rhythmic presence of the drum adapts itself to the specificity of each text and of each context. As such, in considering the resonant musical qualities of *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Crossing the Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnificent*, it is important to avoid universalizing tendencies that suggest some sort of inherent homogeneity among the six novels. Although each text resounds with prominent rhythmic and musical elements, each text reflects an individualized aesthetic that draws from a unique configuration of sociocultural, historical, linguistic, and aesthetic influences. In this respect, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau craft distinct transpoetic works that combine a variety of oral, written, and musical styles from diverse historical, social, and aesthetic contexts.

Beyond culture, beyond history, beyond language, their primary point of commonality lies in the *trans* of transpoetics (and, as we will later explore, transculture). Through the salient incorporation of rhythmic and musical elements in their texts, these writers shatter the binary opposition that attempts to divide oral from written, thus creating an alternative relativizing universe in which identities can be autonomously (re)negotiated and (re) constructed. In between and beyond the domains of oral and written, music occupies a fluid conceptual space that denies concrete definitions and sharply delineated boundaries. This is why, when contemplating contextualized musical phenomena—in texts, as recordings, or in performance—it is impossible to derive a precise series of fixed relationships in connection with the musical work.

In *Penser la musique aujourd'hui* (*Boulez on Music Today*), Pierre

Boulez elaborates on this concept, arguing that music denies absolutes, particularly with regard to structural relationships and their determining criteria: "L'univers de la musique, aujourd'hui, est un univers *relatif*; j'entends: où les relations structurelles ne sont pas définies une fois pour toutes selon des critères absolus; elles s'organisent, au contraire, selon des schémas variants" (Boulez 1963, 35). (The universe of music, today, is a *relative* universe; I mean:[7] where structural relations are not defined once and for all according to absolute criteria; they are organized, on the contrary, according to variant patterns.) For Boulez, music is important primarily because it changes the ways in which relationships are constructed and developed. Necessitating perpetual variability and forcing constant (re) negotiation, music prevents the establishment of definitively structured relationships, including those existing within the constraints of polarized systems as well as those determined by other inequitable or hierarchical modes of classification. By toppling the power structures that impose the taxonomy of clearly defined relationships and fixed identity typographies, music becomes a powerful tool that relativizes everything, and, in doing so, challenges dominant modes of thinking by creating alternative autonomous spaces for identity negotiation and configuration.

Insisting on the ambiguous *trans* or in-between spaces that defy precise and enduring definitions, music operates as a transpoetic mechanism in the frame of the novel, one that activates the text as a transpoetic space. A place where poetic, aesthetic, and stylistic conventions are endlessly deconstructed and reconfigured, where identities and relationships are constantly called into question and (re)evaluated, the transpoetic space appropriates aesthetic and identificatory autonomy for writers and readers alike. In conceiving the text as a transpoetic space, the ubiquity of rhythm and music is instrumental for a number of reasons. First and foremost, music is not fixed in nature. Rather, music relies on the singularity of performances, collaborations, and improvisations. Since performance production and participation conditions are inevitably variable, musical interpretations are never the same no matter how many times they are repeated, even when playing well-known songs or reading from established musical scores. Furthermore, listening conditions are equally unpredictable and changing. Whether experiencing a live performance or listening to an audio recording, countless variables—including, but not limited to, the listener's mood and mind-set, the listener's activities and actions, and external factors like background noise—influence a listener's perception and reception of music.

7. Boulez's use of the word *entendre* is interesting. While in this instance, it translates as "to mean," in other contexts, the verb conveys the sense of "to hear" or "to understand."

In addition, there is the problem of reading and writing music. Charles Seeger points out the limits of musical transcription, both prescriptive (rendered before a performance) and descriptive (produced after a performance), in "Prescriptive and Descriptive Music Writing." In the essay, he identifies three "hazards" "inherent" to the practices of musical notation. The first, which deals with the nature of the writing itself, is also relevant to the exploration of narrative representations of musical phenomena: "The first [hazard] lies in an assumption that the full auditory parameter of music is or can be represented by a partial visual parameter, i.e., by one with only two dimensions, as upon a flat surface" (Seeger 1958, 184). In signaling the problems and discrepancies common to visual representations of music, whether transcribed using texted linguistic elements or musical notations, Seeger emphasizes the inconsistencies involved in writing (or writing about) musical phenomena. Seeger's observations about the reading experience of texted music, whether prescriptive or descriptive, suggest a high degree of variability and a vast domain of performance possibilities for a given musical text.

Furthermore, music—or, more specifically, instrumental and drummed music, often referred to as absolute music—refuses to be contained within the limits of unyielding binary categories, most notably those that divide oral from written. Resisting inclusion in either one category or the other, instrumental music occupies a space in between or even outside of the two poles. As Titinga Frédéric Pacere argues in *Le langage des tam-tams et des masques en Afrique: Une literature méconnue* (The Language of Tam-tams and Masks in Africa: A Neglected Literature), instrumental and drummed music comprise their own separate category, distinct from oral and written literature, one that he names "instrumental literature" (Pacere 1991, 83). In arguing for a field of study he names *la béndrologie* (bendrology), a domain that incorporates "la science, les études méthodiques, les méthodes de pensée, de parler, des figures de rhétorique relatives au tam-tam Béndré et donc en fait à la culture de ce tam-tam, voire à la culture des messages tambourinés notamment d'Afrique" (12) (the science, methodical studies, methods of thinking, of speaking, rhetorical figures relative to the Bendré tam-tam, and thus in fact to the culture of this tam-tam, or even the culture of drummed messages notably from Africa),[8] Pacere considers the connections among oral, written, and instrumental genres, but nonetheless insists on the distinct characteristics of instrumental

8. Bendré comes from the Mooré language, which is spoken in Burkina Faso, southeastern Mali, and northern regions of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin. The Bendré tam-tam, referred to in French as the *tambour calebasse* (calabash drum), is a royal court instrument constructed from a large hollowed-out calabash covered with animal skin; it is traditionally used during official ceremonies.

literature. Keeping the cultural specificity of West African drumming traditions in mind and placing particular emphasis on his native Burkina Faso, Pacere explains why instrumental literature refuses alignment with oral and written categories:

> La littérature du tam-tam . . . n'est pas une littérature écrite; l'absence de caractères figés, matériels, dans un contexte de milieu analphabète, l'atteste, l'impose. Cependant aussi, il ne s'agit pas d'une littérature orale et c'est à tort qu'on fait relever la littérature des tamtams, et de l'Afrique non entrée dans l'écriture, de la tradition orale. (82)
>
> [Tam-tam literature . . . is not a written literature; the absence of fixed characters, in a context of an illiterate background, attests to it, imposes it. However also, it is not a question of oral literature and it's wrongly that people associate tam-tam literature, and that of Africa not entered into writing, with the oral tradition.]

In his refusal to equate instrumental literature with oral literature, Pacere relies on the etymology of the word "oral." Derived from the Latin word *oris*, a term meaning "of the mouth," Pacere argues that "oral" should be used only in characterizing vocal genres, whether they be musical, narrative, or otherwise. For this reason, he prefers the category of instrumental literature to describe instrumental or drummed musical texts. According to Pacere, instrumental literature communicates its own messages, just as oral and written literature do, whether standing alone or serving as an accompaniment to oral genres or other performing arts such as theater or dance. For the purposes of this study, Pacere's distinction is significant in that it recognizes the potentiality and the power of instrumental or drummed music, particularly with respect to its expressive, evocative, and communicative capacities.

In discussing the roles of the drums and drumming in West African cultural contexts, Pacere argues that the importance of music is manifest in its message, not its melody: "La musique n'est donc pas *mélodie* mais *message*; peu importe que l'oreille s'y conforme ou pas; les seuls interlocuteurs visés sont l'esprit et le coeur, voire le corps, en cas de transmission des mouvements" (87). (Music is thus not *melody* but *message*; little does it matter if the ear complies with it or not; the only target interlocutors are the spirit and the heart, or even the body, in the event of the transmission of movements.) Favoring function in tandem with form, Pacere argues that, as far as the transmission of instrumental music is concerned, the hearing ear is not necessary. Preferring the spirit, the heart, and even the body as receptors, Pacere equates musical comprehension with the sensorial and physical experience of rhythm, much like Lefebvre does. Although

Pacere's text deals with the roles of drums and drumming in specific geographic and cultural contexts, namely those of multiple communities in West Africa, his characterization of instrumental literature as a distinct genre and his insistence on the importance of its communicative capacity can be applied in describing music and rhythms cross-culturally. We will revisit these topics in addressing questions of tradition and cultural specificity in West African contexts, particularly in considering the works of Sembene, Kourouma, and Sow Fall in chapters 2 and 3. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is important to keep in mind Pacere's contribution in creating an alternate system of categorization that refuses a polarized separation of the concepts of oral and written, and that functions on aesthetic and operative levels.

By breaking free of the limiting binary construct that succinctly separates oral from written, Pacere encourages approaches that deviate from Western philosophical and critical traditions. Doing so in a way that differs from such modes of thinking without directly opposing them, Pacere further neutralizes other polarized constructs, including those that attempt to separate Occidental from Oriental, Northern from Southern, and traditional from modern. Designating an alternate theoretical space that favors the limitless possibilities enabled by the intermingling of written, oral, and instrumental literatures, Pacere's text is fundamental to the understanding of the power of instrumental and drummed music. Resonant as a communicative medium free of oral signifiers and written words, Pacere's conception of instrumental literature contributes to the perception of drums and drumlike instruments as transpoetic mechanisms.

Whether standing alone, resonant as a sounding drum (or any of its metaphorical equivalents including the sounds of heartbeats, footsteps, and those of people working), or serving as an accompaniment to vocal and instrumental performances, the drum serves as a fundamental transpoetic mechanism in the texts examined in this study. Drums, as instruments of musico-social performance, possess sonorities that burst the silent structure of the text, transfiguring it, and in the process, appropriating spaces in which alternative aesthetic and sociocultural conventions are negotiated and performed. In keeping with Mikhail Bakhtin's assertion that the novel is an ideal space for multiple languages and genres to intermingle,[9] drums serve to augment and accentuate the novel's transpoetic capacity,

9. In Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination*, he suggests that the novel is an ideal medium for the kinds of interactions that take place among different languages, literary genres, and aesthetic domains: "The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times comprised of different languages) into the higher unity of the work as a whole: the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of the novel is the system of its language."

moving beyond the confines imposed by the choice of a single language, a single culture, or a single genre. Even when their rhythms are not explicitly evoked or described, the drums' ubiquity underlies every mention of music, song, and dance in the novel, which, in turn, increases the aesthetic complexity and communicative possibilities of the written text.

In *Introduction à la drummologie* (Introduction to Drummology), Georges Niangoran-Bouah affirms this assertion, focusing, like Pacere, on the expressive and communicative dimensions of drums and drumming in West African cultural contexts: "Le tambour symbolise la musique, la danse et le chant . . . [Il] reste présent dans toutes les manifestations musicales; même utilisé comme simple instrument accompagnateur, *il a son mot à dire*" (Niangoran-Bouah 1981, 25). (The drum symbolizes music, dance, and song . . . It remains present in all musical manifestations; even used as a simple instrument of accompaniment, *it has its word to say.*)

Like Pacere, Niangoran-Bouah insists on the importance of instrumental and drummed music, paying particular attention, once again, to drums as they function in West African cultural contexts, primarily in his native Côte d'Ivoire. In spite of their similarities, there are some important distinctions between Pacere's bendrology and Niangoran-Bouah's drummology. Although both writers are based in West Africa, Niangoran-Bouah's text is more inclusive in that it considers drums and drumming from multiple locations and traditions, suggested by the term "drummology." Pacere's concept of bendrology, on the other hand, seems narrower in focus since it was born out of the languages and drumming traditions of the Mooré peoples. Even so, the ideas of both Niangoran-Bouah and Pacere can be expanded upon in exploring and comparing the traditions, languages, and practices of drums and drumming in African cultural contexts. The second primary difference results from the categories designated by the two theorists to characterize drumming languages and literatures. Although Pacere takes care to distinguish instrumental literature and music from oral genres, Niangoran-Bouah allows instrumental and vocal categories to intermingle since, as he sees it, the drum is inherently manifest in music, dance, and song in West African performance and participatory practices. In *Oral Literature in Africa*, Ruth Finnegan provides a similar characterization, describing the multiple forms and functions of drum languages and literatures, yet classifying them as a part of her conception of "oral literature" (Finnegan 1970, 499).

Nevertheless, in comparing Niangoran-Bouah's drummology to Pacere's bendrology, these categorical distinctions are rather inconsequential, as Albert Ouédraogo suggests: "En fait bendrologie et drummologie participent de la même veine, nonobstant que Pacere reproche au mot *drummologie* son caractère inauthentique et extraverti" (Ouédraogo 1998,

157). (In fact bendrology and drummology contribute to the same vein, notwithstanding that Pacere reproaches the word *drummology* for its inauthentic and extroverted nature.) For Ouédraogo, the points of commonality that connect Pacere's bendrology and Niangoran-Bouah's drummology are more significant than the subtle differences that distinguish them. In this respect, the fact that both concepts identify drums, drummers, and drumming as important objects of study in West African cultural contexts connects the two disciplines in a manner that renders their differences insignificant. Urbain Amoa conveys a similar perspective in *Poétique de la poésie des tambours* (Poetics of Drum Poetry): "Ce qui, dans ces deux 'sciences,' nous intéresse n'est ni leur scientificité, ni la pertinence de la définition des concepts: c'est plutôt le substrat linguistique qu'elles offrent et que l'on appelle tantôt texte tambouriné, tantôt discours des tambours" (Amoa 2002, 89). (That which interests us in these two "sciences" is neither their *scientificity* nor the pertinence of the definition of the concepts: it is rather the substrate linguistics that they offer and that is sometimes called drummed text, sometimes drum language.)

As Amoa points out, in presenting their respective theories of *bendrology* and *drummology*, both Pacere and Niangoran-Bouah insist on the importance of drums as communicative devices through which aesthetic, historical, and sociocultural information can be transmitted and shared. Moreover, drum languages offer operative alternatives to oral and written forms of expression, breaking free of binary categorical tendencies while affirming subjective autonomy and increasing aesthetic and functional possibilities.

In regarding the drum as a messaging mechanism, Niangoran-Bouah goes so far as to accord the drum its own subjectivity, suggesting that the drum is constantly communicating with listeners, regardless of whether it stands alone or accompanies other instruments. In presenting this possibility, Niangoran-Bouah suggests, "il a son mot à dire," a phrase that can be interpreted as *it has its word to say*, or even, *he has his word to say* when translated from the French. Niangoran-Bouah's personification of the drum reveals much about the importance of the instrument in West African cultural contexts, a theme this study revisits in discussing the works of Sembene, Kourouma, and Sow Fall. Resonant within West African geographical regions and sociocultural contexts, drums serve as powerful mechanisms charged with a variety of emblematic implications and social functions.

In his collection of African folktales *La nuit des griots* (Night of the Griots), Kama Kamanda goes so far as to present the tam-tam as an omnipotent instrument—one that resonates with the power of pure possibility. In his rendering of the folktale "Le tam-tam," Kamanda retells the story of

a lumberjack who finds "un vieux tam-tam cassé, abandonné" (Kamanda 1996, 197) (an old tam-tam broken, abandoned) as he walks through the brush. Curious, the lumberjack retrieves the tam-tam, deciding to take up the musical craft. As he begins to play, the lumberjack immediately recognizes the power of the tam-tam, manifest in its immense resonant potential. As he continues to play, the lumberjack-drummer is equally concerned with the aesthetic, spiritual, and philosophical implications of his art: "Il comprit que, telle la terre, ce tam-tam pouvait tout donner; comme elle, il pouvait également tout reprendre" (198), (He understood that, like the earth, this tam-tam could give everything; like it, it could equally take everything away.) As Kamanda describes, when played with good intentions, the tam-tam brings love, luck, and happiness to the drummer and the people for whom he plays. In this light, when he plays with a generous spirit and an open heart, the lumberjack-drummer experiences the realization of his dearest hopes and wishes. Nevertheless, as an instrument of seemingly boundless possibility, the drum provides nefarious prospects as well as positive ones, particularly when the instrument is played with ill intentions. In Kamanda's tale, a tragic end befalls the lumberjack drummer when, in his final performance, he takes up his drum in anger.

As Kamanda's version of the tam-tam tale suggests, in many African sociocultural contexts, the drum is a powerful symbolic device, at times serving as a point of correspondence between physical and spiritual domains. Beyond its capacities as a musical instrument, the drum represents a force in itself, serving as a medium for accessing realms of unknown possibilities. For this reason, as Kamanda illustrates, in many African traditions, it is important to respect the power and possibility of the drum, to approach the instrument with an open heart and good intentions. This holds true for both drummers and their listeners.

Not limited to aesthetic categories, drums allow for limitless possibilities in function and in form. For Niangoran-Bouah, who is primarily concerned with the sociological and historical aspects of drums and drumming, drums act in a multitude of capacities and also can serve as social leveling devices. Omnipresent, their rhythms penetrate all levels and all aspects of society, as he affirms: "Le tambour n'est ni en haut, ni au milieu, ni en-bas, il est partout à la fois" (Niangoran-Bouah 1981, 151). (The drum is neither at the top, nor in the middle, nor at the bottom, it is everywhere at once.) In contemporary drumming contexts, Niangoran-Bouah's premise is apparent as increasingly, people who were once denied access to art of drumming and to the knowledge of drummed languages—including, but not limited to, members of certain nongriot or nonroyal social classes or castes (as in Senegal or Mali, for example) and women (throughout

the West African region, at least in formalized or ceremonial drumming contexts)—are now taking up the practice, and in some instances gaining the status of master practitioners.[10] What is even more striking is that drummers are increasingly studying geographically, aesthetically, and culturally diverse drumming repertoires. Not limiting themselves to the drum languages and rhythms representative of a single geographic location or ethnic group, African drummers are using their knowledge of diverse rhythms as a means of bridging local and international divides.

Similarly, in the Caribbean and the Americas, drummers are succeeding in negotiating the divides imposed by typographic aesthetic, sociocultural, geographic, linguistic, and gender-based categorical criteria. One prominent way in which such practices are gaining momentum is through the women's drumming movement, which seeks to encourage cross-cultural understanding through the knowledge and experience of drummed rhythms and drumming practices. Women's drumming activists such as the self-described "drum amazon" Jamaican-born Afia Walking Tree and African American djembéist Edwina Lee Tyler are promoting their ideas locally and globally through performances, workshops, conferences, and nonprofit work. As a result of their efforts and those of other like-minded musicians, we are witnessing an effacement of the categorical boundaries that attempt to separate drummers according to criteria including but not limited to nationality, ethnicity, social class, and gender. Furthermore, this investment in communication across aesthetic and sociocultural divides results in a reinvestment in and reevaluation of traditional music practices while nurturing hybrid and innovative musical styles.

Bayo Martins, a Nigerian musician and critic who concerns himself with examining the seemingly limitless roles of drums and drumming in African cultural contexts, embraces a similar approach in *The Message of African Drumming*. A drummer himself, Martins is cognizant of the multiplicity of social, political, linguistic, and aesthetic functions drums can fulfill for African peoples and global citizens, as are Pacere and Niangoran-Bouah. What is striking, however, about Martins's analysis is what he has to say about drumming in view of the quest for individual identities. Whereas many critics focus on the collective dimensions of West African drumming practices, Martins is careful to insist on the importance of individual factors as well: "In traditional African society the uses of drums are manifold and innumerable. Drums are used for praise and chanting, to console and soothe distress and to give joy to people. They also serve as

10. Ghanaian drummer Antoinette Kudoto is a prime example of a woman who has earned local and international acclaim as a master drummer.

a means of communication, object of authority and above all, as a medium for man's quest of discovering the innermost self, the I" (Martins 1983, 28). Presented in a passage listing examples of what he describes as the "manifold and innumerable" uses of drums in traditional African societies, Martins acknowledges the significance of drums not only for collective social groups and cultures at large, but also in connection with individuals and their respective quests for autonomously configured identities. In Martins's view, the drum—described as a "medium for man's quest of discovering the innermost self, the I"—becomes an important mechanism, one through which individual identities are explored, negotiated, and revealed. This assertion is significant for a number of reasons, primarily because it exposes the multifaceted nature of the drum as medium. No longer limited to the functional domain of the collective, a means of reinforcing shared sociocultural, communicative, and aesthetic values, Martins opens the drum to realms of individual subjectivities, and in doing so, recognizes the drum's potential to influence different people in seemingly boundless possible ways.

Since questions of identity are fundamental in approaching the texts examined in this study, Martins's ideas about the drum as a mechanism through which one investigates and discovers the self remains in the foreground in investigating the roles of rhythm and music in the novel. Although Martins is primarily concerned with the prominence of the drum in West African cultural contexts, his ideas connecting the drum and the individual are applicable in a variety of geographical and cultural settings. As such, the motif of the drum as a medium through which identities are questioned, constructed, and reevaluated plays a central role in dealing with the texts analyzed and interpreted in this study, regardless of a writer's sociocultural, linguistic, and geographic origins and irrespective of his or her present location.

Even so, in considering the role of drums and drumming in Caribbean cultural contexts, it is often easier to find arguments that emphasize the importance of individual aspects rather than collective values in connection to locally produced music. For example, in his essay *Poétique de la Relation* (*Poetics of Relation*), Édouard Glissant makes a point to distinguish Antillean drummed music from African drummed music not only in terms of aesthetic criteria, but also in terms of the cultural values it performs and the social aspects it promotes:

> En Afrique, le tambour est un langage qu'on organise en discours: il y a des orchestres de tambours où chaque instrument a sa voix. Le tambour est un partage. Aux Antilles, c'est le plus souvent un solitaire; ou un accompagnement. Les orchestrations tambourinées sont

> rares, et jamais aussi complètes ni totales. Comparé à l'africain, le tambour antillais me donne l'impression d'un filet. Son rythme est moins variable. Je n'en conclus pas à une 'décadence'; les rythmes antillais ont leur personnalité. Mais peut-être à une défonctionnalisation de l'instrument, qui ne correspond plus à des moments de l'existence collective, rassemblés dans la communion de l''orchestre'. (Glissant 1990 386–87)
>
> [In Africa, the drum is a language that is organized in speech: there are drumming ensembles in which each instrument has its voice. The drum is a sharing. In the Antilles, it's most often a loner; or an accompaniment. Drummed orchestrations are rare, and never as complete nor total. Compared to the African, the Antillean drum gives me the impression of a net. Its rhythm is less variable. I am not drawing the conclusion of "decline"; Antillean rhythms have their personality. But perhaps a defunctionalization of the instrument, that no longer corresponds to moments of collective existence, gathered together in the communion of the "band."

By characterizing the drum in the African context as a sort of shared discourse between multiple instruments and individuals, Glissant evokes the complexities and the richness of African drumming traditions. Emphasizing collectivity in the experience of rhythm and music, he suggests that the drum serves as a sacred unifying mechanism, one that unites players and listeners in a sort of communion, a "moment of collective existence." In contrast, Glissant portrays the Antillean drum as a solitary instrument or a mere instrument of accompaniment. While he acknowledges that Antillean drumming has its own merits, its own "personality," he claims that it lacks the completeness and totality of African drumming, that it fails to foster the same sense of undeniable collectivity, of inseparable community. Rather, Glissant proposes a sort of "defunctionalization" of the drum—one that refuses the sociocultural, linguistic, and political conventions traditionally assigned to the drum in the African context.

For Glissant, the drum becomes a solitary instrument once it is introduced into the Antillean context—one that is played by and speaks to individuals. Denied the sense of collective identity typically associated with African representations of drums and drumming, in Glissant's view, the Antillean subject is forced to play, to listen to, and/or to identify with the drum on an individual level. Although Glissant does not go so far as to make the same assertion Martins does in defining the drum as a "medium for man's quest of discovering the innermost self, the I," he establishes an important connection between the drum and the individual, one that can be related to Martins's claim. In this respect, in describing the purported

defunctionalization of the drum, Glissant suggests a process by which the subject is excluded/freed from the comforts/constraints of collective conventions, which in turn exposes the subject to the possibility of exploring the self.

Although Glissant's remarks about the defunctionalization of the drum and his insistence on the prominence of the individual in the Caribbean context are appropriate for this study, perhaps he is too quick to reject the presence of cooperation and collectivity in Caribbean music and drumming. It is therefore important to recognize that while the interests of the group and the individual appear to lie at opposite ends of a binary configuration, the two concepts are far from mutually exclusive. As Martins adeptly illustrates in *The Message of African Drumming*, the drum can simultaneously address both players and listeners on group and individual levels, at least concerning drumming in multiple African cultural contexts. In terms of examining the role of the drum in Caribbean contexts, other critics, including anthropologist Kenneth M. Bilby, argue similar points, accepting the coexistence of collective and individual values in Caribbean music.

In *The Caribbean as a Musical Region*, Bilby traces the history of music and explores the multiple functions of music in Caribbean societies. At the heart of his discussion is the concept of creolization, which Bilby describes as a process by which diverse European, African, local, and other international influences intermingle to create distinct linguistic, aesthetic, and sociocultural products. Although specific cultural influences can be detected, both seen and heard, in examining phenomena produced through creolization, such *nouveautés* are not derived from a single source or set of sources. Rather, they result from an intricate process of communication, collaboration, and synthesis. As Bilby explains, while Caribbean music bears similarities to both European and African musical styles, "It is not simply a matter of 'African rhythm' married to 'European melody'" (Bilby 1985, 20). Distinct in style and in functions, Caribbean music is innovative, interactive, and inventive, a creative integration of the diverse musical influences and cultural traditions that have contributed to its development.

Rather than insisting on either/or characterizations to describe Caribbean music in comparison with other regional or national styles, Bilby recognizes the dynamic nature of Caribbean music in form as well as in function. Noting multiple emphases on "individual expressiveness" and "collective interaction" as well as on "improvisation" and "experimentation," Bilby argues that "Caribbean musical cultures . . . are distinguished by their receptivity to new combinations of ideas and influences," adding, "whatever else may be said about Caribbean music, it remains always ripe for change" (24). Fluid and dynamic, as Bilby explains, Caribbean music is

open to possibility in style and in purpose. Addressing players and listeners on individual and collective levels, it creates a space in which people are free to negotiate relationships with themselves, each other, the world, and with the music they hear. Drawing from Caribbean cultures and culture at large, but also respecting individual originality and expressiveness, as Bilby and Glissant maintain, Caribbean music also plays an important role in creating spaces for autonomous identity negotiation and configuration.

As Léna Blou explains in *Techni'ka*, even when inspired by or grounded in traditional rhythms or performance protocols, the degree of improvisation, invention, and interplay involved in many Caribbean musical and performance genres amplifies dimensions of identification and relationality among musicians, dancers, singers, and spectators. In her work, Blou defines five relational spaces in which the collaborative performance of the music coincides with collective and individual identifications-in-process. Contextualized in the performance context of the Guadeloupean *swaré-léwoz*—in which musicians and performers combine traditions and innovations in an improvisational forum of music and dance that Blou characterizes as a mix of "étrangeté et fascination" (strangeness and fascination)—for Blou, the five relational spaces of Caribbean performance exist in the vocal space (in which singers, storytellers, and audience members interact), the resonant space (in which the *tambouyé* drummers communicate through *gwo ka* rhythms and tones), the corporeal space (in which the bodies of individual dancers perform and interact in a collective space), the relational space (in which the circle of performers and participants connect on conscious, subconscious, physical, and spiritual levels), and the convivial space (in which food, drinks, music, movement, emotions, and intensity are shared until the early hours of dawn) (Blou 2005, 21–22). In designating *gwo ka* performance experiences as relational forums, Blou exemplifies the *gwo ka* experience as "une danse de survie, de l'inespéré, de l'inattendu . . . Danse de résistance, de résilience, de l'adaptation: *Danse de la vie*" (17) (a dance of survival, of undreamed [of possibilities], of the unexpected . . . Dance of resistance, of resilience, of adaptation : *Dance of life*). Grounded in the specificity of local aesthetic, historical, linguistic, and sociocultural criteria while open to international, multilingual, and transcultural influences, the *gwo ka* performance serves as a useful model for musically mediated identity negotiation and configuration. For Blou, Caribbean performance traditions as innovations provide meaningful, productive forums in which identities are improvised, auditioned, performed, and (re)positioned by the community of participants and performers. As we will see, such relational strategies can also play out in the transcultural transpoetic space of the text.

## Rhythm and Transculture

Before discussing the importance of music and rhythm in connection with transcultural transpoetics in the works of Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau, it is first necessary to define the concept of transculture. As with the *trans* of transpoetics, the *trans* of transculture insists on in-between conceptual spaces, calling attention to relationships between and among disparate cultural entities. As for the word culture, a concept identified as problematic by anthropologists, literary critics, and cultural studies scholars alike (see Clifford 1988; and Rowe 1998), it is useful to draw upon Ulf Hannerz's notion of a culture as a dynamic system, one that is open to a constant flow of communication and exchange. In "The World in Creolization," Hannerz explains his concept of culture and simultaneously addresses the dangers of viewing *a culture* as a singular and intact homogeneous entity:

> "A culture" need not be homogeneous, or even particularly coherent. Instead of assuming far-reaching, cultural sharing, a "replication of uniformity," we should take a distributive view of cultures as systems of meaning. The social organization of culture always depends both on the communicative flow and on the differentiation of experiences and interests in society . . . [P]eople are also in contact with (or at least aware of) others whose perspectives they do not share, and know they do not share. In other words, these perspectives are perspectives toward perspectives; and one may indeed see the social organization of a complex culture as a network of perspectives. (Hannerz 1987, 550)

By placing the term "a culture" in quotation marks, Hannerz problematizes the word "culture" itself, but nonetheless surrenders to its ubiquity in seeking to redefine the term rather than suggesting a new word or expression. Fluid rather than fixed in nature, a culture is constantly shifting and transforming, which makes it difficult or even impossible to accurately describe a specific cultural group or to identify cultural absolutes. While, at first glance, this lack of precision and definition of the term "culture" may seem problematic, it is important to progress beyond the taxonomic tendencies that encourage us to categorize and simplify, particularly in dealing with cultural phenomena. When regarded in this light, the ambiguity of culture and cultures in themselves opens up a realm of pure possibility, a space in which a perpetual flow of communication, collaboration, and negotiation takes precedence over rigid characterizations and static descriptions.

In "Une interculturalité vécue" (A Lived Interculturality), Albert Memmi presents a similar notion of culture, but takes his ideas a step

further in arguing for the universality of the intercultural in view of all cultures and cultural systems: "[L']illusion est de croire qu'une culture est un système imperméable et autonome. L'histoire d'une culture est celle de ses contaminations et de ses mutations. Toute culture est interculturelle" (Memmi 1985, 35). ([The] illusion is to believe that a culture is an impermeable and autonomous system. The history of a culture is that of its contaminations and its mutations. Every culture is intercultural.) Rather than insisting on "communicative flow" and "experience," as Hannerz does, Memmi describes culture as being comprised of a limitless series of "contaminations" and "mutations." Blurring the boundaries that distinguish cultures from one another and the divides that separate them, the processes of contamination and mutation refuse any sense of cultural purity and deny all claims to the existence of cultural totality. With cultures inextricably linked with one another, bearing multiple influences across time, for Memmi, "every culture is intercultural." In making this assertion, Memmi relies on the importance of individual perspectives and subjectivities rather than that of a homogeneous or collective cultural whole. By suggesting: "L'interculturalité est pour moi une expérience vécue, une donnée de mon histoire personnelle" (Memmi 1985, 35) (Interculturality is for me a lived experience, an element of my personal history), Memmi favors a model in which individuals are accorded the power to negotiate cultural identities, rather than receiving them as prescribed definitions from an outside authority.

In view of Hannerz's description of culture and Memmi's characterization of interculturality, the difficulties of defining culture and cultural phenomena further reveal themselves. Nevertheless, in spite of these problems, in their respective models, Hannerz and Memmi create conceptual spaces for boundless possibility, specifically with respect to cultural change and transformation and to individual experience and identification. It is in these blurry conceptual spaces that the nature of transculture reveals itself. A point of connection, communication, and exchange, the transcultural space allows for the negotiation of individual perspectives and collective value systems across geographical borders and historical epochs. Perpetually shifting, constantly changing, the transcultural space is particularly effective in the frame of the novel, a genre that lends itself to a multiplicity of possibilities in form and in function.

In considering the novels selected for this study, this premise is of particular importance in determining how Francophone[11] writers negotiate

11. There is an important distinction between "Francophone" and "francophone." Whereas capitalized "Francophone" implicates a political affiliation in which self-acknowledged French-speaking nations and cultures agree to participate in

the balance of power in relation to French language and culture in the postcolonial era. Presently, French maintains the status of "langue officielle" (official language), and its application concerns such matters as politics and the law in former colonies such as Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire as well as in officially recognized French departments including Guadeloupe and Martinique. Although West African and Caribbean Francophone writers choose to write in French for a variety of reasons, most of them insist on shifting the balance of power in dealing with the French language and its prescribed culture and authority. Oftentimes, this redistribution of power is achieved through the use of linguistic devices and stylistic techniques. Generally referred to as localization or indigenization strategies (see Zabus 1991), such techniques incorporate elements from local languages, oral genres, and literary traditions into the frame of literature written or performed in another, usually politically dominant, language.

Even Kourouma, who consistently champions the countless possibilities for intercultural exchange and communication among members of the francophone community, acknowledges the difficulties of reconciling the poetics of African languages with those of standard French. In his native Cote d'Ivoire, French is the official language, but there are also around seventy-eight national languages including Baoulé, Senoufo, and Yacouba. Although Côte d'Ivoire's New Constitution of 2000 includes a clause that protects the promotion and development of national languages (Article 29), some languages including Beti, Plapo Krumen, Kodia, Jeri Kuo, and Deg are in peril due to dwindling speaking populations.[12] Although, according to linguist Jacques Leclerc, Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most "francophonisé" (francophonized) countries in Africa (40 percent of the population can speak French), local languages with larger populations seem to be faring well due in part to de facto language practices. As Leclerc explains, Ivoirian languages and French tend to be used according to specific social criteria. In this respect, Ivoirian languages are used for day-to-day conversational purposes at home and in villages, whereas French, in addition to its political, legal, and educational functions as the official language, is

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the Francophonie organization, lowercase "francophone' connotes a community of French speakers around the world, regardless of their nationality, political affiliation, or language proficiency. I incorporate both spellings throughout the text, specifically as a way of emphasizing the political dimensions of language policy that Francophone writers deal with every day, but also as a way of considering the ways in which francophone writers deconstruct political authority in addressing members of an informal global community of French language readers and speakers.

12. According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the* World, the Esuma and Tonjon languages are already classified as extinct in Côte d'Ivoire, while others are in danger of extinction (Gordon 2005).

used for professional and social advancement in major cities like Abidjan and Yamoussoukro.[13]

Choosing to write in French as a means of addressing a global francophone community, Kourouma nonetheless points out the problematic dimensions of French language governance in Francophone West African nations. In "Écrire en français, penser dans sa langue maternelle" (Write in French, Think in One's Maternal Language), Kourouma explains why, although he opts to write his novels in French, he is nonetheless at odds with the dominance of the French language in Francophone African countries:

> Mon premier problème d'écrivain, d'écrivain francophone, est donc d'abord une question de culture. De culture, parce que ma religion de base étant l'animisme, l'animisme africain, je me bats dans une grande confusion de termes avec les expressions françaises que j'utilise . . . On conviendra qu'il y a quand même un problème pour nous Négro-Africains qui avons pour langue nationale le français. Problème, parce que notre langue nationale n'a pas de mots précis pour nommer notre Dieu et notre religion. (Kourouma 1997, 115)
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> [My first problem as a writer, as a Francophone writer, is thus first a question of culture. Of culture, because my religion, the base of which is animism, African animism, I fight in a great confusion of terms with the French expressions that I use . . . One would admit that there is, even so, a problem for us Black-Africans who have French as a national language. Problem, because our national language does not have the precise words to name our God and our religion.]

Beyond questions of religious, philosophical, and cultural autonomy and expression in Francophone West Africa, Kourouma also indicates the potential problems of French linguistic dominance in political and legal domains: "Dans le français qui est notre langue nationale et qui est la langue administrative, les termes utilisés n'ont pas le même sens pour le juge—qui raisonne en français—et le jugé—qui raisonne en négro-africain" (115). (In French, which is our national language and which is the administrative language, the terms used do not have the same meaning for the judge—who reasons in French—and the judged—who reasons in Black-African [languages].) Indicating problems in political, legal, religious, and cultural domains, Kourouma favors the designation and dissemination of localized varieties of French that correspond to the sociocultural and aesthetic

13. Although this information is published in book form (see Leclerc 1992), the most up-to-date information is available on Leclerc's Web site, *Aménagement linguistique dans le monde*, at http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl.

specificities of diverse Francophone localities. While recognizing the dubious nature of French language dominance in postcolonial West Africa, Kourouma all the while acknowledges multiple possibilities for growth and creativity in African languages as they interact with and reappropriate French linguistic forms. "On peut dire que les langues négro-africaines sont en perpétuelle création; elles s'adaptent, épousent les réalités et les sentiments qu'elles sont chargées d'exprimer" (118). (One could say that Black-African languages are in [a state of] perpetual creation; they adapt themselves, espouse the realities and sentiments that they are responsible for expressing.) For Kourouma, the intermingling of quotidian West African expressive imaginaries and authoritative French language realities in Francophone West Africa opens spaces for invention and appropriation that operate in a multiplicity of sociocultural, political and aesthetic domains.

Writers in the Francophone Caribbean face similar linguistic challenges. Like Kourouma, Condé chooses French as an international vehicular language, but still finds fault with French political, sociocultural, and linguistic dominance in the Francophone Antilles. In Condé's native Guadeloupe, which is recognized as a French DROM (Département et Région d'Outre Mer/Overseas Department and Region), French is the official language whereas Guadeloupean Creole, lacking an official government status, remains the primary maternal language. In "Au delà des langues et des couleurs" (Beyond Languages and Colors), Condé expresses her disdain for the Francophone establishment, repeatedly declaring, "[J]e ne crois pas à la francophonie" (Condé 1985, 36) (I do not believe in the Francophonie). Nevertheless, in disputing the presence of the Francophonie as institution, Condé equally eschews other linguistically determined affiliations, most notably Creolophone associations.

> On croit souvent que nous, enfants des cannes à sucre, nous avons été bercés par les sonorités du créole, ce baragouin de l'exil devenu langue, par les mythes et légendes, que sa merveilleuse créativité a enfantés. Des images en forme de cliché volent à la rescousse . . . Mon cou s'étirait dans le carcan des conjugaisons, des accords des participes et de la récitation avec émotion des vers de Corneille. Quand je marronnais le créole, car cela arrivait tout de même, c'était au Carnival quand Pointe-à-Pitre résonnait des battements des tambours gwo-ka . . . Quelques jours par an, c'est peu, on en conviendra. (36)

> [One often believes that we, children of sugar canes, we were brought up with the sonorities of Creole, this gibberish of exile become language, by the myths and the legends, to which its marvelous

> creativity gave birth. Images in the shape of clichés rush to the rescue . . . My neck stretched under the yoke of conjugations, of past participle agreements, and of the emotional recitation of Corneille's verses. When I took refuge as a maroon in Creole, because that happened all the same, it was at (the annual) Carnival (celebration) when Pointe-à-Pitre resonated with the beating of the *gwo-ka* drums. A few days each year, it is little, one must admit.]

For Condé, languages provide a means of communication that, while aligned with collective modes of identification in a given sociocultural context, do not decidedly determine identities or communities. By pointing out lingering and limiting sociocultural clichés based on linguistic criteria, Condé emphasizes the problematic relationships between French and Creole, further complicated by the difficult legacies of abuse and exploitation perpetuated by the French through slavery and colonialism. Refusing to accept prescribed sociolinguistic and cultural protocols, Condé encourages readers to confront the typographic stereotypes that underlie cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and racial identities. On this note, she challenges individuals to develop relational communities that transcend the categorical limits of language and ethnicity, an endeavor she characterizes as "fraternités dessinées au-delà des langues et des couleurs" (36) (fraternities designed beyond languages and colors).

Much like Condé, critic Paul Gilroy invites readers to reconsider problematic dimensions of socially prescribed identities. Although he deals primarily with Anglophone literary texts and contexts, Paul Gilroy has established a substantial body of critical work that deals with the importance of music in relation to identity, placing particular emphasis on the creation and perpetuation of autonomous identity constructs in black communities. In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy designates a transcultural space he refers to as the "Black Atlantic." Characterized in part as "a non-traditional tradition, an irreducibly modern, ex-centric, unstable, and asymmetrical cultural ensemble that cannot be apprehended through the Manichean logic of binary coding," the Black Atlantic concerns itself "with the flows, exchanges, and in-between elements that call the very desire to be centered into question" (Gilroy 1993, 198, 190). Inspired by the Atlantic Ocean—the vast divide that simultaneously separates and unites Europe, Africa, and the Americas—Gilroy breaks up the precise geometry of triangular and binary relationships, envisioning a mutable viscous space that blurs the linear connections and dominance configurations established by hegemony and hierarchy. An apparent and important inspiration to my own model of transcultural transpoetics, the Black Atlantic recognizes the complexity of communication

and exchange among diverse peoples and cultures across distant spaces and disparate epochs.

In acknowledging the similarities between the transpoetic transcultural space and the Black Atlantic, the question arises: Why not simply refer to the transpoetic transcultural space as the Black Atlantic? Wishing to avoid the trappings of color-coded identities, and in particular, the binary model that emerges when black is viewed in opposition to white, I aim to promote a more neutral model that recognizes the multiple racial, linguistic, and cultural identities present in a "mosaic" identificatory model, much like the mosaic configuration suggested by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant in their *Éloge de la Créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*). Although Gilroy does indeed warn of the dangers of "the continuing lure of ethnic absolutisms in cultural criticism produced both by blacks and whites" (Gilroy 1993, 3), his decision to include the word "Black" in the title of his model seemingly does little to discourage such tendencies.

As for alternative models designed to represent and explain the complex networks of communication and exchange among different cultures, languages, and locations, specifically Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Rhizome* (presented in *Mille Plateaux*) and Édouard Glissant's *Relation* (discussed in *Poétique de la Relation* and *Traité du tout-monde*), they too seemed inappropriate in attempting to accurately represent transpoetic transcultural phenomena in literature. Although both the Rhizome and the Relation are considered more extensively in chapter 3, it is important to take a moment to elucidate why I insist on creating the designation of transpoetic transcultural space rather than opting to use preexisting terminology.

Written as an alternative to roots-derived single-source models for identity configuration, Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome allows for a multiplicity of identificatory influences from numerous sources. Characterized as "acentré, non hiérarchique et non signifiant, sans Général, sans mémoire organisatrice ou automate central, uniquement défini par une circulation d'états," (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 32) (acentered, nonhierarchical, and nonsignifying, without General, without organizing memory or central automation, uniquely defined by a circulation of states), the Rhizome allows for increased freedom and possibility in identification. Although innovative, influential, and inspiring, Deleuze and Guattari's term "Rhizome" is ill-suited for the purposes of this study for many of the same reasons Glissant delineated in creating his concept of the Relation. Citing the pair's inability to escape from generalizing tendencies resulting from the Occidental/Oriental dichotomy as well as their failure to recognize "other [non-Western] situations" (Glissant 1997, 338–39), Glissant saw the need to create an alternative nonessentialist model, one that could more readily

be adapted in describing the diverse peoples of the Antilles and expanded in characterizing individuals and cultural communities around the world. Abstract in nature, Glissant's Relation has no physical manifestation, botanical or otherwise, which, according to Glissant, makes it superior to other relativizing systems. Although I do not wish to argue for the superiority of abstract versus organic in establishing identificatory models, I can understand and appreciate Glissant's resistance to roots-based or Rhizome-based models. As for the Relation, as an identificatory model, it represents a perpetual process that favors mobility and movement, one that is always open to transformation and innovation. As an abstract model, the Relation leaves behind only traces of motion and points of connection, unlike the Rhizome, an organic system that, as Glissant maintains, develops roots "even in the air" (Glissant 1997, 340).

As for Glissant's Relation, the schematics of the model are ideal in describing both transpoetic and transcultural ideals. Consisting of traces of movement, connection and communication, the Relation refuses the rigidity of fixed characterizations and generalizations. Open to a domain of pure possibility, the Relation provides a vast and limitless expanse in which a multiplicity of elements intermingle, most notably languages and genres, both oral, written, and instrumental. In *Poétique de la Relation* (*Poetics of Relation*), Glissant describes the boundless potential of the Relation, particularly as manifest in poetic phenomena:

> C'est aussi que la poétique de la Relation est à jamais conjecturale et ne suppose aucune fixité d'idéologie. Elle contredit aux confortables assurances liées à l'excellence supposée d'une langue. Poétique latente, ouverte, multilingue d'intention, en prise avec tout le possible. La pensée théoricienne, qui vise le fondamental et l'assise, qu'elle apparente au vrai, se dérobe devant ces sentiers incertains. (Glissant 1990, 44)

> [It's also that the poetic of the Relation is forever conjectural and supposes no ideological fixedness. It contradicts the comfortable assurances tied to the presupposed excellence of a language. A latent, open, multilingually intentioned poetic, caught up with all of the possible. Theoretical thinking, that targets the fundamental and the foundation, that resembles truth, gives way before these uncertain paths.]

Transcending the confines of fixed categories, Glissant's Relation offers the freedom and uncertainty of possibility. Yielding unpredictable results spanning overlapping cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic criteria, Glissant's Relation deals as much with the transcultural as it does with transpoetics.

As a dynamic relativizing system, the Relation provides subjects with a conceptual space for autonomous identity (re)configuration on both individual and collective levels. There are no absolutes in the Relation, no standard stereotypes, no stock generalizations. Everything in the Relation is incessantly changing, each moment ephemeral, which in turn perpetuates a constant process of negotiation. Although Glissant's Relation seems to correspond completely with what is characterized as transpoetic and transcultural, for the purpose of this study it has become important to designate terminology one could specifically apply in examining transpoetic and transcultural phenomena within the frame of the novel. Hence, the designation of transpoetic transcultural space(s).

## Method

Abstract and ephemeral, music has the power to overcome not only the limits of language, but also those created by geographical borders, sociocultural norms, and aesthetic formats. By injecting the rhythms of music and everydayness in their novels, writers subtly subvert the authority of linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural conventions in favor of the unpredictable and the possible. Resonating at the heart of the transpoetic transcultural spaces crafted by Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau are the percussive sonorities of drums and drumbeats that underlie their texted representations of music, dance, work, and chores. Open to cacophony, euphony, and all of the in-between aesthetic variants, drums and their percussive variants have the capacity address a variety of disparate rhythmic and musical sensibilities, to appeal to a multiplicity of diverse peoples and cultures, and to convey multiple meanings in the process.

In examining the importance of rhythmic and musical phenomena in view of the performance and negotiation of social values, cultural traditions, and local aesthetic tendencies, it is necessary to acknowledge that not all readers are going to have the same amount of familiarity with or have access to the multiplicity of cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic elements an author chooses to include in his or her text. Nevertheless, even uninitiated readers, those unfamiliar with the rhythms, the instruments, and the music of the texts, can derive meaning from these novels and arrive at some point of understanding, activated by an engagement with the transpoetic and transcultural elements of each text. In *Ku sà: Introduction à la percussion africaine* (Ku sà: Introduction to African Percussion), Cameroonian poet and musician François Fampou illustrates this point on an auditory level in describing how listeners receive and interpret the complex rhythms of local drumming traditions.

> La complexité et les possibilités de communication sont les principales caractéristiques de cette musique inaccessible même aux Africains non initiés. Une musique réservée à quelques personnes de lignée et de descendance bien définies n'a aucune chance de se populariser. Néanmoins, l'aspect purement complexe du rythme aurait pu être accessible à tous. (Fampou 1996, 42)
>
> [The complexity and the possibilities of communication are the principal characteristics of this music inaccessible even to uninitiated Africans. A music reserved for a few people of well-defined lineage and descent has no chance of becoming very popular. Nevertheless, the purely complex aspect of the rhythm could have been accessible to everyone.]

In characterizing African drumming traditions and practices in *Ku sà*, Fampou insists on their communicative capacities, aesthetic complexities and, of course, the possibilities they present to initiated and uninitiated listeners alike. Moreover, by asserting that the drummed music is inaccessible on certain levels, even to uninitiated African ears, Fampou breaks free of nationalizing or regionalizing tendencies that suggest that there are inherent geographically or culturally determined ways to interpret music (i.e., an *African* way, a *Caribbean* way, or a *European* way). By arguing that certain aspects of drummed music, in this instance its rhythmic complexity, are accessible to everyone, Fampou opens a space for negotiation in which listeners can independently appreciate rhythmic music and derive some sense of meaning from it. As explained earlier, music functions in a similar fashion in the space of the novel. Although a reader may fail to recognize the sound and shape of a particular instrument or coherently understand its intended message or function in a localized context, he or she can still be moved by the rhythmic presence of music and sound in the text, and find therein an interpretive space in which meaning can be negotiated and constructed.

A strong rhythmic and musical presence introduces an interesting set of variables and possibilities into the frame of the novel. As literary critic André-Patient Bokiba suggests in *Écriture et identité dans la littérature africaine* (Writing and Identity in African Literature), music plays an important role in the novel, first and foremost in that it offers "à l'écrivain une palette d'images beaucoup plus riche, de permettre au musicien de rester présent sur le terrain de la parole littéraire" (Bokiba 1998, 257) (the writer a much richer palette of images [and] allows the musician to remain present in the domain of literary speech). Bokiba's characterization of the novel is interesting in that it insists on incorporating a variety of aesthetic genres, combining musical, literary, and visual aesthetic sensibilities. In this light,

for Bokiba, it becomes possible for the writer, the painter, and the musician to be one in the same in the transpoetic transcultural space of the novel.

Although Bokiba's examination of the role of music in the novel focuses on one particular text, that of Congolese writer Sylvain Bemba's *Le soleil est parti à M'pemba* (The Sun has Gone to M'pemba), many of his ideas about music and literature can be applied in approaching other novels, including those selected for the purposes of this study. In characterizing how the musical presence manifests itself in the frame of the novel, Bokiba describes "une musicalisation des bruits de la vie courante" and "une personnification des sons instrumentaux" (257) (a musicalization of the noises of daily life and a personification of instrumental sounds). He further identifies the importance of what I refer to as texted music as a means of "défense-et-illustration de l'identité culturelle . . . [qui] entretient une forme de conscience historique . . . [et sert] comme manifestation de stratification sociale" (257–58) (defense and illustration of cultural identity . . . [which] maintains a form of historical conscience . . . [and serves] as a manifestation of social stratification). Although these concepts are addressed and explored at length in later chapters that deal more specifically with examples from the works themselves, at this point, it is important to take a moment to consider Bokiba's ideas about the "personification of instrumental sounds" in view of the multiple metaphors identified for drums and drumming.

Often serving as the figurative pulse of the text, in many instances drums serve as metaphorical hearts, audibly quickening in moments of intense joy, fear, excitement, and anticipation. Similarly, drumbeats can also have soothing effects on their listeners. Their patterned drummed rhythms—comforting like the sure and steady heartbeat of a mother, a father, a friend, or a lover—have the power to dissipate anger, malice, frustration, and negativity. Schwarz-Bart alludes to the soothing nature of familiar music and rhythms in her novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (*The Bridge of Beyond*), characterizing their sonorities as a grounding force that shapes the everyday realities of her characters. In one particularly poignant passage, Schwarz-Bart describes the comforting effect drummed music has on Télumée, a woman scarred by violence, humiliation, and betrayal at the hands of her estranged husband:

> Je demeurai immobile devant le tambour. Les doigts d'Amboise bougeaient doucement sur la peau de cabri, semblant y chercher comme un signe, l'appel de mon pouls. Saisissant les deux pans de ma robe, je me mis à tourner comme une toupie détraquée, le dos courbe, les coudes relevés au-dessus des épaules, essayant vainement de parer des coups invisibles. Tout à coup, je sentis l'eau du tambour couler

> sur mon coeur et lui redonner vie, à petites notes humides d'abord, puis à larges retombées qui m'ondoyaient et m'aspergeaient tandis que je tournoyais au milieu du cercle . . . (*Pluie et vent,* 216–17)
>
> [I remained motionless before the drum. Amboise's fingers softly moved on the skin of the drum, seeming to search there for some sort of sign, like the call of my pulse. Seizing both sides of my dress, I began to turn about like a broken-down top, my back curved, my elbows raised above my shoulders, trying vainly to ward off the invisible strikes. Suddenly, I felt the drum's water run over my heart and bring it back to life, with little humid notes at first, then with large outpourings that sprinkled me and baptized me as I whirled around in the middle of the circle . . . ]

As Schwarz-Bart describes, the rhythms of drumbeats have a rejuvenating effect on Télumée's hardened heart. While at first she is reticent, unwilling to engage with the drum's soft cadences, Télumée ultimately opens her heart to its healing rhythms, letting the sound waves wash over her heart like water. Both reassuring and invigorating, the soothing sonorities of familiar drumbeats coax Télumée out of her self-imposed exile and emotional isolation, drawing her back into the fold of a community of caring and concerned friends.

As Schwarz-Bart demonstrates, Télumée's success in connecting the interior rhythms of her heartbeat with the exterior rhythms of drumbeats signals an important turning point in her character development as well as in the progression of events in the plotline. Serving much like the pulse of the text, explicit texted representations of the rhythms of drumbeats and heartbeats often provide meaningful audible cues that foreshadow imminent changes and transformations. Almost imperceptible when the mind is distracted or the body at rest, the drum's pulse quickens and its beating becomes louder during intense moments, as a heart does, including those of celebration, anguish, and despair. This motif is also apparent in Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé (Allah is Not Obliged*), a text characterized more by the chilling echoes of gunfire and the haunting sounds of warfare than by the vibrant sonorities of music and song.

In the passages in which Kourouma makes mention of drums and drumming, the rhythms serve to accentuate the decadence of the rebel faction's lifestyle. In narrating the atrocities committed by warring rebel factions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s as experienced through the eyes of a twelve-year-old *small soldier*, Kourouma interweaves the noises of tam-tams and machine gunfire, resonantly framing a climate of intense emotions amid extreme chaos. Transcribed on the written page,

the tam-tam rhythmically heightens the intensity of the soldiers' emotional responses, fueled by excessive amounts of palm wine and hashish, and driven by the obsession and insanity of the thirst for control amidst so much anguish and instability. The intercalation of drumbeats and gunfire is particularly apparent in one passage that describes the ambiance at the rebel camp after the death of one of their own, a ruthless child soldier named Captaine Kid.

> On est arrivés dans le camp retranché. Comme tous ceux de Libéria de la guerre tribale, le camp était limité par des crânes humains hissés sur des pieux. Le colonel Papa le bon pointa le kalachnikov en l'air et tira. Tous les enfants-soldats s'arrêtèrent et tirèrent en l'air comme lui. Ça a fait une véritable fantasia. (*Allah n'est pas obligé*, 62)
>
> [We arrived at the camp position. Like all those of Liberia's tribal war, the camp was bordered by human skulls hoisted up on stakes. Colonel Good Papa pointed the *kalachnikov* in the air and fired. All the child soldiers stopped and fired in the air like him. It made for a veritable fantasia.]

Amidst a symphony of machine gunfire, the Colonel and his young battalion commemorate the life of their fallen comrade. As they fire their guns into the air, the harsh sonorities of the raucous overlapping successions of shots audibly augment the madness and mayhem of their funerary celebration.

Later on in the evening, long after the excitement of the machine gun symphony has faded, Kourouma evokes the rhythms of tam-tams. In shifting from the sonorities of machine gunfire to those of drumbeats, Kourouma effectively signals a significant emotional transformation, as one soldier's thoughts shift from honoring the life of Captaine Kid to seeking vengeance for his death:

> Et les tam-tams reprirent de plus belle, de plus endiablé, de plus trépidant . . .
>
> C'est vers quatre heures du matin, totalement soûl, que [le colonel Papa le bon] se dirigea à pas hésitants vers le cercle des femmes. Et là [il] se saisit vigoureusement d'une vieille qui était elle aussi à demi endormie. C'était elle et pas une autre qui avait mangé l'âme du brave soldat-enfant Kid. (*Allah n'est pas obligé*, 65)
>
> [And the tam-tams picked up again more beautiful, more furious, more pulsing . . .
>
> It was around four in the morning, totally drunk that (Colonel Good Papa) headed with hesitant steps toward the women's circle.

> And there (he) vigorously seized an old woman who was also half-asleep. It was her and not another that had eaten the soul of the brave child-soldier Kid.]

While losing himself in a stupor propelled by excessive amounts of palm wine and drugs, the colonel is suddenly compelled to act. Moved by the rhythms of the tam-tams, which Kourouma characterizes as both beautiful and furious, the colonel's motivation abruptly changes from one of remembrance to one of retribution. Increasing in intensity, the rhythms of the tam-tam, "more beautiful, more furious, [and] more pulsing," quicken like that of a pulse in a nervous or excited state of anticipation, audibly echoing the interior rhythms of the Colonel's heart as he prepares to seek vengeance for the death of Captaine Kid.

As demonstrated in the aforementioned passages from *The Bridge of Beyond* and *Allah Is Not Obliged*, drums and other percussive devices tend to serve as a signals of change or transformation, designating important turning points in the texts we will consider in this study. Often evoked in descriptions of social rites that mark ritualized transitions from life to death and youth to adulthood, among others, drums often emphasize important moments in the development of a novel's principal characters. Not exclusive to character development, texted representations of drums and drumming are also implemented to signal substantial shifts in plotlines. Received by the reader, the rhythmic variations create a climate of anticipation, suggesting inevitable yet often unforeseeable turns of events. In *The Bow and the Lyre*, Octavio Paz explains how transitions in rhythmic processes operate in fostering a sense of expectation, perceptible by readers and listeners alike:

> [R]hythm is something more than measure, something more than time divided into parts. The succession of beats and pauses reveals a certain intentionality, something like a plan. Rhythm provokes an expectation, arouses a yearning. If it is interrupted, we feel a shock. Something has been broken. If it continues, we expect something that we cannot identify precisely. Rhythm engenders in us a state of mind that will only be calmed when "something" happens. It puts us in an attitude of waiting. We feel that the rhythm is a moving toward something, even though we may not know what that something is. (Paz 1973, 45–46)

In Paz's view, rhythmic patterns establish "a certain intentionality" that, when altered, generates shifts in purpose and/or direction. Detectable both in reading and in listening activities, such rhythmic variations give rise to an intuitive sense of anticipation that is appeased only when "'something'

happens," when change occurs. In this respect, for Paz, rhythm and, more precisely, rhythmic changes inherently function as signals of transition and transformation. When offered as an explanation for texted moments of rhythmic variation, Paz's reasoning helps to elucidate why representations of drums, drumbeats, and other percussive devices, when transcribed in the frame of the novel, often serve to foreshadow important changes in the plotline or character development.

On a practical level, drums function as important modes of communication that operate on multiple interpretive and aesthetic levels. As earlier suggested by Fampou, the communicative capacity of drums is almost limitless. In some instances, particularly in reference to many West African drumming traditions, drums can be used signals to communicate specific messages across vast distances using drummed languages. In other instances, drums can serve as speech surrogates, imitating the rhythms, inflections, and tonalities of verbal languages (see Nketia 1971).[14] Acknowledged as languages (and literatures) in themselves by Pacere (1991) and Niangoran-Bouah (1981) among others, such drummed languages are perpetuated by highly skilled drummers who not only transmit complex messages across distant spaces, but who also preserve important historical and cultural information and pass it on from generation to generation in the form of sounding rhythmic arrangements.

In other cases, the communicative capacity of drumming takes on more fluid and interpretive dimensions, as Martins suggests in his characterization of traditional drummers in *The Message of African Drumming*: "Unlike the school of thought which views drumming as playing for art's sake, the drummer is socially, culturally and politically involved. Traditionally, through the drums, the drummer can monitor public conscience and act as its social critic. Ideology therefore is a major aspect in traditional drumming. The personality and the character, which assume a focal role, must then relate to a specific ethnicity and culture if they are to be accepted as authentic by the mass-population" (Martins 1983, 11). In describing the multiplicity of roles a traditional drummer can and should fulfill in African cultural contexts, Martins touches upon the dual importance of creativity and cultural authenticity in drumming. In this respect, a drummer not only preserves ties to important sociocultural traditions but also

14. In characterizing West African drumming traditions, J. H. Kwabena Nketia has designated three distinct categories or modes: speech mode (in which the drum acts as a speech surrogate); signal mode (in which drums are used to communicate information from one location to another); and dance mode (in which drums are used to lead the dance moves and vocal responses of performers and participant-spectators) (Nketia 1963).

contributes his own innovative perspectives and aesthetic sensibilities to his art.

Not unique to African drumming and musical traditions, drums can also serve as expressive communicative mechanisms in Antillean cultural contexts. Although Antillean drummers do not traditionally utilize drum languages to communicate complex messages from one location to another as some African drummers do, Antillean drumming genres can nonetheless function in ways that convey thoughts, feelings, and impressions to their listeners,[15] while creating spaces for subjective improvisations and responses for performers and participant-spectators alike. Underlying a vibrant blend of musical tradition and innovation, drums communicate a wealth of information and emotions in Antillean contexts. Perhaps Daniel Maximin says it best when he characterizes Antillean music as a language in its own right, one that rivals the expressive powers of spoken languages like French or Creole. Directly addressing each and every inhabitant of the Antilles using the singular informal French pronoun *tu*, Maximin affirms: "Oui, tu es d'un peuple originaire de deux ou trois langues maternelles: la musique, le créole, le français" (Maximin 1985, 34) (Yes, you are of a people native to two or three mother tongues: music, Creole, French). Although—as Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau remind us—French and Creole remain on unequal footing in Guadeloupe and Martinique, specifically in view of political and socioeconomic categories, by invoking the language of music, Maximin subtly reminds us that music has the power to displace Western dominance hierarchies and to subvert polarizing constructs. Linguistically and aesthetically charged, music allows for the creation of sounding relational spaces in which individuals are called to (re)consider and (re)negotiate the ways in which they identify with and relate to one another in performance and extramusical contexts.

In both West African and Caribbean cultural contexts, drummed and instrumental music have the power to communicate ideas and emotions in a manner that transcends the limits of spoken and written language. In this way, the drum speaks without grammar and without words. Once

15. As Michel Béroard suggests in characterizing Guadeloupean *gwo ka* rhythms, the rhythms convey emotions, but also communicate complicated dimensions of sociocultural and historical phenomena: "Les musiques n'goka [*gwo ka*] véhiculent l'espérance, les souffrances et les joies du peuple guadeloupéen. Dans la société antillaise, elles furent reléguées au rang de musiques folkloriques puis de 'bitin a vié nèg' (musique de sales nègres). Aujourd'hui, elles trouvent une place privilégiée dans l'âme et l'expression guadeloupéennes" (Béroard,1997, 12). (The *gwo ka* musics convey the hope, sufferings and joys of the Guadeloupean people. In Antillean society, they were relegated to the rank of "music of dirty black people." Today, they find a privileged place in the Guadeloupean soul and expression.)

perceived, once heard or felt, the music's resonant vibrations engage listeners (both willing and unwilling) in a sort of dialogue. As they receive musical information, listeners acknowledge the music and respond to it by reacting in some way or another such as dancing (in accord or in disaccord with the music), clapping, smiling, crying, or covering their ears. Even the act of hearing music and processing it as background noise engages the listener and qualifies as a response.

In recognizing the communicative capacity of drummed and instrumental genres, it is important to acknowledge the variable quality of the rhythmic information and messages transmitted through music. Dependent on multiple factors including location and time as well as the moods and mind-sets of both musicians and listeners, musical meaning is neither fixed nor limited to a series of set interpretations. Much like a reader who determines his or her own reading of a text through the process of *lecture-écriture*, a listener engages in a similar process each time he or she listens to a musical selection. With music, this process is further complicated since musicians do not always write or compose the musical pieces they perform. In these types of situations, musical selections are doubly interpreted, first by the musician and then by the listener, which, in turn, increases the variable quality of music and what it communicates. In *Sounds and Society*, sociologist Peter Martin supports this premise, arguing that there are no authentic interpretations of musical selections: "[D]isputes about the 'real' meaning of music or the relative value of different genres never seem to reach resolution. We can see too why different and incompatible interpretations may nevertheless coexist, and why accepted meanings change over time" (Martin 1995, 67). Martin's observations are important, particularly in that they acknowledge the fact that "different and incompatible interpretations" of musical information can and do "coexist" much in the way that the terms "cacophony" and "euphony" could conceivably be used by listeners in characterizing a single piece of music. He further suggests that musical "meanings change over time," allowing for revision and reinterpretation in shifting from one sociohistorical context to another.

Martin's observations are particularly useful when considering the labels critics, listeners, and readers often use to categorize musicians and writers based on criteria of language, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and gender. These labels are particularly troublesome when interpreted as prescriptive rather than descriptive. An example of this tendency would be expecting African writers to write only about African problems and paradigms or for a Muslim woman writer to write only about the experiences and perspectives of Muslim women. Among francophone writers,

Gaston-Paul Effa is particularly adamant in refuting the labels critics and readers use to categorize him and his work. Perceiving the space of the text as one of limitless possibility in which the writer and reader are free to "become," Effa fears the limiting effects of labels on the text: "J'ai peur des étiquettes . . . La littérature c'est une terre sans murs" (Effa 2003). (I am afraid of labels . . . Literature is a land without walls.) In view of labels and the expectations they perpetuate, similar assumptions are applied in anticipating how people will perform and receive music, or how people will read and interpret literary texts. While the process of enculturation—through which people passively acquire local cultural information and behaviors as a result of being raised in a particular sociocultural setting—plays a role in shaping the metaphorical window through which one views the world, it does not establish static, culturally prescribed modes of thought, expression, or interpretation. In this respect, it is important to go beyond the mode of thinking that there is a specific *African* way, *Antillean* way, or *French* way of writing, performing, receiving, or interpreting texted and/or musical information.

Roland Louvel expresses similar sentiments in his text *Une Afrique sans objets: du vide naît le rythme* (An Africa without Objects: Rhythm Born out of the Void), in which he explores the possibility of "a post-modern Africa" in moving from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. Refuting the presence of an "intellectual" or "moral authority" that dictates cultural absolutes, Louvel designates a conceptual space that he calls the "imaginary" in which subjects are free to negotiate independent ideas and opinions in considering cultures and cultural phenomena:

> Quelle autorité intellectuelle ou morale pourrait encore nous indiquer, de nos jours, ce qu'est véritablement l'Afrique? Qui pourrait encore nous dicter ce que devrait être le bon comportement à son égard? Chaque imaginaire individuel peut désormais revendiquer le droit de s'en faire sa propre idée, de s'en bricoler une représentation à sa convenance. À chacun son Afrique. Ce qui n'empêche nullement que chaque vision particulière ne continue de se nourrir en puisant toujours très largement dans les lieux communs que nous tient en réserve notre commune *doxa* sur le compte de l'Afrique. (Louvel 1999, 171)

> [What intellectual or moral authority could still tell us, in our day, what is truly Africa? Who could still dictate to us what should be the right attitude towards it? Each individual imaginary can henceforth claim the right to make one's own idea of it, to throw together a representation at one's liking. To each his Africa. Which doesn't at all

> prevent each particular vision from continuing to nourish itself by always drawing very broadly from the common places that we hold in reserve, our common *doxa* on account of Africa.]

In affirming "à chacun son Afrique," Louvel recognizes the importance of constructing autonomous notions of place, both geographical and conceptual spaces that span nations, cultures, and continents. He nonetheless maintains the importance of collectively determined cultural ideals and information, suggesting that individuals can draw from an immense pool of stories and histories—a random collection of images, sensations, tastes, smells, and sounds—in forming their own ideas of what locations and cultures are and/or represent.

Louvel's observations remind me of something my students did during an eighteen-day interdisciplinary course in Ghana in 2007. Students in the course learned about Ghanaian history, literature, politics, culture, music, ecology, and current events in a variety of locations and social settings through classroom discussions, cultural activities, site visit excursions, and service learning. Only one of the students had been to Africa before (Kenya), and two of the students had never before traveled outside of the United States. Although the students adjusted to the environmental and sociocultural rhythms of the new location at varying speeds and in different ways, they often shared their perceptions of and reactions to day-to-day experiences and events with each other. One way they communicated their observations and impressions was through a game they invented during the four-hour bus ride from Cape Coast to Kumasi. Each student would begin a sentence with, "The thing about Africa is . . . " and complete the phrase with information from their personal experiences in Ghana. Although at first the game served as a way for students to acknowledge the challenges of adapting to life in a new cultural context and to make light of minor mishaps (including transportation delays, energy shortages, and problems resulting from miscommunication), the game later became a technique students used to try to encapsulate the whole of their experience in Ghana. In this respect, their answers became more profound. Rather than focusing on the cultural particularities of life in Ghana, students began to direct their gazes inward to themselves and to reflect on the personal changes they had undergone during the course of their journey. In doing so, began to reformulate their conceptions of identity, place, and relationality, in view of questions of what it means to be in the world.

This brings us back to rhythm. Rhythmic phenomena are ever-present in our lives, shaping our individual and collective experiences, both ordinary and extraordinary, as we move through space and time. Resonating in real and imaginary spaces, the rhythms of heartbeats, footsteps, drumbeats and

dance steps overlap with the rhythms of languages, cultures, nature, and random everydayness. Through rhythm, we negotiate our understandings of ourselves, each other, and the world around us. Through rhythm, we (de/re)construct and (re)configure our identities and our positions in the world. As writers, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau incorporate rhythmic and musical phenomena in their novels in ways that implicate readers in complicated processes of identity negotiation that operate both inside and outside the frame of the text. As we begin to contemplate the intricate dimensions of local and global identities through texted representations of rhythm, music, and sounds in their works, let us read with open eyes and open minds, and also endeavor to open our ears, our hearts, and our bodies to the rhythms and musics resonating therein.

# 2 / Rhythm and Reappropriation in *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*

Throughout time, music and rhythm have served as important strategies for subverting and reappropriating authority, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, during which time diverse musical genres—including jazz, punk, rap, and other forms of popular music—have played a role in challenging aesthetic and sociocultural conventions in locations around the world (see Berger and Carrol 2003; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Mattern 1998; Pratt 1990; and Yankah 1997). Serving as points of connection or commonality among diverse peoples, rhythm and music can function as powerful devices that unite people in their struggles against political, economic, and hegemonic authorities. Theodor Adorno describes music as a "formative force" that creates "binding experiences," even in its most abstract and fragmentary forms, and that encourages collectivity in that it "says We directly regardless of its intentions" (Adorno 1997, 167), while simultaneously promoting individualism. A creative, expressive form of pro-activity or pro-activeness, the power of music manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways, fostering a dynamic rhythmic force that connects and empowers individuals, affirms their autonomously constructed identities, and inspires them to question and to pro-actively resist repressive regimes and social agendas. Not exclusive to the domain of music, this power is also affirmed through transdisciplinary rhythmic phenomena as perceptible in linguistic, poetic, and biological forms (among others). As Henri Meschonnic maintains: "Comme la collectivité est rythmique, le rythme engendre la collectivité" (Meschonnic,1982, 649) (Just like collectivity is rhythmic, rhythm engenders collectivity).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, West African

musicians have used their voices to speak out against economic exploitation, political corruption, and social injustices, spreading their messages to a global forum through live performances, music videos, and audio recordings. Ivoirian reggae artists Alpha Blondy and Tiken Jah Fakoly have emerged in recent years as prominent critics of European and American overinvolvement in African affairs. In doing so, they have become vocal advocates for African autonomy and Pan-African unity. Blondy has earned notoriety throughout the past decade with his 1998 song "Armée française" (French Army), in which he orders the French army to leave the independent African nations of Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Gabon, Djibouti, and Central African Republic, among others (Blondy 1998). As the song begins, Blondy commands : "Armée française, allez-vous-en! Allez-vous-en de chez nous. Nous ne voulons plus d'indépendance sous haute surveillance." (French army, get out of here ! Get out of our home. We no longer want independence under high surveillance.) Later in the song, Blondy proclaims :

Nous sommes des États indépendants et souverains.
Votre présence militaire entame notre souveraineté,
Confisque notre intégrité, bafoue notre dignité,
Et ça, ça ne peux plus durer
Alors allez-vous-en!

[We are independent and sovereign States
Your military presence undermines our sovereignty,
Confiscates our integrity and scoffs at our dignity,
And this, this can no longer last
So get out of here!]

Although the song was recorded five years prior to violent exchanges between France and Côte d'Ivoire in 2004, the song quickly became an anthem for young Ivoirians who were frustrated with the French response to civil unrest in their country.

After a failed coup d'état attempt on September 19, 2002 (when rebel factions from northern Côte d'Ivoire attacked government and military installations in Abidjan, Bouaké, and Korhogo), France increased its troop levels in Côte d'Ivoire. As tensions mounted between the northern and southern regions of Côte d'Ivoire, France also worked to broker the Linas-Marcoussis Peace Accord in January 2003 through which officers from the rebel forces would be integrated into President Laurent Gbagbo's government, and foreign troops would be brought in to monitor the cease fire. Although Gbagbo and the leaders of the rebel faction accepted the terms of the accord, declaring the end of civil war in July 2003, their agreement

eventually broke down, and violence began to mount once again between rival factions. The violence between groups escalated in the months leading up to November 2004, when Gbagbo ordered air strikes in rebel-controlled regions in northern Côte d'Ivoire. During one such air strike, nine French soldiers and an American aid worker were killed. Whether the strikes were accidental or intentional, the world may never know. Even so, despite Gbagbo's claims that the deaths were unintentional and his assurances that Côte d'Ivoire was not at war with France, French president Jacques Chirac ordered a retaliatory strike that destroyed most of the Ivoirian air force's fighter jets and helicopters. After the attacks on the Ivoirian air force, a wave of anti-French violence and vandalism erupted in Côte d'Ivoire during which French schools and businesses were burned and vandalized. As tensions mounted in the capital, anti-French protests in Abidjan were met with gunfire when French troops responded to days of protests and riots by firing on Ivoirian civilian protesters. According to one source, seven Ivoirians were killed by French gunfire, and nearly two hundred others were injured in the attacks (Leupp 2004).

Although the French government maintains that the French soldiers responded with gunfire as a means of protecting French citizens against Ivoirian civilian attacks, many citizens, artists, and advocates disagree with this assertion, including Blondy. In 2007, the artist resuscitated "Armée française" by making a controversial video for the song using graphic images from the November 2004 attack on Ivoirian civilians. Although critics have accused Blondy of trying to incite violence through the video, Blondy argues that the purpose of the video is to document the tragic events of November 2004 and to discourage European overinvolvement in African affairs. In Blondy's view, the problems he addressed in his 1998 song have not been sufficiently resolved or addressed. In defending his concept for the video, Blondy asserts, "J'ai écrit cette chanson en 1998, l'armée française en a 'fait' les images en 2004" (Poissonnier 2007). (I wrote this song in 1998, the French army "made" the images for it in 2004.)

Although Blondy's "Armée française" provides just one contemporary (and controversial) example (Senegalese singing sensation Youssou N'Dour, Beninoise afropop artist Angelique Kidjo, Malian wassoulou singer Oumou Sangaré, Rwandan R & B star Corneille, and Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi are among countless others), musicians in Africa have been using music for centuries to voice social concerns and to fight injustice and inequality. In their collection *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel*, Esi Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw provide transcriptions of traditional songs used by women to express unpopular or subversive viewpoints. As Sutherland-Addy and Diaw explain, rather than inciting or heightening conflicts or violence, the inflammatory lyrics of certain songs

are designed as a means of encouraging communication, negotiation, and exchange among performers and audience members: "[F]irst and foremost, the performance of songs or tales by a good singer or storyteller opens avenues for discussion, for argument, for protest, for debate . . . Performance events in the traditional oral West African context favor responsiveness and force the deaf to hear" (Sutherland-Addy and Diaw 2005, 22–23). As Sutherland-Addy and Diaw affirm, such musical pieces are traditionally performed in a social forum where the social critiques, challenges, and commentaries they offer will be received and considered by allies and opponents alike. In this respect, the aim of music is not to impose a single will or a single way, but to open the ears, the eyes, and the mind to multiple perspectives and to stimulate thoughtful consideration and discussion.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, African writers have found inspiration in the provocative strategies employed for centuries by vocal and instrumental musicians in Africa.[1] Although generations of African writers have taken up their pens to engage readers from a global audience in transgenerational and transcultural dialogues, Ousmane Sembene and Ahmadou Kourouma were among the first. Through the incorporation of prominent rhythmic and musical elements in their respective novels, *Gods Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*, Sembene and Kourouma create vibrantly sounding imaginative worlds that resonate from the space of the written page. Most visibly manifest in the ever-present rhythms of drums and drumming, but also evoked through multiple representations of song and dance in both ritual and quotidian settings, the pronounced presence of rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena plays a significant role in each novel, connoting aesthetic, linguistic, sociocultural, and political implications. Tied into strategies of resistance, reclamation, and reappropriation in the colonial and postcolonial eras, Sembene and Kourouma effectively include rhythmic and musical components in their respective texts, creating resonant transpoetic works that dually promote each writer's mission to be socially committed through writing. In what Jean Ouédraogo refers to as the quest to "witness, denounce and demythify" (Ouédraogo 2001, 772), Sembene and Kourouma exploit the power of rhythm and music in a multiplicity of ways that influence not only their texts' characters and plotlines, but also have an impact on social relationships and contexts outside of the frame of the novel.

Published in 1960, Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood* presents a fictionalized account of a 1947 railroad workers' strike that immobilized railway traffic

1. For those interested in reading more about the five-year crisis situation in turn-of-the-century Côte d'Ivoire, see Jacobleu's *Au nom de ma patrie: Le peuple pris en otage* (In My Country's Name: The People Held Hostage) and Tanella Boni's *Matins de couvre-feu* (Curfew Mornings).

between the cities of Bamako, Thiès, and Dakar. Filled with the texted sonorities of multiple representations of music and dance as well as the resonant rhythms of sounding quotidian phenomena, Sembene's portrayal of the struggles of striking workers and their families explores dimensions of resistance and reappropriation in a West Africa scarred by the political abuses, social injustices, and economic exploitation of the colonial era. While exposing the hardships endured by the striking workers and their families, Sembene insists on the importance of the rhythms of language, music, and movement throughout the novel, particularly as they relate to questions of authority, autonomy, and identity in colonial and postcolonial West Africa.

Kourouma examines similar themes in *The Suns of Independence*, a novel that reveals social problems in West Africa in the early postcolonial era. Politicized in content and in form, Kourouma's first novel drew its share of international controversy and acclaim even before printed copies were available to francophone readers. After repeated rejections from French publishing houses, due in part to their reluctance to endorse Kourouma's malinkisized brand of French, *The Suns of Independence* was first published in Canada by Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal in 1968. Later distributed by the French publishers Les Éditions du Seuil, *The Suns of Independence*, like *God's Bits of Wood*, quickly established itself as a pillar in the African literary canon. In telling the tragic story of Fama, a Malinké man of royal heritage who spends his days begging to earn his livelihood, and his wife, Salimata, a woman who struggles with infertility and memories of a botched excision, Kourouma examines complicated dimensions of identity and authority in postcolonial West Africa. Like Sembene, Kourouma masterfully weaves rhythmic and musical elements into his prose, celebrating the sonorities of everyday rhythmic and musical happenings as a means of exposing political inequalities, social problems, and linguistic conflicts.

In considering the multiple manifestations of rhythm and music in *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*, we will first examine texted evocations of the rhythms of song, dance, music, and chores as well as those of the biological processes of respiration and circulation. In addition, we will discuss the significance of the decidedly resonant qualities of the texts in view of Sembene and Kourouma as socially committed writers. By establishing links between rhythmic and musical representations in the texts and the aesthetic, sociocultural, and linguistic localization strategies both writers employ, it becomes apparent how rhythm and music serve as effective subversive mechanisms, displacing the authority of the French language and culture in colonial and postcolonial West Africa, while designating autonomous spaces for innovation, invention,

and reappropriation that impact identity questions and configurations on global and local levels.

## Language and the Language of Music

For Sembene and for Kourouma, the decision to write in French is inescapably politically charged. Hailing from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire respectively (both former French colonies in which French has remained the sole official language despite the presence of thriving nationally recognized languages), Sembene and Kourouma argue that the choice of language is inextricably connected to questions of identity, with implications in political, sociocultural, and aesthetic domains. Beyond the identificatory dimensions of language and, more specifically, the choice of language, French serves a practical communicative purpose for Sembene and Kourouma in that it allows them to reach global audiences with their writing. In spite of its utility for communicating with readers around the world, the French language is nonetheless problematic in postcolonial contexts. An emblematic presence that recalls the injustices of colonialism and the power of French authority during the colonial era and the persistence of French cultural encroachment and economic exploitation in the postcolonial era, the French language continues to impose a far-reaching authority in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

As the official language of legal and political authority in the two countries, French, an imported and acquired language, reinforces the socioeconomic hierarchical systems in place in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, effectively marginalizing people who do not speak the language at all, as well as those who do not speak the language at a native or near-native level of proficiency. In Kourouma's native Côte d'Ivoire, French is the official language despite (and also because of) the presence of seventy-eight other living languages including Baolé, Sénoufo, Yacouba, and Dioula. For purposes of interlinguistic communication, Dioula, not French, is one of the preferred vehicular languages in many parts of Côte d'Ivoire, particularly for local business transactions. The linguistic situation is comparable in Mali (where Kourouma completed his studies), where there are around thirty local languages, thirteen of which are recognized as national languages (Bambara, Bobo, Bozu, Dogon, Peul, Soninké, Songoy, Sénoufo-Minianka, Tamasheq, Hasanya, Kasonkan, Madenkan, and Maninkan). Although Bambara is spoken as the primary vehicular language in Mali, French remains the official language. Similarly, in Sembene's native Senegal, French is the official language where thirty-five local languages coexist. Six (Wolof, Peul, Serer, Dioula, Malinké, and Soninké) are recognized as national languages. In Senegal, Wolof functions as the majority language

as well as the primary vehicular language, particularly in the northern half of the country. Provided that different local vehicular languages are preferred in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal, on a practical level, French operates as an important regional vehicular language, connecting people in Francophone West African nations with each other and with members of the global Francophone community. The choice of French as the official language also prevents a single ethnic or linguistic group from claiming a disproportionate amount of political power and authority by designating their mother tongue as the sole official language. Even so, the percentage of French speakers in each country is relatively low. Recent estimates suggest that 40 percent of Ivoirians and 20 percent of Senegalese speak French as a second, third, or fourth language.[2]

Sembene has overtly criticized language policy and practices in Senegal and other West African nations, all the while acknowledging that the choice of language is a delicate one with no easy solutions, particularly on a national level. In an interview with Sada Niang, Sembene points out two examples to illustrate the pragmatic challenges to the French official language policy in Senegal. In the first example, Sembene discusses how different ethnic groups have been unable to agree upon a Senegalese language alternative to French in government proceedings. He describes one instance in particular when Wolof was proposed as the preferred language for Senegalese National Assembly meetings. The motion was rejected when members of minority language groups voiced their concerns that using the Wolof language would give an unfair advantage to the Wolof majority. Sembene explains his frustration with their decision, supporting the choice of Wolof as a pragmatic one since more people in Senegal speak Wolof than any other language: "Suprême contradiction: au sein de cette auguste assemblée, il siège des deputés qui ne parlent ni pular ni français bien que le discours officiel s'y déroule en français" (Niang 1993, 91). (Supreme contradiction: within this grand assembly are seated deputies that speak neither Pular nor French, even though the official proceedings are conducted in French.)

Even worse, according to Sembene, is the linguistic situation in Senegalese courtrooms and tribunals. As the official language in Senegal, French is the language of law and justice, so all court proceedings are conducted in French, even if all of the witnesses, lawyers, and officials understand a common language like Wolof. Sembene explains:

> [L]orsque vous allez devant les tribunaux, les magistrates sont wolof et parlent wolof, les prévenus sont wolof et parlent wolof, mais les

2. Although this information is published in book form (see Leclerc 1992), the most up-to-date information is available on the Leclerc's Web site, *Aménagement linguistique dans le monde*, at http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl.

> gens ne parlent que par des interprètes. Ce que le prévenu dit en wolof, le président, les juges, les assesseurs le comprennent parfaitement, mais malgré tout, il faut que ceci leur soit traduit en français. N'est-ce pas ridicule ça? (Niang 1993, 91)
>
> [When you go before the tribunal, the magistrates are Wolof and speak Wolof, the accused are Wolof and speak Wolof, but the people only speak through interpreters. What the accused says in Wolof, the president, the judges, the associates understand it perfectly, but in spite of everything, it must be translated to them in French. Isn't that ridiculous?]

Sembene's criticism of language practices in legal and judicial sectors in Senegal and other Francophone nations only begins to scratch the surface of the problematic dimensions of language policy and practices in contemporary West Africa. There are also questions of linguistic barriers to educational institutions, economic opportunities, and social mobility, among others, which further complicate the discussion.

Often referred to as a voice of the voiceless, Sembene was born in the Casamance region of southern Senegal in 1923. Although he was expelled from school as a teenager for disciplinary problems, Sembene nurtured his love of reading, writing, cinema, and storytelling. After serving with the French army as a *tirailleur*, an African infantryman who helped to liberate the French army from the German occupation, Sembene returned to a Dakar ravaged by the political, economic, and social injustices of colonialism in 1946. Unable to find work in Senegal, Sembene returned to France, where he worked as a manual laborer on the docks of Marseille. After spending over a decade in France, Sembene returned to Senegal following the declaration of Senegalese independence in 1960. Sembene's novels and novellas—*Le Docker noir* (*Black Docker*) (1956), *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* (Oh Country, My Beautiful People!) (1957), *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu: Banty mam yall* (*God's Bits of Wood*) (1960), *L'Harmattan* (1964), *Le Mandat* (*The Money Order*) (1966), *Xala* (1973), *Le Dernier de l'empire* (*The Last of the Empire*) (1981), and *Guelwaar* (1996)—and his collections of short stories—*Voltaïque* (1962) and *Niwaam* (1987)—evidence his continued political engagement and his commitment to exposing political, economic, and social injustices in colonial and postcolonial West Africa. In addition to a large body of written works, Sembene has also established himself as one of Africa's premier cinematographers, directing socially committed feature films including *La Noire de . . .* (*Black Girl*) (1966), *Mandabi* (The Money Order) (1986), *Emitai* (1971), *Xala* (1974), *Ceddo* (1976), *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), *Guelwaar* (1993), *Faat Kiné* (2000), and *Moolaadé* (2004). His life and work have inspired writers, filmmakers, and activists around

the world and continue to do so, even after his death at the age of eighty-four in 2007.

Another socially committed writer, Kourouma was born in northern Côte d'Ivoire near Bundiali in 1927. As a young man, he completed his studies in Bamako, and later served in the French army before pursuing studies in math in Paris and, later, in Lyon. Like Sembene, Kourouma returned to his country in 1960 following Ivoirian independence. Upon his return to Côte d'Ivoire, Kourouma was vocal in criticizing the politics of the changing country. An outspoken advocate for the Ivoirian people, Kourouma was identified as an opponent of Houphouët Boigny's regime, and spent five years in exile in Algeria from 1964 to 1969. During his time in exile, Kourouma wrote his first novel, *The Suns of Independence*, in which he grapples with questions of identity, autonomy, and authority in postcolonial West Africa. He later wrote *Monnè, outrages et défis* (Monnè, Outrages and Provocations) (1990), *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (*Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote*) (1998), and *Allah n'est pas obligé* (*Allah is Not Obliged*) (2000), all of which demonstrate his continued commitment to exposing West African social problems and exploring their implications on national and international levels. Over the course of his career, Kourouma also published a children's book, *Yacouba, chasseur africain* (Yacouba African Hunter) (1998), a theatrical piece, *Le Diseur de vérité* (The Teller of Truth) (1999), and coauthored a book of popular African proverbs, *Le Grand livre des proverbes africains* (The Great Book of African Proverbs) (2003) before his untimely death in December 2003. In 2004, a posthumous novel, *Quand on refuse on dit non* (When we refuse we say no), was released as a lasting testament to Kourouma's social activism through writing.

Although they choose to write their novels in French, Sembene and Kourouma are both hesitant to accept the label of Francophone writer, due in part to the political and sociocultural implications such linguistically prescribed labels convey. Sembene, who characterizes language as "a tool" he uses for communicative purposes (Aas-Rouxparis 2002, 577), also describes language as "a product of politics":

> La langue est un produit de politique. Ce sont les hommes au gouvernement qui décident de cette politique. À mon avis, toutes les langues recèlent de la richesse. Cela dépend de qui les emploie. Dans nos écoles, au Sénégal, nous enseignons toutes les langues européennes. Nous écrivons aussi dans les langues africaines, et nous avons même traduit la Bible et le Coran. Personnellement, je ne veux pas qu'on nous enferme dans la Francophonie. (577)

> [Language is a product of politics. It is the men in government who

> decide on this politic. In my opinion, all languages possess wealth. It depends on who uses them. In our schools, in Senegal, we teach all of the European languages. We also write in African languages and we have even translated the Bible and the Coran. Personally, I do not want people to confine us to the Francophonie.]

Equally recognizing the power of language as a "tool" and the danger of language as a political "product," Sembene dislikes the practice of applying the Francophone label to Senegalese writers who choose to write in French. Viewing the label as a limiting constraint, always inevitably aligned with the trappings of French culture and politics, Sembene favors the designation of alternative monikers that also recognize the depth, versatility, and vitality of African languages. Perhaps this is why Sembene so actively commits himself to introducing West African languages such as Wolof and Bambara to his public, both as a writer and as a filmmaker.

While, in a cinematic setting, Sembene's characters speak French, Wolof, and Bambara, sometimes in tandem with other languages such as Arabic, resonantly reflecting the realities of expression and communication in a polyglossic setting, in his novels he employs a combination of stylistic and lexical strategies to create a similar effect. For example, in *God's Bits of Wood*, Sembene often emphasizes a character's choice of language by directly inserting words from the Wolof and Bambara languages or by identifying the speaker's choice of language (e.g., "in French," "in Wolof"). In other instances, when introducing lexical elements from local languages, Sembene visually calls attention to Wolof, Bambara, and Arabic terms by presenting them in italicized print or accompanying them with explicatory footnotes. In subsequent uses of these words and expressions, they often appear in the same nonitalicized typeface as the French text. In this way, Sembene simultaneously imposes the terms' orthography and signification on the French language framework. Moreover, by incorporating elements from local lexicons into his French-language text, Sembene masterfully intercalates the rhythms of French, Wolof, and Bambara, creating polyphonic and polyrhythmic effects. By infusing the rhythms of the French language text with the rhythms of Wolof and Bambara language and orality, Sembene denies the conventions and rhythms of prescribed language practices, instead crafting a text that resonates with the overlapping rhythms of multiple voices speaking multiple languages.

Such linguistic and stylistic techniques are apparent throughout *God's Bits of Wood*. In one passage, on the eve of the workers' strike that drives the plot of the novel, Sembene evokes the persistent beating of drums, manifest in the rhythm of the *bara*, a term Sembene defines in a footnote as a "Bambara dance" (*BBD*, 28). Offset in italicized print and defined in

a footnote in its initial appearance, the word later resurfaces in two other passages. Camouflaged in the black-and-white body of the French text and devoid of explicit clarification, the reader is left to his or her own devices—those of guessing, inferring, or remembering—to determine the meaning of the Bambara term one hundred pages and, later, three hundred pages after its initial use. This is just one of the techniques Sembene uses to reorient or localize the French language, subtly transforming it to better reflect the rhythms of Senegalese and Malian linguistic and cultural realities and imaginaries.

In other examples, Sembene opts to emphasize a character's use of language through the designations "in French," "in Wolof," or "in Bambara." Whether used to reveal the complexity of polyglossic interactions, to affirm the importance of one's choice of language, or to expose the socioeconomic and cultural inequalities among languages and the people who can and cannot speak them, such clarifications reveal the extent to which language and identity are inextricably interwoven. Sembene demonstrates this phenomenon in *God's Bits of Wood* through his portrayals of characters and their use of language in varying interpersonal situations and sociocultural contexts. At times, such situations are determined by a person's language competency or the lack thereof in a legally or socially prescribed linguistic interaction such as when Ramatoulaye is arrested and must communicate with the French-speaking authorities with the help of an interpreter, which only serves to complicate her situation (*BBD*, 123). At other times, linguistic circumstances and criteria are more a matter of choice, such as when N'Deye Touti, in an attempt to align herself with the language of power, privilege, and authority in the French colonial system, prefers to speak French whenever possible. An additional example of the significance of language choice takes place when Bakayoko, in an effort to unite diverse West African peoples in the struggle to resist colonial authorities in the critical moments preceding the end of the strike, delivers a decisive speech in Wolof, Bambara, Toucouleur, and French (336).

In another passage, Sembene simultaneously re-creates the multiple sonorities of the West African linguistic landscape while affirming the inherent connections between language and identity both locally and globally when Ad'jibid'ji, a young Bambara girl, speaks to her grandmother Niakoro about languages and idiomatic expressions. As Niakoro smokes her pipe, Ad'jibid'ji wonders about why different words and expressions are used in French, Bambara, and Wolof to characterize the experience of smoking a pipe. She also wonders why there are two expressions to describe the experience in Wolof and in French but only one in Bambara. In response to her grandmother's annoyance at being asked such a question, Ad'jibid'ji explains that she has had difficulties finding an answer to the

question since her father is away and, although her mother speaks both Bambara and Foulah, she understands neither Wolof nor French. Although Niakoro is unable to provide her with an answer to her question, the moment is meaningful to the grandmother and granddaughter as Ad'jibid'ji affirms her Bambara identity while rationalizing that her competency in Wolof is limited since she is "a Bambara, not a Wolof" (162). Although just a young girl, Ad'jibid'ji is already beginning to understand the complicated relationships among different languages, contexts, and peoples in West African cultural contexts.

Effectively utilized, Sembene's masterful incorporation of a variety of linguistic localization strategies has implications on aesthetic, sociocultural, and political levels. By challenging the authority of French language and cultural practices, Sembene subtly subverts their power, opening a space in which new expressive modes are developed and autonomous identity constructs are conceived and negotiated. Avoiding the trappings of what Hédi Bouraoui calls "la binarité infernale" (Bouraoui 1995, 42) (the infernal binarity) of postcolonial discourse, Sembene creates a transcultural zone in the space of the text, one in which cultural particularities overlap and intermingle, allowing for communication, exchange, transformation, and synthesis. Rejecting the notion that cultures and cultural systems are impenetrable, homogenous entities, Sembene clearly establishes a relationship among France, Mali, and Senegal that refuses the sharp divisions imposed by binary distinctions. Favoring interaction and possibility, Sembene's ideas about culture and intercultural dynamics correspond with Bouraoui's vision of the relationships among Francophone countries and France:

> Si parfois l'affrontement est nécessaire pour stimuler le processus créateur, il n'en reste pas moins que tout jeu d'opposition hiérarchique doit être résorbé par les progressives successions d'analyse et de synthèse. Dans ce sens, nous ne voulons pas suggérer un schéma rigide qui risque de figer l'apport francophone et ses mouvements, mais plutôt esquisser une sorte d'économie de complémentarité et non de polarité. Ceci permettra à chaque cycle informationnel de circuler librement et à chaque contenu culturel de croître naturellement. (Bouraoui 1995, 42)

> [If sometimes confrontation is necessary to stimulate the creative process, the fact remains that every game of hierarchical opposition must be absorbed by progressive successions of analysis and synthesis. In this sense, we do not want to suggest a rigid schema that risks freezing the Francophone contribution and its movements, but rather sketch a kind of economy of complementarity and not of polarity.

> This will allow each informational cycle to freely circulate and each cultural component to grow naturally.]

In considering the works of Sembene as well as those of Kourouma, Bouraoui's assertions about Francophone identity negotiation and configuration are significant for a number of reasons. First and foremost, rather than viewing confrontation as a perpetuation of conflict and hostility, Bouraoui recognizes the confrontational process as an important catalyst that "stimulates the creative process," encouraging "progressive successions of analysis and synthesis" that ultimately neutralize polarized or hierarchical relationships. Preferring the dynamics of complementarity to those of polarity, Bouraoui argues for a fluid, interactive model that is transcultural in nature and emphasizes mobility, exchange, and inevitable growth.

Much like Sembene, Kourouma succeeds in employing linguistic and stylistic devices as a means of creating a forum for negotiation and reappropriation in his novels. Nevertheless, Kourouma distinguishes himself from Sembene in his philosophy and his approach. Although Sembene and Kourouma are equally concerned with problems surrounding questions of Francophone identity, Kourouma, unlike Sembene, embraces the title of francophone writer, albeit with one stipulation. Maintaining the importance of always *thinking* in one's native language, even when communicating in French, Kourouma sees positive potential and possibilities in the contemporary Francophone world.

> Écrire en français en continuant à penser dans sa langue maternelle ne construit pas seulement une case maternelle à l'écrivain dans la francophonie; il permet de réaliser une francophonie multiculturelle qui peut rassembler des peuples égaux qui considéreront en définitive le français comme un bien commun. (Kourouma 1997, 118)
>
> [Writing in French while continuing to think in one's mother tongue does not only construct a maternal hut for the writer in the Francophonie, it allows the achievement of a multicultural Francophonie that can bring together equal people who will consider French like a common asset after all is said and done.]

For Kourouma, the process of expressing one's native-language thoughts in French allows francophone writers to appropriate their own distinct versions of the French language. Imbued with the rhythms and musicality of local languages, Kourouma's transposed renderings of French present Malinké cultural conventions and aesthetic sensibilities to a global francophone forum. Not only does this prospect allow different writers from disparate regions to convey cultural and aesthetic values on individual and

collective levels, it also opens up a shared space for transcultural communication and exchange. Multicultural in nature, the francophone community Kourouma envisions brings together a multiplicity of peoples representing a diversity of perspectives. In this respect, as each francophone writer, thinker, and communicator constructs or dwells in his or her own maternal language hut in a francophone forum, the sociocultural, political, and aesthetic landscapes of the French language are gradually transforming, resonating with the sonorities of multiple languages and reflecting the mosaic identities representative of the members of the international francophone community. As Kourouma sees it, French is not the exclusive intellectual property of the French people. "A common asset" collectively owned by the members of the global francophone community, for Kourouma, the French language can ideally serve as a social-leveling mechanism, particularly when infused with the rhythms and lexicons of multiple languages. In this capacity, Kourouma's ideal of an internationally operative francophonized French contributes to the deconstruction of social hierarchies within and among nations, effectively unifying people from around the world with diverse histories, cultures, experiences, and perspectives.

Despite Kourouma's optimistic vision of a multicultural francophone community, he admits that the process of translating one's thoughts into another language is not without its problems, particularly in instances where one attempts to communicate oral forms of expression through writing.

> Mon problème d'écrivain francophone est de transposer en français des paroles créées dans une langue orale négro-africaine, des oeuvres qui ont été préparées pour être produites, pour être dites oralement. Je me heurte à des difficultés. La langue française m'apparaît linéaire. Je m'y sens à l'étroit. Le lexique, la grammaticalisation, les nuances et même les procédés littéraires pour lesquels la fiction avait été préparée. La langue française est planifiée, agencée. Les personnages, les scènes cessent d'avoir le relief qu'ils avaient dans la parole africaine. Leurs interventions ne produisent plus les échos qui les suivaient dans la langue originelle. (Kourouma 1997, 116–17)

> [My problem as a francophone writer is of transposing words created in an oral Black African language into French, works that have been prepared to be produced, to be said orally. I come up against difficulties. The French language seems linear to me. I feel cramped in it. The lexicon, the grammaticalization, the nuances, and even the literary techniques with which the fiction had been prepared. The French language is planned, constructed. The characters, the scenes cease

to have the depth that they had in the African word. Their interventions no longer produce the echoes that followed them in the original language.]

Categorizing his native language, Malinké, as an oral language that lacks a prominent or prolonged history of writing, Kourouma explains that, for him, writing in French is not merely a question of translating one language into another. Rather, it involves trying to express the vibrant sonorities of an oral language within the silent frame of the written text. A complicated endeavor involving multiple linguistic processes and aesthetic considerations, what Kourouma refers to as transposing is not merely a synonym for translation. Rather, it involves the double task of translation and transcription. For Kourouma, the challenge is to convey his Malinké thoughts and feelings in written French without betraying the resonant qualities of the Malinké language. Admittedly, Kourouma acknowledges that the process of transposing, while promising in its capacity for communication and exchange, fails to convey the full sounding experience an oral language transmits. Among other things, the audible textures created through speech acts in the original language are no longer perceptible in transposed text.

Nevertheless, in spite of the problems of transposing, the double task of translating and transcribing, Kourouma succeeds in conveying a sense of the Malinké language and culture in *The Suns of Independence*. Through persistent evocations of oral and instrumental modes of expression, Kourouma imbues the French written text with resonant possibility. Beginning with the first sentence, Kourouma immediately draws the reader into the text through the incorporation of oral communicative techniques, a strategy that serves to offset the sense of unfamiliarity a non-Malinképhone may experience when reading the transposed text: "Il y avait une semaine qu'avait fini dans la capitale Koné Ibrahima, de race malinké, ou disons-le en malinké: il n'avait pas soutenu un petit rhume" (*Soleils*, 9). (It has been a week since Koné Ibrahima of Malinké race, had finished in the capital, or as we say in Malinké, he had not withstood a little cold.) Through the use of the second-person plural form "let's say" or "as we say," Kourouma instantaneously initiates the reader into the audible domain of *The Suns of Independence*. In doing so, Kourouma effectively creates a sense of complicity with the readers in spite of their potential lack of familiarity with Malinké euphemisms. He does this not only by inviting them into the text through his use of the first-person plural form of the imperative mood, but also by informing them about Malinké linguistic and cultural particularities and revealing the problems of translation.

Throughout the novel, Kourouma consistently employs these and

other strategies, including repetition and other storytelling techniques, to promote the oral qualities of the Malinké language in the French text. Kourouma equally incorporates these elements to welcome the reader into the transpoetic transcultural space of his novel and to engage the reader in the text on a more meaningful level. Establishing a basis for a constructive dialogue through which the reader responds to the author's oral prompts by working with the text to create meaning, Kourouma expects his readers to participate in the text, not just as readers, but also as spectators, as listeners, and even as speakers themselves.

At times, Kourouma admittedly puts the reader in the uncomfortable position of confronting his or her own uncertainties in view of those of the storyteller or writer. In discussing the importance of repetition in his novels, Kourouma explains that it is not simply a matter of infusing the French text with Malinké orality; rather, it is also question of trying to say something "unsayable":

> La répétition chez moi aussi a un autre sens. Cela signifie que je n'ai pas trouvé le mot exact saisissant le terme que je veux donner. Je montre pour que le lecteur se trouve un peu gêné là-dedans et se dise au fond qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire, qu'est-ce qu'il veut ressortir? Je lui dis: Voilà, je vous offre un peu tout ce que j'ai à dire là-dessus, mais je n'arrive pas, moi-même, à trouver le mot. (Ouédraogo 2001, 775)

> [Repetition for me also has another meaning. It means that I have not found the exact word capturing the term that I want to provide. I show (this) so that the reader finds himself a bit embarrassed inside and says to himself down deep what does he want to say, what does he want to bring out? I tell him: That's it, I am offering you a little of all that I have to say about it, but I do not manage, myself, to find the word.]

Through repetition, Kourouma conveys a strong sense of Malinké orality, but more importantly, devises a means of implicating the reader in the quest to build meaning, to develop a sense of understanding in spite of the problems of translation and transposition. By holding the reader accountable for negotiating a sense of what he cannot express within the limits of language, Kourouma further demonstrates his spirit of social commitment through writing. Perhaps this is why Madeline Borgomano refers to him as the "'guerrier' griot," (Borgomano 1998) (the griot "warrior"), and Jean Ouédraogo calls him "un griot de l'indicible" (Ouédraogo 2004) (a griot of the unsayable).

Characterized by Camara Laye as "maîtres de la parole" (masters of the spoken word) and as "speaking documents" (Laye 1978, 12), griots

traditionally fulfill a variety of social roles in many West African societies. Referred to as *gewel* in Wolof and as *jali* in Malinké and Bambara, griots are not merely entertainers. Rather, they are prominent storytellers with generations of histories and legends, songs and poems, proverbs and folktales committed to memory. Through their art, they preserve local history and lore and promote important cultural traditions. Often utilizing musical instruments such as tam-tams and *koras* to accompany their performances, aside from serving as sociohistorical conservationists, griots also act as innovators and improvisers, incorporating their own unique rhythmic and musical stylings into each distinct performance. On a social level, griots also function as intermediaries, bringing together local groups and communities, but also connecting characters and peoples from different epochs and places with a living listening public.

Despite the significance of a griot's connection to West African traditions, cultures, and histories, as Laye maintains, a griot's target constituency is not exclusive to the African continent. In this respect, his or her influence is not limited to African audiences. Rather, the power of the griot has the capacity to bridge vast distances across space and time, connecting disparate peoples in a common condition—the human condition.

> Il y a aussi, en définitive, que l'on oublie volontiers que les paroles que le griot prononce, nous voulons parler du griot traditionaliste, il ne faut pas être nécessairement africain pour les prononcer; ce n'est pas une question de continent . . . [L]e griot traditionaliste en vient là: à l'ineffable; à cette patiente et infinie recherche où tous les êtres—Blancs, Jaunes, Noirs, Rouges—sont de l'ineffable; à cette recherche qui fait regarder tous les peuples, dans leur union étroite entre le ciel et la terre . . . et nous lie, ici comme là, au même sort, au même destin; à ce qui est notre destin même, notre mystérieux destin: celui du voyageur qu'est chaque homme sur la terre. (Laye 1978, 22–23)
>
> [There is also, after all is said and done, that people easily forget the words that the griot pronounces, we mean to speak of the traditionalist griot, it is not necessary to be African to pronounce them, it is not a question of continent . . . [T]he traditionalist griot comes from there: to the ineffable; to this patient and infinite search where all beings—Whites, Yellows, Blacks, Reds—are of the ineffable, to this search that makes all peoples look, in their tight union between the sky and the earth . . . and connects us, here like there, to the same fate, to the same destiny, to what is our destiny even, our mysterious destiny: that of the voyager that is every man on earth.

Like Kourouma and Sembene, Laye recognizes points of commonality

among diverse cultures and peoples as well as the powerful potential of cross-cultural communication and exchange. Envisioning a new brand of humanism through which the world's citizens find themselves united in the shared experiences of humanity in spite of their differences, Laye suggests that oral traditions can play an important role in bringing disparate peoples together. In this respect, the griot's art, a combination of melody and message, has the power to resonate in each and every individual, connecting them in the quotidian struggles and celebrations of everyday life regardless of location, language, customs, or culture.

Equally prominent in the works of Sembene, the tradition of the griot plays an important role in *God's Bits of Wood*, serving as an essential component of Sembene's arsenal in displacing the authority of the French language and culture in Francophone West Africa. Simultaneously preserving local histories, stories, and legends, as well as promoting regional songs, instrumentation, and languages, griots serve as living links between past, present, and future generations of Africans. For many, Sembene is viewed as an innovative griot who reworks traditional forms to consider important sociocultural and political questions in prosaic and cinematic media. Referred to by Anthère Nzabatsinda as the "continuateur du griot," the upholder of, or the heir to, the griot tradition (Nzabatsinda 1997, 871), Sembene infuses his novels with the vibrancy of local languages and the sonorities of African rhythms, music, and oral traditions. Intercalating the vocal stylings of the griot and the narrative techniques of the writer in the space of his texts, Sembene creates resonant written works that reflect local cultural traditions and aesthetic values, but that also negotiate spaces for possibility, appropriation, and innovation.

Although griot characters are not expressly evoked in *Gods Bits of Wood*, Sembene utilizes a variety of narrative strategies to convey the spirit of oral traditions in the novel. Integrating proverbs and popular expressions derived from local lexicons and cultural traditions, Sembene intertwines the roles of griot and narrator in recounting the story of the West African railroad workers' strike. Incorporated throughout the entire text, oral proverbs and expressions prominently figure in Sembene's text in examples such as "Les fils de chiens! . . . [I]ls m'ont pilée comme du grain!" (*BBD*, 177) (Sons of dogs! . . . [T]hey crushed me like grain!), and "Il n'y avait en lui ni haine ni amertume pour personne, mais il se sentait perdu, plongé dans une hébétude qui était lui-même incompréhensible. Ainsi qu'on le dit de certains danseurs sacrés de l'Afrique Centrale, il 'cachait sa face dans son âme'" (134). (There was neither hate nor bitterness for anyone, but he felt lost, plunged in a stupor that was incomprehensible in itself. As people say about certain sacred dancers in Central Africa, he "was hiding his face in his soul.")

Similarly, Sembene repeatedly weaves *devinettes* (A French term for "riddle" that translates literally into English as "little guess") into the space of the text. In one particularly salient example, the *devinette* "Qu'est-ce qui lave l'eau?" (What washes water?) appears twice in the text (162, 172). Just like Ad'jibid'ji's grandmother who initially presents the enigmatic riddle to the young girl, Sembene doesn't reveal the answer and explanation immediately, which gives readers adequate time to try to guess the answer along with the young Ad'jibid'ji. It isn't until page 368, two hundred pages after the riddle's initial evocation, that Ad'jibid'ji reveals the correct response to the readers: "C'est l'esprit, car l'eau est claire, mais l'esprit est plus limpide encore" (368) (It is the spirit, because water is clear, but the spirit is even more limpid). The inclusion of the *devinette* is significant in function and in form, allowing readers to experience an important component of local oral traditions while conveying a meaningful philosophical message about the nature of the human spirit.

At other times, Sembene seems to directly address the readers much like a storyteller would. Although transcribed storytelling techniques, used to promote a sense of dialogue between the storyteller and his audience, are more prominent in some of his other novels such as *Guelwaar*, Sembene achieves this effect in *Gods Bits of Wood* by posing questions to the readers within the narrative structure, drawing them into the story as spectators and listeners. Before considering the narrative techniques Sembene uses to promote a sense of the musicality of orality in *God's Bits of Wood*, it is useful to examine some of the more overt stylistic strategies he incorporates into many of his other texts. In *Guelwaar*, for example, Sembene constantly draws the reader into the story through repeated representations of the second-person plural pronoun *vous*, directly involving them in text as the story unfolds. The oral motif is further accentuated by the constant presence of a narrator who explicitly identifies himself as a *conteur*, a storyteller: "A mi-récit, je dois vous ramener en arrière, pour vous narrer ce qui s'était passé, bien avant le soleil de ce funeste jour. Conteur, je ne dois omettre personne et situer chacun à sa place, même minime dans cette fable" (Sembene 1996, 56). (At midstory, I must bring you back in time, to relate to you what has happened well before the sun of this fateful day. Storyteller, I must not omit anyone and situate everyone in their place, even minimal in this fable.) Interrupting the continuity of the story, the *conteur*-narrator in *Guelwaar* initiates a break in the action of the narration in order to contextualize events leading up to the untimely death of Pierre Henri Thioune and the subsequent mix-up of his body at the morgue. In pausing to situate his readers, easing somewhat the sense of disorientation conjured by the problematic corpse, Sembene employs lexical elements to doubly reinforce the figure of narrator as storyteller,

first through the use of the second-person plural pronoun *vous* and then through his explicit evocation of the term *conteur*. In the process, Sembene effectively establishes a sense of complicity between the storyteller-narrator and his readers, implicating their shared involvement in the story as events unfold.

Although more explicitly conveyed in *Guelwaar*, Sembene also promotes the oral aesthetic of the griot in *God's Bits of Wood*. In one such example, the story's narrator inquires about local legends and beliefs about vultures in *cade* trees, posing rhetorical question to the reader much like a storyteller would to the listener: "Ces arbres et ces oiseaux qui, dans les vieilles légendes incarnaient l'esprit du mal, n'allaient-ils pas leur porter malheur?" (*BBD*, 299) (These trees and these birds who, in the old legends incarnated the spirit of evil, wouldn't they bring them misfortune?) Rather than overtly predicting unfortunate events, by presenting information in the form of a question, Sembene solicits the participation of his readers by asking them to verify his statements or to correct them by filling in inaccurate elements or missing details. By incorporating storytelling strategies in the frames of his novels, Sembene simultaneously promotes a musico-oral sensibility and demands readers to be engaged with the storyteller-narrator as events and outcomes are revealed.

Like Kourouma, Sembene also exploits the technique of repetition to convey a musico-oral aesthetic. Nevertheless, unlike Kourouma, who admittedly uses repetition as a way of engaging the reader in the task of finding meaning for untranslatable or "unsayable" thoughts and expressions, Sembene seemingly integrates repetition as a means of enhancing the musical or sonorous qualities of the text. This is not to say that Sembene neglects to involve the reader in meaning construction through the process of repetition. Rather, as explained in the following example, Sembene uses repetition to implicate the reader in recognizing and responding to local rhythmic forms and expressive patterns.

In *God's Bits of Wood*, for example, Sembene repeats variations of one specific expression: "Des jours passèrent et des nuits passèrent" (Days passed by and nights passed by). First evoked on page 63, Sembene utilizes the phrase as a means of succinctly summarizing the monotony of days upon days of waiting. Repeated to signal the start of a new paragraph near the bottom of the same page and, again, at the beginning of the following paragraph on the next page, Sembene places the sentence into the structure of the text much like a lyricist would incorporate a refrain into a song. With each evocation, Sembene augments the intensity of the situation, suggesting an ambiance of anticipation, frustration, and restlessness as striking workers and their families wait for signs of hopeful change. In a later representation, two pages after its initial appearance, Sembene

employs the phrase once again, subtly altering it to reinforce the predominant climate of desperation and hopelessness in the Senegalese city of Thiès during the early days of the strike: "Les jours étaient tristes et les nuits étaient tristes" (65) (The days were sad and the nights were sad). Altered to convey a sense of suffering and despair, the final variation jars the reader with its rhythm and its message. Unlike the early representations, each offering the same ambiguous message with the same words and the same rhythmic structure, the later version explicitly incorporates lexical variants to convey a single emotion—sadness—which is presented in a modified rhythmic frame.

The repeated phrase resurfaces in two other passages in the text, reinforcing the relentlessly persistent sense of uneasiness and uncertainty that prevails day after day as the strike wears on. Later employed to frame portrayals of difficulties faced by striking workers in Bamako, in its two final appearances, the original phrase "Des jours passèrent et des nuits passèrent" is presented in an abbreviated form, "Des jours passèrent" (136, 169) (Days passed by). In both instances, the sentence stands alone in the chapter. Seemingly incomplete and devoid of the reiteration demonstrated in the earlier passage, the two final representations are nonetheless significant, partly because each time the sentence resurfaces, it acts as sort of echo, recalling the musicality of its initial evocations. More importantly, however, the abbreviated version of the phrase offers a variation on the original musical form. A texted representation of antiphony—also referred to as call-and-response—the fragmented phrase actually serves as a call to the reader to respond to the prompt "Des jours passèrent" with the missing rhythmic formula, "Des nuits passèrent."

As Christopher Small explains in "Africans, Europeans and the Making of Music," these formulaic choral responses generally are "invariant" and operate "under strict rhythmic rules" (Small 1999, 118). Although the respondent's role is typically predetermined, as Small notes, the caller's solos are "often improvised" (118). In this respect, in playing the role of leader or soloist, Sembene is permitted the freedom to improvise in between the pattern of calls and responses, which he demonstrates through a highly variable prosaic style, filled with innovative elements that reflect a transcultural transpoetic aesthetic. By subtly incorporating the rhythmic structures of antiphony into his text, Sembene enhances the resonant quality of *God's Bits of Wood*. Furthermore, Sembene helps break down the divisions that traditionally separate reader from writer by promoting the sense of collectivity fostered by oral traditions and antiphony. In inviting his readers to respond with the appropriate rhythmic formula, Sembene implicates them in helping to shape a vibrant, sonorous universe, all in the frame of the written page.

Presented in French, the aforementioned illustration of repetition and antiphony promotes a localized audio aesthetic, providing an alternative to French musical and aesthetic formats. Although these examples are devoid of explicit references to the Wolof or Bambara languages, they are nonetheless important in that they valorize Wolof and Bambara musico-cultural traditions in a French-language framework. For Sembene, this process of imposing musico-oral traditions and African linguistic elements on the Francophone novel is significant primarily in that it serves as a means of preserving local cultural and aesthetic values in spite of the socioeconomic and political dominance of the French language in Senegal and in Mali. Characterizing the prevalence and predominance of French in contemporary Francophone Africa as problematic, Sembene fears that the ubiquity and authority of the French language is suppressing locally conceived ideas and ideals as Africa moves into the twenty-first century:

> Le problème, c'est que notre société, et là je parle de l'Afrique francophone, ne sécrète plus de nouvelles valeurs en conformité avec notre propre évolution interne. Nos références, en dehors du verbe ou des métaphores ou même des proverbes, ne viennent plus de nos langues. Nos références dans le sens de la maîtrise du réel, de la transformation de nos sociétés au plan de la réflexion, nous viennent principalement de l'Europe, ou de l'Occident. (Kassé and Ridehalgh 1995, 184)

> [The problem, it is that our society, and there I want to talk about Francophone Africa, no longer fosters new values in conformity with our own internal evolution. Our references, outside of the verbs or the metaphors or even the proverbs, no longer come from our languages. Our references in the sense of the mastery of the real, of the transformation of our societies in the framework of reflection, come to us mainly from Europe or from the West.]

Unlike Kourouma, who sees French as a point of commonality in which individual speakers are free to appropriate and to construct their maternal language "huts," and through which diverse peoples from different locations can exchange information, ideas, and attitudes, Sembene views French as a threat to African sociocultural landscapes. For Sembene, the dominance of French, encroaching on local values, belief systems, and perspectives, is shifting local points of reference away from Africa and toward Europe, the North, and the West.

## Rhythm and Reappropriation in the Novel

Kourouma and Sembene have helped in shaping what Bouraoui refers to as a "new (Francophone) humanism" (Bouraoui 1995, 45) by creating modes of reappropriation that favor alternative models to binary opposition-based constructs. Favoring communication and exchange instead of competition and confrontation, Bouraoui's vision of humanism refuses homogeneous cultural absolutes and insists on transcultural heterogeneity. Rejecting rigid polarized constructs that leave little room for negotiation and divagation, Bouraoui prefers a star-shaped crossroads model for representing the relationships among different peoples and cultures. As Bouraoui explains, this transcultural intersection "permet la communication inter-active instaurant des jeux de différenciations capables de transformer la compétition en coopération" (45) (allows for interactive communication, establishing a game of differentiations capable of transforming competition into cooperation).

Like Édouard Glissant's Relation, Bouraoui's crossroads model emphasizes the mobility of cultures and cultural phenomena. For Glissant and Bouraoui, cultures, neither fixed nor clearly defined, are constantly moving, shifting. Nevertheless, while Glissant avoids giving his model a tangible manifestation, preferring abstract points in space and invisible traces of movement and interconnection, Bouraoui constructs a series of intersecting roads and paths, physically possible spaces that human feet and vehicles can encounter and traverse. Recalling the human factor in humanism, Bouraoui's crossroads model emphasizes the importance of human interaction in considering transcultural communication and exchange. By placing players on a common terrain, Bouraoui diminishes the importance of dominance hierarchies, allowing for increased sociocultural mobility and more equitable means of exchange among different cultures. Although his system cannot instantly remedy centuries of imperialism, conflict, and inequality, Bouraoui maintains the virtues of his model. Refusing current constructs that insist on opposition, Bouraoui's crossroads model favors alternative methods of resistance and reappropriation that disrupt the "le cercle vicieux" (45) (vicious circle) of violent power struggles that have troubled postcolonial Francophone communities.

Faced with the problematic dimensions of Francophone identities, in addition to resisting the political, economic, linguistic, and cultural legacies of colonialism, as socially committed novelists, Kourouma and Sembene struggle with the authority of "print colonialism." A term coined by Christopher Miller and derived from Benedict Anderson's notion of "print capitalism" (Anderson 1991), "print colonialism" problematizes the propagation of French literacy during the colonial era, suggesting that it

served as a means of strengthening the authority of the French language and culture in African colonies: "Francophone literacy arrived in colonial Africa like a Trojan Horse, bearing an ideology of collaboration and assimilation, a condition of 'original sin' which the Francophone literature of Africa has sought to overcome during the last seventy years" (Miller 1993, 64).

As Miller suggests, the arrival of French texts in colonial Africa was deceptively alluring since, at the time, Francophone literacy was inextricably connected to the French colonial authority. As such, in spite of the purported benefits of Francophone literacy, the subsequent implementation of French texts in West African political, legal, and educational institutions established French as the language of authority, relegating local languages to a second-class status. Inscribed into laws and public education, even in the postcolonial era, French remains a dominant force, not only in political and economic arenas, but in cultural and aesthetic domains as well. Thus, as Miller maintains, Francophone writers are engaged in a struggle to shift the balance of power, increasing the authority and autonomy of the peoples and nations of Francophone Africa.

In attempting to dismantle the (print) colonial authority, Kourouma and Sembene employ a variety of sounding techniques, creating texts that resonate with the vivid sonorities of African languages, music, and orality. While linguistic and oral localization strategies play an important role in both *The Suns of Independence* and *God's Bits of Wood*, such techniques have been adequately addressed by literary scholars (see Case 1987; Nzabatsinda 1996, 1997; Outtara 2000; and Toyo 1996). The role of music, however, particularly drummed and instrumental music, has yet to be fully explored. Manifest in representations of dynamic drumbeats and vibrant songs, as well as in descriptions and evocations of the rhythms of people dancing and working, the incorporation of resonant musical structures and rhythmic devices in the space of the text is not without consequence. Neither oral nor written, instrumental music challenges print colonial institutions without subscribing to the polarized relationship that separates writing from orality in contemporary criticism. Breaking free of the binary critical models problematized by Bouraoui and other scholars such as Homi Bhabha (see Bhabha 1994), instrumental music resists such classification. Whether standing alone or serving as a complement or accompaniment to vocal genres, instrumental music subtly subverts the authority of the printed word without directly opposing it.

In considering the multiple roles of rhythm and music in *The Suns of Independence* and *God's Bits of Wood,* particularly in view of questions of identity in contemporary Africa, it is important to examine the communicative capacities of rhythmic and musical phenomena. Prominently

manifest in representations of songs and dances as well as in descriptions of the everyday rhythms that accompany work and chores, Kourouma and Sembene integrate intricate layers of sounds and silences into their novels as a means of transmitting information, expressing emotions, and signaling important events. Often conveyed through evocations of the rhythms of drumbeats, Kourouma and Sembene insist on the importance of drums not only as emblems of tradition, but also as important communicative devices. Used to preserve historical and cultural information within tribes or social groups, or to send specific messages across vast distances, drums have traditionally fulfilled a variety of communicative, expressive, and evocative functions for many African peoples.

As anthropologists Thomas Sebeok and Donna Umiker Sebeok have observed, drums and drum languages have been used to transmit information from one location to another in many parts of West Africa (Sebeok and Sebeok 1976). Although in many instances, the drum language imitates spoken language, providing encoded rhythmic and/or tonal versions of oral languages, in other instances, the language of the drums represents languages or literatures in themselves, as theorists including J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1963), Titinga Pacere (1991), and Georges Niangoran-Bouah (1981) maintain. In their respective texts, Pacere and Niangoran-Bouah both present musical transcriptions of poems, songs, and stories expressed through drum languages as well as their translations in languages including Baoulé, Abron, Mossé, and French. Capable of expressing a complex array of emotions, thoughts, and information, drum languages are independent of written and oral languages and can serve as languages in their own right, complete with their own *literary* traditions.

In his presentation of drum languages and drum literatures, Pacere goes so far as to distinguish what he calls instrumental literature from oral and written forms of literature. It is important to note that Pacere's terminology treats the three kinds of literature—oral literature, written literature, and instrumental literature—as distinct phenomena and avoids blending categories. Although the sonorities of instrumental music often accompany oral literature performances and comprise an important component of many oral literatures, Pacere's designation of instrumental literature is significant in that it considers the expressive and communicative capacities of nonvocal instrumental genres.

For the purposes of clarity, it is appropriate to separate what Pacere refers to as "oral literature," literature transmitted through singing or speaking, from "oraliture," oral literature presented in the frame of a written text. Characterized by the transmission of oral phenomena through writing, oraliture has been described by Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio as such: "We prefer the term *oraliture* to *orature* when referring to the various

genres of oral literature such as short stories, legends, proverbs, rhymes, songs that present oral storytelling to us once again, but this time in the form of writing where orality is translated into written genres either in the form of transcription or of more or less complex literary expression" (Petrilli and Ponzio 2001, 99–100).

Just as oral literature is distinct from oraliture, instrumental literature—literature performed on drums, musical instruments, and other percussive objects—should be distinguished from *instrumentaliture*—instrumental or performance literature presented in the frame of written literature. In following with Petrilli and Ponzio's assertion that "*Oraliture* evokes *écriture*" (100), I have designated the term "instrumentaliture," which may also be referred to as "performance literature," to represent the rich variety of sounding rhythmic, musical, instrumental, and noisy phenomena writers impose on and transpose in written texts. Although devoid of lyrical vocal stylings, instrumentaliture is similar to Petrilli and Ponzio's conception of oraliture in that it "presents ways of modeling the word—the expression of a sort of play of amusement, the pleasure of inventiveness, encounter, involvement and listening—no less than written literature" (Petrilli and Ponzio 2001, 100). In this respect, instrumentaliture evokes the emotion and expressiveness of nonvocal performance pieces, sound compositions, and musical arrangements and improvisations, creating additional sounding spaces for innovation, communication, and exchange with implications in aesthetic, linguistic, and sociocultural domains, among others, functioning inside and outside the frame of the written text.

In recognizing not only the communicative capacities of drums and other musical instruments, but their creative capacities as well, instrumental literature merits consideration as a genre in its own right, independent of written and spoken forms of expression. With respect to instrumental literary traditions in West Africa, drums play a central role, not merely as transmitters of information, but also as powerful expressive devices. In this light, the boundless potential of drums and drumming becomes all the more apparent. As Cameroonian poet and musician François Fampou explains, the skin of the drum acts as an interface between the drummer and a realm of endless possibility through which a skilled and imaginative percussionist can convey everything words can explain and more, even the unsayable:

> Un percussioniste peut rechercher des artifices de frappe qui lui permettront d'exprimer tous les discours de la vie sur la membrane de son tambour. Le résultat est une gamme de couleurs intérmediares qui avoisinent parfois l'insolite. C'est justement dans ce registre que le griot déploie toute son imagination et tout son génie

> pour que la vibration de la peau incarnant le son devienne enfin parole. (Fampou 1996, 10)
>
> [A percussionist can seek out striking devices that will allow him/her to express all of life's discourses on the membrane of his drum. The result is a scale of intermediary colors that sometimes approach the unusual. It is precisely in this register that the griot deploys all of his imagination and all of his genius so that the vibration of the skin incarnating the sound finally becomes word.]

For Fampou, the power of the drum lies in its variability and versatility. Much like a blank canvas awaiting an artist's colorful brushstrokes, the drum anticipates the deft movements of a drummer's fingers and hands. Combining technical precision and immeasurable creativity, an adept drummer expresses both music and message to his or her target audience. Operating as an intermediary of sorts, the drummer has the power to communicate and negotiate, bridging the divides that separate people, places, generations, and epochs. As Fampou suggests, when viewed through the lenses of vision and imagination, the vibrant sonorities of percussive music come to be seen as colors, images, and words. Communicating that which, at times, is unseeable or unsayable, the drum speaks in a language of its own. Although the perceived meanings and interpretations of different forms of drumspeak are highly variable and dependant on multiple factors including the psychological states, aesthetic preferences, cultural knowledge, and linguistic proficiency of individual listeners, it is important to keep in mind that drumspeak is a co-construction, much like the process of *lecture-écriture* described in chapter 1. Rather than working to determine the intentions of the composer or performer, listeners subjectively interpret and respond to drummed musical cues, interacting with the musical text with active ears, eyes, minds, and bodies to negotiate co-constructed moods and meanings.

In considering the roles instrumentaliture plays in the novels of Kourouma and Sembene, it is useful to reinforce the autonomy and authority of rhythmic and musical genres in connection with languages and written literary forms. Much like Pacere, who classifies instrumental literature as a genre in itself, one that is comparable to oral and written literary categories, Jacques Derrida considers the relevance of musical and rhythmic forms of expression, including them in his characterization of what he calls *écriture* (writing). In *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (*Monolonguism of the Other*), Derrida affirms the importance of rhythmic and musical forms of expression in relation to language and questions of identity. Noting that languages are dynamic, changing systems, susceptible to all sorts of con-

taminations, appropriations, and mutations, Derrida recognizes the power of different languages and forms of language:

> Bien sûr, pour le linguiste classique, chaque langue est un système dont l'unité se reconstitue toujours. Mais cette unité ne se compare à aucune autre. Elle est accessible à la greffe la plus radicale, aux déformations, aux transformations, à l'expropriation, à une certaine a-nomie, à l'anomalie, à la dérégulation. Si bien que le geste est toujours multiple—je l'appelle ici encore *écriture*, même s'il peut rester purement oral, vocal, musical, rythmique ou prosodique—qui tente d'affecter la monolangue, celle qu'on a sans l'avoir. Il rêve d'y laisser des marques qui rappellent cette toute autre langue, ce degré zéro-moins-un de la mémoire en somme. (Derrida 1996, 123–24)
>
> [Certainly, for classic linguistics, each language is a system in which unity always reconstitutes itself. But this unity is not comparable to any other. It is accessible to the most radical graft, to deformations, to transformations, to expropriation, to a certain a-nomie, to anomaly, to deregulation. So well that the gesture is always multiple—I call it here again *écriture*, even if it can remain purely oral, vocal, musical, rhythmic, or prosodic—that attempts to affect the monolanguage, that which we have without having it. It dreams of leaving marks that recall this completely other language, all in all, this degree-zero-minus-one of memory.]

Although he selects the word *écriture* (writing) rather than "literature," Derrida explains that writing is not limited to texts, but also includes oral, musical, and rhythmic categories among others. As Derrida observes, a writer's arsenal is not limited to written and oral language(s). Music and rhythm can also play powerful roles in transforming a dominant language, marking said language with their own "coups de griffe et de greffe" (scratches and grafts) through the process of *écriture* (124).

Critic Denise Egéa-Kuehne has already established a connection between *Monolinguism of the Other* and the work of Kourouma. In "La langue de l'Autre au croisement des cultures: Derrida et *Le monolinguisme de l'autre*" ("The Language of the Other at the Crossroad of Cultures: Derrida and *Monolinguism of the Other*"), she discusses the relationships that Kourouma and two other francophone writers (Suzanne Dracius and Barry Ancelet) maintain with the French language. Egéa-Kuehne suggests that, due to differences concerning sociocultural and individual criteria, each writer experiences the French language in a unique way. In describing Kourouma's situation, Egéa-Kuehne denies the element of choice, positing

that for him, a Malinké, the French language represents "une imposition inévitable, voire une prison" (an inevitable imposition, or even a prison), whereas for Dracius, a Martinican, "c'est un choix libérateur" (it's a liberating choice), and for Ancelet, a Cajun, "c'est une appropriation nécessaire" (it's a necessary appropriation) (Egéa-Kuehne 2001, 198). Although Egéa-Kuehne's characterization of the French language as a prison seems to contradict Kourouma's more positive view of French as vehicular language through which diverse members of the Francophone community can exchange cultural and individual perspectives, her assertion that Kourouma and others "ne cherchent pas nécessairement à s'assimiler à la culture dominante" (198) (are not seeking to become assimilated in the dominant culture) corresponds with the writer's insistence on the technique of transposition, a combined process of translating Malinké language and transcribing Malinké orality into French. Furthermore, since her primary concern is with inequalities concerning language and language education practices and policies in Francophone zones, Egéa-Kuehne's word choice "prison" adequately reflects the imposition of French as the exclusive official language in Kourouma's native Côte d'Ivoire.

Focusing on written and spoken forms of language, Egéa-Kuehne explores important dimensions of *Monolinguism of the Other* in relation to the works of Kourouma, Dracius, and Ancelet. Not limited to the works of these three writers, one can see how her study could be expanded to include the works of Sembene, along with the works of other Francophone writers including Sow-Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau. Having established a connection between Derrida's ideas about language and Kourouma's literary works, Egéa-Kuehne's article provides a basis for further exploration, not only in dealing with other writers, but also in contemplating how alternative modes of communication, namely nonvocal musical and rhythmic methods, can play a role in displacing French authority in Francophone locations, creating spaces for negotiation and appropriation that operate inside and outside the frames of the texts.

## Instrumentaliture at Work

Within the frame of the text, instrumentaliture operates in a number of different ways, filling silent pages with resonant possibility. Whether explicitly evoked through texted references to musical instruments indicated by lexical signifiers including *kora*, *guitar,* and *tam-tam*, or implicitly suggested through descriptions of rhythmic or musical events and processes such as marching, dancing, and working, the sounds of instrumental music fill written pages with the vivid sonorities of day-to-day life. Separate from oraliture, a process through which elements from oral traditions are

transposed on a written text, instrumentaliture, or instrumental performance literature, is a phenomenon in itself, one that is often overlooked in contemporary criticism. Similar to oraliture, instrumentaliture is a process through which audible nonvocal rhythmic and musical elements are transposed on or transcribed in a written text.

By incorporating both oraliture and instrumentaliture in *The Suns of Independence* and *God's Bits of Wood*, Sembene and Kourouma create texted worlds filled with the power of sound and sonority. Masterfully interwoven throughout their respective texts, rhythmic and musical elements serve as important stylistic devices, ones that accentuate local aesthetic values and sociocultural perspectives. Furthermore, since rhythm and music can serve as languages in their own right, by prominently featuring rhythmic and musical devices in their novels, Sembene and Kourouma augment and diversify their arsenal in displacing the authority of the French language in Francophone West Africa. Through an exploration of specific examples from the two novels, instrumentaliture reveals itself as an important component of transcultural transpoetics. Marking the text as a domain for communication, negotiation, and appropriation, texted rhythmic and musical phenomena establish in-between conceptual spaces that break free of hierarchical and binary classificatory modes of thinking, freeing subjects to question and reconfigure hegemonic identity constructs and to generate and adapt autonomous, independent identificatory models.

In view of instrumentaliture, drums and drumming serve as sonorous nuclei for representations of rhythm and music in *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*. Important modes of communication, drums have been used for centuries in West Africa to transmit information from one location to another as well as to preserve local traditions and lore in musical formats. Both Sembene and Kourouma incorporate the power of drums and drum languages in their novels, filling the space of the text with the resonance of instrumentaliture. As such, drums and other devices used to produce percussive sonorities, including mortars and pestles and human hands and feet, are repeatedly evoked as a means of signaling significant events and transformations, and expressing or intensifying emotions. Through an examination of the functions and forms of diverse representations of drums and other rhythmic devices in the two novels, the importance of instrumentaliture becomes apparent.

In certain passages, Sembene and Kourouma present drums as effective communicative mechanisms through which complex messages can be disseminated from one community to another. More powerful and precise than the human voice across the span of vast distances, drums have the power to convey complex strains of information to faraway neighbors.

The communicative signaling capacity of drums and other percussive devices is evoked in multiple passages in both *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*. For example, Sembene invokes the rhythms of the *bara* to forewarn villagers of the start of the strike in Bamako (*BBD*, 28). Similarly, Kourouma portrays the rhythms of drumbeats to convey news of Fama's untimely death from village to village across the Horodougou region (*Soleils*, 196). Functioning as languages in themselves, the varied rhythms and tonalities of drum languages are only accessible to an initiated few, those who learn the intricacies of the language as it is passed on from generation to generation. When transposed in the space of a text, drum languages introduce yet another level of resistance in subverting the authority of dominant languages. Complementing lexical localization strategies, drum languages call for a renegotiation of identificatory terms by refusing existing linguo-political dominance hierarchies. Such hierarchies tend to place French and other languages of colonization above local forms of language and expression by relegating them to an otherizing "traditional" or "indigenous" status.

Sembene portrays the communicative capacity of drum languages in *God's Bits of Wood*, although he conveys this motif in a subtle manner. Rather than using drum languages to communicate information across vast geographical distances, Sembene, in recounting the events of a railway workers' strike, evokes drum languages in their capacity to relay important messages to assembled masses of people. As the strike escalates and the threat of physical violence looms, striking workers and their families perceive the ominous warnings transmitted through drumbeats. For those familiar with the complexities of drummed discourse, the drums transmit a foreboding message:

> Sur la place du 1er Septembre, un autre groupement se préparait, face aux miliciens qui, faiblement éclairés par des falots, montaient la garde devant le commissariat. Momifiés dans leurs consignes, ils regardaient ce rassemblement d'ombres sans trop savoir quelle attitude ils devaient prendre, mais certains d'entre eux, entendant le tam-tam, comprenaient ce qui se préparait. (291)

> [In the square of September 1st, another grouping got ready, facing militiamen who, weakly illuminated by lanterns, stood guard in front of the police station. Mummified by their orders, they looked at this assembly of shadows without really knowing what attitude they should adopt, but some of them, hearing the tam-tam, understood what was brewing.]

Although Sembene does not explicitly reveal to his readers the message

communicated by the drumbeats in the darkness of night, his verb choice *comprendre* (to understand) treats the reception of drummed discourse much like the reception of spoken languages. In this capacity, the drummer uses the drum to *speak* to his or her listeners, much like a speaker uses the voice. As predicted by the nocturnal drumbeats, imminent changes are on the horizon, as people gather to respond to the drummers' call to action and the militiamen stand in nervous anticipation.

Later in the passage, the women's march from Thiès to Dakar begins, signaling an important turning point in the novel. As the women march, they are fueled by the rhythms of drumbeats, marching into the darkness of night: "[P]récédé, suivi, accompagné par le battement des tam-tams, le cortège s'enfonça dans la nuit" (292). (Preceded, followed, accompanied by the beating of tam-tams, the procession disappeared into the night.) Although they are uncertain of what they will encounter on the road ahead, informed and fortified by the drum, the women know that the situation will bring about important changes for the workers and their families. In this example, Sembene's choice of words heightens the performative dimensions of the women's march. He goes so far as to set it up like a musical composition in four movements: a drummed introduction, followed by a chorus of footsteps, chanting and drumbeats, and ending with a drummed interlude leading up to the explosive finale. Combining music and motion, the women's mobile ensemble serves to strengthen the weary women throughout their journey while raising awareness about their struggles from community to community. The explosive finale rings out upon the women's arrival in Dakar, where they are confronted by *chéchia* and *tirailleur* soldiers.[3] In this dramatic final movement, a chorus of gunshots erupts, leaving two dead including Penda, the leader of the women's group. In turn, the marchers respond with the only weapons to which they have access, sticks and rocks. The weaponry effectively creates layers of percussive sounds with a chaotic cadence that serves to direct the marchers' frenzied voices and footsteps. Much like adept dancers and musicians who respond to one another with their sounds and gestures, the women warriors adapt to the frantic and variable rhythms of the violent conflict. Unwavering and relentless, the triumphant women press on toward victory, leaving behind two martyrs and a group of stupefied soldiers in their wake.

Sembene achieves a similar effect in his novel *Guelwaar*, as Pierre Henri

3. *Chéchia* and *tirailleur* are terms used to designate African soldiers who fought on the side of the French in military conflicts throughout French colonial history. In most cases, these soldiers and their families were not compensated with the same honor, recognition, salaries, and pensions as their French counterparts. Ousmane Sembene addresses the problematic legacy of these discrepancies and discriminations in many of his films and novels.

Thioune, an outspoken Senegalese social activist prepares to give an important speech. Addressing an assembly of local politicians, activists, and dignitaries, Thioune's speech is introduced and accompanied by the sonorities of drummed rhythms and oral performances: "Cet après-midi-là, tous les chefs et notables des villages de la région étaient présents, ainsi que des représentants des organisations caritatives, des ambassadeurs. Un grand meeting avec tam-tam et folklore" (*Guelwaar*, 139). (That afternoon, all of the leaders and notables of the villages of the region were present, as well as representatives from charitable organizations, ambassadors. A great meeting with tam-tam and folklore.) In describing the setting for Thioune's speech, Sembene accords the tam-tam with a double functionality, emphasizing its importance on symbolic and operative levels. A common component of speeches and other official public events, the tam-tam, in accordance with local traditions, provides an air of resonant officiality. On a symbolic level, Sembene evokes the sonorities of tam-tams as a means of signaling important changes in the plot development. In this respect, the rumbling tam-tams accentuate Thioune's engagement in promoting sweeping changes in Senegalese society. Nevertheless, in this particular passage, the desire for social change is not the only thing the tam-tams predict. Presented as a flashback in exploring the mysteries surrounding Thioune's untimely death, the resonant drumbeats equally signal another significant, albeit unforeseeable, change—Thioune's impending murder.

In an earlier novel *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* (Oh Country, My Beautiful People!),[4] Sembene provides a more explicit example of drummed discourse, presenting the drum in its capacity to transmit the news of a recent death from one location to another. After the brutal murder of Oumar Faye, a young entrepreneur who vocally opposes the colonial political authority and foreign economic dominance in Senegal in the 1950s, the rhythms of tam-tams announce the news of his unfortunate death to members of the surrounding communities.

> Le tam-tam résonnait. Le rythme de ses grondements devint de plus en plus saccadé, de plus en plus envoûtant. Sa voix traversait les savanes, bondissant par-delà le fleuve où elle était relayée par un déchaînement semblable, envoyant à tous les échos le message de deuil.
>
> . . .
>
> [L]a voix du tam-tam grondait toujours pour appeler les vivants et accompagner la mort. (*Ô pays*, 184)

4. "Oh Country, My Beautiful People!" is a translation of the French title. The work has yet to be translated into English.

> [The tam-tam resonated. The rhythm of its rumblings became increasingly staccato, increasingly enchanting. Its voice passed through the savannahs, leapt here and there across the river where it was relayed by a similar outburst, sending the message of mourning to all of the echoes.
>
> . . .
>
> (T)he voice of the tam-tam still rumbled to call the living and accompany the dead.]

Calling mourners from far and wide to join Oumar Faye's family in grieving his loss, the echoes of tam-tams resonate throughout the countryside. Functioning in a communicative capacity, the drumbeats inform others of Faye's untimely death, and summon them to attend the initial funerary proceedings. In this passage, the somber drumbeats convey expressive and symbolic dimensions as well, resonantly accentuating the immense sadness of Faye's tragic murder and signaling his passage from life into death with vibrant rhythms and tones, both solemn and celebratory.

Similarly, in *The Suns of Independence,* Kourouma describes an instance where drums and drum languages are used to transmit important information from village to village, transmitting the news of an unexpected death to nearby villages. At the moment of the *féticheur* (a spiritual healer in animist traditions) Balla's death, the sounds of drums travel from one location to another, filling the air with the unfortunate news: "Alors le tam-tam frappa, frappa dans tout Togobala, et les rivières, les forêts et les montagnes, d'écho en écho roulèrent la nouvelle jusqu'à des villages où d'autres tam-tams battirent pour avertir d'autres villages plus lointains" (*Soleils*, 179). (Then the tam-tam struck, struck in all of Togobala, and the rivers, the forests and the mountains, from echo to echo rolled the news as far as villages where other tam-tams beat to inform other more faraway villages.) Conveying the motion of the transcultural and the resonance of the transpoetic, the sonorities of drumbeats keep distant neighbors in touch with one another in Kourouma's fictionalized Togobala region, allowing them to stay informed about significant events and occurrences. In characterizing the chain of information transmission, Kourouma emphasizes the verb *frappa* and the noun *écho* through the repetitions *frappa, frappa* and *d'écho en écho*. The stylistic process of repetition serves to reinforce the resonant qualities of the tam-tams as well as the repercussion required to communicate messages from neighboring communities to faraway villages. In this respect, as drummers receive and resend drummed messages, the news spreads from one location to the next. As initiated listeners interpret and react to the rhythmic information, drummers work to pass along

news of the unfortunate turn of events, in this instance, alerting friends, family members, and concerned citizens about Balla's untimely death.

In the passage that immediately follows, Kourouma indicates a sense of comprehension in a manner that reinforces a local sense of collectivity and intelligibility: "Tout le Horodougou poussa un grand 'Ah!' de surprise" (179–80) (All of the Horodougou let out a great "Ah!" of surprise). Preferring traditional modes of communication to technologies imported by French colonizers, habitants of the Horodougou—the region home to Fama's native village—are all familiar with the language of the drum. Clear and concise, the drum's message leaves no room for confusion. As drumbeats resonate throughout the countryside, the thunderous echoes are instantly received and recognized by Horodougou locals. Relatively untainted by the North/West and Northern/Western influences, Kourouma's Horodougou embodies the ideals and traditions of precolonial West African societies, providing a sharp and perhaps idealized contrast to the city where Fama and Salimata reside. Although drums and drumming continue to play important roles in Kourouma's portrayal of city life, their functions tend to be ceremonial or festive in nature rather than communicative. In this capacity, it is doubtful that drum languages would produce a similar effect in the urban zones Kourouma describes.

In *God's Bits of Wood* and in *Guelwaar*, Sembene portrays rhythmic echo effects similar to those he presents in *Ô pays, Mon beau peuple!* and those Kourouma describes in *The Suns of Independence* using alternative percussive devices—namely mortars and pestles. Affirming the resonance and power of the rhythms generated by women working, Sembene explicitly portrays the sonorities of their daily efforts. While, in *Guelwaar*, Sembene relies on onomatopoeic strategies in characterizing "la cadence des 'Kak! Kak! Kak! de la coque cassée [qui] rythmait le travail" (*Guelwaar,* 87) (the cadence of the 'Kak! Kak! Kak! of the broken shell [that] gave rhythm to the work), in *God's Bits of Wood* he employs alternative rhythmico-musical strategies. In doing so, Sembene establishes connections between the intricate communiqués transmitted by drumbeats and the complex rhythmic exchanges created by the sounds of pestles clacking against mortars. In one passage, Sembene evokes what he refers to as *le chant des pilons* (the song of the pestles) in describing the sonorities produced by women crushing grain, providing a poignant illustration of this phenomenon:

> Aux temps anciens, avant même que l'étoile du matin eût disparu dans les premières lueurs de l'aube, commençait le chant des pilons. De cour en cour, les pileuses se renvoyaient le bruit léger du martèlement incessant de leurs pilons et ces bruits semblaient cascader dans l'air bleuté comme le fait le chant des ruisseaux qui folâtrent

> entre les grosses racines, le long des murs des maisons ou au bord des chemins. Au coup sec d'un pilon heurtant le rebord du mortier répondait un autre coup. Ainsi se saluaient les travailleuses du matin en un dialogue qu'elles seules comprenaient. Ces échos répétés qui annonçaient la naissance du jour présageaient une heureuse journée. Ils avaient à la fois un sens et une fonction. (158)
>
> [In ancient times, even before the star of morning disappeared in the first light of dawn, the song of the pestles began. From courtyard to courtyard, the *pestlers* echoed the light noise of the incessant hammering of their pestles to each other and these noises seemed to cascade in the bluish air like the song of the streams that frolic between big roots, along the walls of houses or along paths. At the dry rap of a pestle striking the rim of the mortar, another rap responded. In this way, the morning workers greeted each other in a dialogue that only they understood. These repeated echoes that announced the birth of the day predicted a happy day. They had a simultaneous meaning and a function.]

In characterizing the song of the pestles, Sembene insists on the communicative capacities of the clicks and clacks produced as the pestles strike the mortars again and again. Through the use of the verb *répondre* and the noun *dialogue*, Sembene reinforces the communicative qualities of the interwoven rhythms, explaining that, as they work, the *pileuses* (pestlers) greet one another and speak to each other in a rhythmic language only they understand. Although the uninitiated ears of the non-*pileuses* may fail to understand the meaning of the messages produced through the intricate patterns of clicks and clacks, the rhythms and gestures of the women working are not devoid of meaning. Although denied the precise significations of the song of the pestle's nuanced particularities, to the uninitiated ears of the rest of the community, the loquacious rhythms of pestles against mortars announce the start of a beautiful and bountiful day.

Harmonious in form and in function, the rhythmic song of the pestles exhibits both the communicative and expressive qualities of instrumental language. Performed each morning by the women of the village, the incessant chattering rhythms of pestles striking mortars signal a new and prosperous day. When silenced, the absence of such promising quotidian rhythms can communicate just as much as their presence. Reaffirming the notion that the mortar has a language of its own, Sembene describes the chilling effect of silent mornings devoid of the clickings and clackings of the song of the pestles as the workers and their families suffer the hardships of the strike: "Les moulins ont leur langage qu'ils soient à vent ou à eau; le mortier aussi a le sien. . . . Mais maintenant le mortier est silencieux

et les arbres tristes n'annoncent plus que de sombres journées" (158). (The mills have their language, whether they are wind or water; the mortar also has its own . . . But now the mortar is silent and the sad trees no longer announce anything but dark days.)

This passage is significant in that Sembene affirms that the ways in which the rhythmic sonorities of men and women working operate much like drum languages do in West African cultural contexts. In characterizing the absence of the song of the pestles, Sembene also evokes the absence of the song of the mills, both of whose silences signal just as much as their sonorities would. With food in short supply due to a long and difficult workers' strike, the song of the pestles no longer greets the villagers each morning. Silenced, the familiar audible signal of promise and good fortune now communicates through its absence, announcing the arrival of yet another day filled with hunger, frustration, and disappointment.

## Rhythm and Transformation

Whether prominently present, filling receptive ears with vivid sonorities, or noticeably absent, leaving expectant listeners feeling empty, percussive rhythms fulfill a variety of ceremonial and symbolic capacities in *The Suns of Independence* and *God's Bits of Wood*, often acting as signals of change or transformation. These rhythms, repeatedly conveyed through the beating of tam-tams and other instruments, often serve as audible signposts, designating significant shifts in a novel's plot or in a character's development. In *God's Bits of Wood,* for example, Sembene repeatedly references the signaling power of tam-tams and culturally specific rhythmic patterns as a means of foreshadowing dramatic shifts in the story.

In *God's Bits of Wood*, Sembene uses one rhythm in particular, the *bara*, as a rhythmic frame for the workers' strike, connecting its angst-ridden onset, its arduous progression, and its fortunate conclusion with the *bara's* omnipresent rhythms. Serving as the pulse of the strike, the constant drumbeats of the *bara* are audibly present during moments of turmoil, conflict, and confusion. At other times, the persistent rhythms go unrecognized, just as the automatic beating of the heart inside of one's own body sometimes does. Acting much like a collective heartbeat, slowing in moments of calm and quickening in moments of calamity, the *bara*'s rhythms effectively fuel the intensity of the strike, inspiring the workers and their families to persevere in spite of the immense difficulties they endure.

In its initial evocation, on the eve of the workers' strike, the sound of the tam-tam, transmitting the rhythms of the *bara*, interrupts the silence of night: "Soudain, très lointain, le bruit du tam-tam creva la nuit, c'était le rythme d'un *bara*" (28). (Suddenly, very far-off, the noise of the tam-tam

burst the night, it was the rhythm of a *bara*.) As the familiar rhythms of the *bara* resonate on the eve of the strike, villagers wait in nervous anticipation. Much like a heart beating louder and faster in a heightened emotional state, the incessant rhythms of the *bara* ominously resonate, amplifying the sense of foreboding during the tense moments before the strike. Ubiquitous, the *bara* and its rhythms are inescapable. As the drumbeats persist, announcing inevitable conflict and change, villagers are filled with a sense of expectation tinged with worry. In response to the sounding cues of the *bara*, the workers and their families anxiously prepare for and wonder about the troubles the next day will bring:

> Sur le seuil de chaque demeure, on écoutait craintivement le bara. La nuit s'était enfoncée tout autour de la cité soudanaise, mais le martèlement sonore semblait maintenant venir de partout à la fois; il tournait, tournait, et tournait aussi dans les têtes à qui le sommeil se refusait. (30–31)

> [On the threshold of each residence, they timorously listened to the *bara*. The night had fallen all around the Sudanese town, but the resonant hammering now seemed to come from everywhere at once, it turned, turned, and turned also in the heads of those that sleep denied.]

Unable to sleep on the eve of the strike, the villagers recognize the incessant beating drums as an audible signal of change. Repeatedly resonant, the rhythms continue throughout the night, stirring the villagers from their sleep, preparing them for the conflict and uncertainty of the strike. As the drums ring out, rolling the rhythms of the *bara* throughout the region, the workers and their families understand that the decision to initiate the strike has been made. As the drums signal inevitable change, the inhabitants of the region realize the finality of the situation; there is no turning back.

As the railway workers' strike wears on, the *bara* becomes an all-too-familiar reminder of the difficult and painful process of transformation. Day after day, hungry and weary women, fighting to feed their families in spite of food shortages and an unstable water supply, abandon themselves to the rhythms of the *bara*, managing to find momentary solace and escape in the music: "Elles déambulaient dans les rues, s'abandonnant gracieusement au rythme des baras que l'on entendait à chaque carrefour" (126). (They wandered about the streets, graciously abandoning themselves to the rhythm of the *baras* that they heard at every intersection.) Momentarily defying the suffering and sadness brought about by the strike, the women lose themselves in the power of the music that has become the rallying cry

of the striking workers. As powerful as it is ever-present, the *bara* sustains the women and their families. Its rhythms, familiar like heartbeats, reassure and fortify the women despite their sinking spirits in the face of immense hardship. As the women allow their bodies to be transported by the powerful rhythms of the *bara*, they solidify their commitment to the strike and to each other. United by the cadence of a rhythmic anthem, the women and their families stand committed to the pursuit of social change.

An important rallying cadence, the rhythm of the *bara* is a constant presence in *God's Bits of Wood* and, as such, prominently resurfaces near the end of the text. Once again serving as a meaningful signal of change, its familiar drumbeats ultimately announce the end of the railway workers' strike in Bamako. After months of hunger, hardship, and endless suffering, the *bara* rhythmically proclaims the success of the strike to the residents of Bamako and the surrounding areas. Like a pulse quickening with intense joy and excitement, the rhythms of the *bara* fill the workers and their families with a heightened sense of elation. In the town square, the families, united by a common cause and a familiar rhythm, share in an exuberant celebration resplendent with the sounds of music and dancing (368).

In *God's Bits of Wood*, the *bara* is not the only rhythm that inspires the striking workers and their families to continue with their struggle. Since Sembene limits the *bara* to his descriptions of striking families in Mali, he designates an alternative series of rhythms in framing the plight of striking families in Senegal. In this respect, Sembene constructs two parallel frames, bridging the distance between strike sites in Mali and Senegal with the power of music, but distinguishing them with different audible signals. Along with the repeated representations of the rhythms of tam-tams, Sembene portrays the vivid sonorities of vocal music, the persistent rhythms of drumbeats, and the cacophonic sounds of countless marching footsteps on the path from Thiès to Dakar as a means of signaling plot shifts occurring in Senegal. Much like the familiar cadence of the *bara*, these audible cues act as signals of transformation, foreshadowing significant conflicts and changes in the plot of the novel.

Beginning in Thiès and ending in Dakar, the women's march, filled with the multiple resonances of footsteps, drumbeats, and singing, designates an important sonorous turning point in the storyline. The significance of the march is accentuated through the prominent incorporation of rhythmic and musical elements in Sembene's narration. From the onset, the march combines elements of harmony and cacophony, as the women join their voices in song while noisily clambering to assemble their ranks. Initiated by a call-and-response of hundreds of echoes, the women's march commences with a polyphonic, polyrhythmic mélange of voices and footsteps. "Nous partons, nous partons! cria Penda. Comme autant d'échos,

des centaines de voix lui répondirent: 'Nous partons, nous partons, partons, partons, partons, partons . . . '" (292). (Off we go, off we go! shouted Penda. Like so many echoes, hundreds of voices responded: "Off we go, off we go, [let's] go, [let's] go, [let's] go, [let's] go . . . ) In narrating the start of the women's march, Sembene effectively employs repetition to represent the echo effect produced by the marching women's voices. After Penda issues the call, "Nous partons, nous partons!" hundreds of women reply with an identical response "Nous partons, nous partons." Then, to accentuate the echo effect produced by the marchers' voices, Sembene drops the "nous," repeating the final part of the phrase "partons, partons, partons, partons."

As the women embark on the long and difficult journey on foot from Thiès to Dakar, the rhythms of drumbeats intermingle with the sonorities of singing voices and marching footsteps. Providing the pulse of the march, the rhythms of multiple drumbeats sustain the women in spite of thirst, hunger, pain, and fatigue. As with the drummed rhythms of the *bara* that announce the beginning of the strike in Bamako and support the families throughout their hardships and struggles, the footsteps, drumbeats, and songs of the women's march resonantly nurture the marchers and provide meaningful audible cues to readers and listeners. Like with the *bara*, in describing the women's march, Sembene prominently features the sonorities of rhythm and music as a means of signaling an important turning point in the novel, particularly as the strike is about to draw to a successful close.

Throughout the text, Sembene summons a multiplicity of female voices united in song and in strife, but, at other moments, a solitary voice resonates. It is the voice of Maïmouna, a blind woman and young mother of twins, singing her "Legend of Goumba N'Diaye." The story of powerful woman who challenges her suitors to complete various feats of strength and endurance better than she, the "Legend of Goumba N'Diaye" is introduced at the beginning of the strike in Thiès. As violence breaks out around her in the marketplace with soldiers and civilians engaged in a lopsided battle, Maïmouna's plaintive voice breaks through the surrounding chaos. Amidst great turmoil, injury, and death, Maïmouna sings, covering over the dismal scene with her music: "Au milieu de cette foule soudain silencieuse, seule la voix de Maïmouna semblait vivante. Elle couvrait le bruit des souliers cloutés et le piétinement des pieds nus" (47). (In the middle of this suddenly silent crowd, only the voice of Maïmouna seemed alive. She covered the noises of the studded shoes and the trampling of bare feet.) As she continues, an ironic turn of events transpires when one of her twin infant sons is killed in the upheaval. At this moment, the voice of Maïmouna, a woman who usually sings "pour glorifier la vie" (48) (to

glorify life) is silenced: “Maïmouna ne chantait plus” (49) (Maïmouna no longer sang).

Her song unfinished, Maïmouna’s voice fades away into obscurity, as the sounds of struggle and strife take over. Unlike the *bara*, whose sonorities persistently resonate throughout the conflict, Maïmouna’s song is silenced after the violent episode in the marketplace of Thiès, only to be heard again on the final page of the text. Throughout the strike, Maïmouna is immersed in a state of sadness and confusion, perpetuated by the long and difficult strike and the tragic loss of her infant son. Silenced by the traumatic events, she rarely speaks and never sings until the strike draws to a close. It is not until the citizens of Thiès initiate the return to normalcy in the aftermath of the strike that Maïmouna’s voice rings out once again, singing the conclusion of the “Legend of Goumba N’Diaye.” As she sings, Maïmouna describes how Goumba succeeds in defeating her challengers after fighting for days on end. The final line of the song, which also serves as the final line of the novel, reveals the secret to Goumba’s ultimate success as well as that of the striking workers: “Heureux est celui qui combat sans haine” (379) (Happy is s/he who fights without hate).

Used to signal the violent onset of the strike and, later, its dramatic conclusion, Maïmouna’s song resonantly frames the events of the workers’ strike in Thiès. Since the text of her song is presented in italic print and offset by blank spaces from the blocks of narrative, Maïmouna’s “Legend of Goumba N’Diaye” provides a visual frame as well. Functioning much like the rhythmic *bara*, her unaccompanied voice serves as a powerful sign of transformation. Nevertheless, unlike the *bara*, whose resonant drumbeats are easily recognized by striking workers and their families, filling their heads and hearts with anticipation and worry, the underlying meaning of Maïmouna’s song goes unnoticed by the novel’s characters. Devoid of musical notation or other audible indicators as transcribed in the space of the text, the power of her song rests its lyrics. Inextricably bound to the authority of language, Maïmouna’s song is meaningful to the reader primarily because of its words, not because of its musicality, since generally, in the frame of the text, the lexical stylings of vocal music tend to supersede other aesthetic criteria. On the other hand, the *bara*, free from the trappings of language, necessitates an intuitive interpretive approach rather than a lexical or stylistic interpretive strategy. In this respect, the rhythms of the *bara* transmit a vast domain of possibility without words, one that operates both inside and outside the space of the text.

In *The Suns of Independence*, the rhythms of drumbeats are prominently incorporated into the text, also serving as important signals of transformation. Nevertheless, unlike Sembene, who utilizes resonant drumbeats as a means of foreshadowing considerable changes in the plotline, Kourouma

elicits the sounds of drums in order to forecast significant shifts in character development. Typically included in traditional rites of passage, ceremonies that mark the social and physical transitions from one stage of life into another (e.g., life into death, childhood into adulthood), the cadences of tam-tams are resonantly present in festive social transformation rituals.

When presented in print, such potent drummed rhythms grant access to infinite realms of possibility. Communicating the unsayable with sounds and sensations, the percussive sonorities of drums reveal things that can only be perceived and experienced. This aspect is particularly important in considering the drum's role in traditional rites of passage in *The Suns of Independence*. Displaying the drum in its ritual capacity, Kourouma evokes the rhythms of drumbeats in describing the rite of excision,[5] explicitly representing the instrument through the use of the word "tam-tam" in his description of the procedure and surrounding festivities. In the scene Kourouma describes, rhythm and music comprise inextricable and meaningful components throughout the traditional yet controversial social ritual observed to symbolize a woman's purificatory passage from girlhood to adulthood in many Malinké communities. As the group of girls completes the ritual components of their social metamorphosis that precede and follow the secretive cutting ceremony, the drums are not merely heard, they are felt throughout the body by participants and spectators alike, much like a heartbeat. Intermittently beating like nervous or excited hearts, drumbeats are instrumental in heightening the anticipatory ambiance preceding official recognition of the rite's completion. Omnipresent, the intricate rhythms intensify the social transformation process, solidifying the ties that connect the new initiates to each other and with the local community at large.

An equally important component of the ensuing celebration, the drums' rhythms heighten the festive exuberance of the occasion. Ensuring the successful completion of the rite of passage, the drummed rhythms applaud the success of the new initiates. Percussively proclaiming their accomplishment to everyone in earshot, the tam-tams publicly congratulate the initiates, signaling the success of their transformation from girlhood to womanhood. Socially significant in traditional ritual practices, the sounding of the tam-tam in celebration of the fait accompli is boldly optimistic, foreseeing good fortune for initiates and participants in the face of future obstacles and adversity.

Nevertheless, when absent, the silent tam-tams communicate as

5. A controversial traditional practice, limited to certain ethnic groups, excision is a procedure through which part of or all of a girl's clitoris is removed. Like Kourouma, Sembene has criticized the procedure in his work, specifically in his 2004 film *Moolaadé*.

powerfully as their audible counterparts with respect to traditional social rites of passage. Devoid of the promise suggested by the drummed rhythms, in silent settings, failure and misfortune loom on the horizon. Whether attributable to the power of drums or the power of traditional beliefs, the rhythmic influence of tam-tams is undeniable in *The Suns of Independence*. For Salimata, the victim of a botched excision, the silence of the tam-tams speaks volumes. As she awakens in the field where the ritual excisions took place, she realizes, much to her horror, that the parade of new initiates has left without her:

> Le cortège était parti! bien parti. C'est-à-dire que le retour des excisées avait été fêté sans Salimata. Ah! le retour, mais il faut le savoir, c'était la plus belle phase de l'excision. Les tam-tams, les chants, les joies et tout le village se ruant à la rencontre des filles excisées jouant les rondelles de calebasses. Salimata n'a pas vécu le retour triomphal au village dont elle avait tant rêvé. (*Soleils*, 37–38)

> [The procession was gone! long gone. That is to say that the return of the excised girls had been celebrated without Salimata. Ah! the return, but one must know, it was the most beautiful phase of the excision. The tam-tams, the songs, the joys and all of the village rushing to meet the excised girls playing pieces of calabashes. Salimata had not lived the triumphant return to the village of which she had so often dreamed.]

Isolated from the other initiates, Salimata misses out on an important part of the social ritual marking her passage from childhood to adulthood—the ensuing collective celebration with the other initiates, members of her family, and the local community. Although she is later able to join the other girls in completing the healing and instructive portions of the ritual, for Salimata, the damage has already been done. Her rite of passage unsung, Salimata is relegated to a realm of foreboding and uncomfortable silences far from the jubilant applauding tam-tams that celebrate the successes of the other girls in the distance. Denied the rhythm, energy, and power of drumbeats, Salimata's social transition remains markedly incomplete.

For Salimata, the failed rite of passage commences a cycle of misfortune, marking the first of an unfortunate series of events. While recovering from the excision procedure in the hut of the village *féticheur*, or animist spiritual healer, Salimata is raped. The brutal attack mars her physically and psychologically, as she later encounters great difficulties in attaining intimacy with men and in conceiving a child. Salimata's initial problems, foreshadowed by the silence of the tam-tams during her unsuccessful social transition from girlhood to adulthood, are reinforced during a second

important ritual, her first marriage. Once again, unheard tam-tams play an important role in forecasting Salimata's future unhappiness:

> Salimata, transie de frayeurs, fut apportée un soir à son fiancé avec tam-tams et chants. La lune jaune regardait dans les nuages, les réjouissances des noces chauffaient et secouaient le village et la forêt; sa maman tremblait et pleurait, Salimata ne voyait et n'entendait rien, la peur seule l'occupait. (41)

> [Salimata, paralyzed with fear, was brought one evening to her fiancé with tam-tams and songs. The yellow moon watched in the clouds, the wedding celebrations warmed and shook the village and the forest, her mother was trembling and crying, Salimata saw and heard nothing, only fear occupied her.]

As Salimata is led to her fiancé, she is so consumed with fear that she is numb to the sounds, sights, and sensations of the wedding ritual. Although the swirling sounds of tam-tams and vocal music accompany the procession, Salimata hears nothing and sees nothing, denying the purported power of the rhythms. As the resonant vibrations of tam-tams fall on her inattentive ears and unresponsive body, Salimata unwittingly refuses their rhythmic promises of good fortune. As a result, her first marriage to a cruel and unyielding man ends in tragedy, and her second marriage, equally unbearable, ends in a perilous escape. Impacting Salimata through silence rather than sound, the tam-tams serve as important rhythmic signals in *The Suns of Independence*, predicting significant downward shifts in her character development. Through her misfortune and refusal to acknowledge and experience the rhythms of ritual and celebration, Salimata unwittingly isolates herself from the local community. Whether intentionally or unwittingly, by defying the values of tradition and collectivity, Salimata ultimately divorces herself from her African past. This leaves her to face an uncertain and conflicted future in the post-independence era.

In *Kourouma et le mythe: Une lecture de* Les soleils des indépendances (Kourouma and the Myth: A Reading of *The Suns of Independence*), Pius Ngandu Nkashama describes a similar phenomenon in his discussion of Salimata's third husband, Fama. Focusing on the power of myth, rather than that of music, Ngandu Nkashama explains how Fama develops a "disarticulated conscience," separating himself from the community at large through his denial of the authority of myths. Effectuating a "total rupture" with collectively recognized and celebrated myths, Fama is compelled to generate new myths. In doing so, "il se tourne vers son propre mythe, il devient à lui-même le héros rédempteur de son propre rêve" (Ngandu Nkashama 1985, 192–93) (he turns toward his own myth, he becomes the

redeeming hero of his own dream), as a means of coping with the harsh realities of his existence.

Ngandu Nkashama's observations about the role of myth translate well in considering the roles of rhythm and music in *The Suns of Independence*. Just as Fama attempts to fill the void left by the absence of myth with his own visions, without the sustaining power of collective rhythms, Salimata draws strength from alternative sonorities, many of which she generates while clicking pestle against mortar. Using her pestle and mortar much like a dynamic percussive instrument as she works, Salimata achieves the expressive capacity of drummers playing tam-tams. Capable of representing a vast spectrum of emotions through the repeated resonant clicks, at times, Salimata communicates her frustration and anger "comme un tam-tam de malheur" (*Soleils*, 56) (like a tam-tam of misfortune). At other times, when expressing her joy and contentment, Salimata is described as having an "air de tam-tam" (184) (a tam-tam air). Although she is unable to reconcile herself with the music of her past (or more precisely, the lack thereof) in dealing with her botched excision and failed marriages, Salimata rediscovers the power and pleasure of rhythmic music, forging an alternative relationship with it. Much like Fama becomes myth through his refusal of it, Salimata comes to embody rhythm after turning away from it.

Often resplendent and joyful, the sonorities of multiple tam-tams are also incorporated into scenes of collective celebration in *The Suns of Independence*. In several prominent examples, the rhythms of drumbeats are audibly present during funerals (196), festivals in praise of hunters (123) and as Fama is released from prison (172). In one such example, Kourouma combines the rhythmic components of funerary rituals and prehunting festivities. As Kourouma recounts the events surrounding Fama's father's funeral proceedings, he demonstrates the importance of rhythmic phenomena, as villagers incorporate the multiple cadences of drumbeats, dance steps, and gunfire to simultaneously commemorate the noble life of a fallen hero and to honor the brave exploits of local hunters.

> Un exemple: l'exploit triomphant lors des funérailles du père de Fama. Empressons-nous de le conter.
>
> Donc le tam-tam tourbillonnait. Vint le tour de danse des chasseurs. Il y avait tous les chasseurs du Horodougou, des chasseurs de toute carapace, de toute corne, même des chasseurs ayant à leur actif sept tigres. Les fusillades ébranlaient les murs et le sol, la fumée donnait comme un incendie. On promettait tout: le tigre, le lion, l'éléphant, mais à terme . . . C'est à dire à l'harmattan prochain, à l'hivernage prochain. Balla sauta dans le cercle de danse, croisa un

> entrechat, alluma la poudre entassé dans le canon. Cette poudre était haute de quatre doigts joints. Et le boum! Balla demanda à toutes les femmes du village d'installer les canaris de sauce sur les foyers et disparut dans la brousse. (123–24)

> [An example: the triumphant exploit during Fama's father's funeral proceedings. Let's gather around to tell it.
>
> So the tam-tam swirled. Then came the dance of the hunters. There were all of the hunters from the Horodougou, hunters of every shell, of every horn, even hunters having seven tigers in their favor. Gunfire shook the walls and the ground, smoke issued like in a fire. They promised everything: tiger, lion, elephant, but in time . . . That is to say in the next *harmattan* or the next *hivernage*. Balla jumped in the dance circle, skipped across, lit the powder packed in the gun. This powder was four fingers high. And the boom! Balla asked all the women in the village to put sauce in the *canari* pots on the fire and disappeared into the brush.]

Presented in the frame of the novel, Kourouma introduces the dual rhythmically mediated funerary rites and hunting festivities much like a traditional storyteller would. Through his use of the first-person plural imperative form *empressons-nous,* Kourouma incorporates lyrical stylistic devices as a means of further implicating the reader in the narrative process. Moreover, as Kourouma makes the transition from a first-person to a third-person narrative perspective, he immediately evokes the figure of the tam-tam, which serves as a point of correspondence that not only connects the funerary ritual and the hunting celebration, but that also provides a rhythmic interface relating orality and writing. As the tam-tams ring out, the sonorities of lively dance steps and ceremonial gunshots follow suit, adding layers of rhythmic sonority to the collaborative percussive performance piece. The overlapping rhythms increase in volume and complexity, building up to a resonant zenith accentuated by the impressive boom of Balla's gunshot, heightening levels of anticipation and excitement as the men prepare their hunt in honor of Fama's deceased father.

In a later passage, Kourouma's rendering of Fama's liberation combines multiple layers of sonorous elements, much like his portrayal of the dance of the hunters. The festive sensorial ambiance of the events succeeding his release—a jubilant swirl of vibrant sights, sounds, and sensations—is particularly striking in that it sharply contrasts the dim and silent squalor of the prison cell where Fama existed for years in a state of constant hopelessness and desperation. On the day of his release, as the president delivers a speech commemorating the liberation of Fama and his fellow political pris-

oners, the entire region is abuzz with the sounds of celebratory drumbeats punctuated by joyful shouts and applause from members of the crowd:

> Le président se fit présenter ensuite à tous les libérés. Il les embrassa l'un après l'autre et remit à chacun une épaisse liasse de billets de banque. Évidemment chaque embrassade était saluée par des cris, des applaudissements et des tam-tams. Puis le programme de la fête et de la réconciliation fut annoncée: 'Ce sera dans la capitale que la fête battra son plein.' (175)

> [The president was then presented to all of the liberated. He hugged them one after another and gave each of them a thick bundle of banknotes. Of course each hug was greeted with shouts, applause and tam-tams. Then the plan for celebration and reconciliation was announced: "The celebration will beat its fill."]

As the president congratulates Fama and his fellow detainees in a public display of generosity and affection, the tam-tam acclaims the fortunate event. Providing a sounding base for the applause and cheers of crowd members, the rhythms of tam-tams accentuate the public's excitement and elation during the president's speech. At the close of the event, the noisy tam-tams resonantly transport the celebration from the site of the public gathering, expanding the festivities to the public spaces of the city, as local citizens are invited to participate in a citywide celebration. In doing so, Kourouma insists on the resonant percussive dimensions of the festivities, connecting the sonorities of celebratory heartbeats, drumbeats, and dance steps.

## Ordinary and Extraordinary Rhythms

In both *The Suns of Independence* and *God's Bits of Wood*, the rhythms of instrumental music play an important role in shaping the lives and destinies of each novel's characters. Serving much like heartbeats and serving as the pulses of the texts, these rhythms also indicate significant shifts in the plotlines, forecasting fortune and misfortune, celebration and suffering. Repeatedly interwoven into the frame of the text, the sounds of drumbeats resonate from a variety of sources and locations. Accompanying the music and noises of quotidian life and underlying the rhythms of working and walking, drums and other rhythmic devices fill the novels with intricate layers of vibrant polyphony.

In *God's Bits of Wood*, the power of rhythm is manifest not merely in its traditional, communicative, evocative, and ceremonial capacities, but also in its everydayness. In drawing parallels between the rhythms of drums

and those of people working, dancing, singing, and walking, Sembene accords ordinary objects and activities with extraordinary capacities. In one passage, pestles, the domestic instruments and percussive devices used by women to transmit the daily "songs of the pestles" as they prepare their meals, are employed as weapons to fight against colonial authorities (251). Tam-tams are also taken up as arms against the oppressive regime, although, as weapons, they are employed in a nonviolent capacity. Near the close of the novel, Lahbib commands his striking cohorts to "allez chercher les tam-tams et chantez" (376) (go find the tam-tams and sing), as a means of resisting the soldiers stationed in the city. Effective in creating a peaceful yet defiant ambiance, the tam-tams are successful in "mettant les nerfs à dure épreuve" (377) (really putting the nerves to the test), without inciting further violence.

In attributing extraordinary potential to commonplace sonorities, Sembene also evokes the sounds of footsteps, portraying the epic women's march as an important rhythmic event leading to the resolution of the workers' strike. Presenting the variable cacophonic cadences of countless marching footsteps and dissonant shouting and singing voices, Sembene describes the effect produced by the sounds of the unlikely parade as the women descend upon the city of Dakar:

> Les 'marcheuses' arrivèrent par le faubourg de Hann et le pont qui est à l'entrée de la ville . . . On entendait le bruit de cette foule presque sur les quais lointains: piétinements des sandales, martèlement des talons, grelots des bicyclettes, grincements des essieux de charrettes, cris, appels, chants, plaintes des éclopés, bégaiements des mendiants, coups de sifflets des policiers, un dôme bruyant semblait couvrir la cité tout entière. (325–26)
>
> [The "*marcheuses*" arrived by way of the Hann working-class area and the bridge that is at the entrance of the city . . . The noise of this crowd was heard almost on the faraway banks: shuffling of sandals, hammering of heels, bells on bicycles, creaking of axles on carts, shouts, calls, songs, moans of the walking wounded, stutters of beggars, police whistle peals, a noisy dome seemed to completely cover the entire city.]

In describing the sounds of the women's march, Sembene creates a whirlwind of vibrant sonorities that both surround and imbue on-site listeners, causing them to feel enclosed within a "noisy dome" that "seem[s] to completely cover the entire city." Achieving the power and overall effect of persistent pulsing tam-tams, the noisy and variable cadence of the women's footsteps and chants serve not only to intensify the situation and signal

imminent change, but to also implicate random passersby and bystanders in the process. Although the police respond by blowing their whistles antagonistically, adding yet another layer to the women's noisy arrival in Dakar, many of the residents of the Hann working-class area applaud the women, showing their resounding solidarity through shouts, handclaps, dances, and cheers.

Similarly, throughout *The Suns of Independence*, Kourouma evokes the multifaceted allegory of the tam-tam, likening everyday sounds and experiences to those generated by the captivating rhythms of drumming. Connecting their sounds and silences with sights, smells, and sensations, Kourouma presents drums in a way that goes beyond their capacities as musical instruments, communicative devices, and emblems of West African tradition. For Kourouma, the experience of tam-tams and their rhythms penetrates into all areas of life. Even in describing the cacophony of a bustling marketplace, Kourouma represents rhythm in a multisensorial dimension in a manner that approaches what Lefebvre describes as "la temporalité vécue" (Lefebvre 1992, 33) (lived temporality). Eliciting a vociferous spiral of sensorial imagery, Kourouma fills the entire body—the eyes, the ears and the nostrils—with the experience of the market:

> Le marché! D'abord un vrombissement sourd qui pénétra dans tout le corps et le fit vibrer, le vent soufflant la puanteur. Puis une rangée de bougainvillées et le marché dans tous ses grouillements, vacarmes et mille éclats. Comme dans un tam-tam de fête, tout frétillait et tournoyait, le braillement des voitures qui viraient, les appels et les cris des marchands qui s'égosillaient et gesticulaient comme des frondeurs. Les acheteuses, les ménagères, les sollicitées partaient, revenaient, se courbaient, sourdes aux appels, placides. Les toits des hangars accrochés les uns aux autres multipliaient, modelaient et gonflaient tout ce vacarme d'essaim d'abeilles, d'où cette impression d'être enfermé, d'être couvert comme un poussin sous une calebasse qu'on battrait. (*Soleils*, 54)

> [The market! First a deaf roar that penetrated the entire body and made it quiver, the wind blowing the stench. Then a row of bougainvillea and the market in all of its swarmings, rackets, and thousand bursts. Like in a celebration tam-tam, everything wriggled and swirled around, the groaning of shifting cars, the calls and the cries of the merchants who yelled at the top of their lungs and gesticulated like troublemakers. Buyers, housewives, the solicited parties left, came back, bent down, deaf to the calls, placid. The roofs of the stalls hanging one on top of the other multiplied, shaped and blew up this

whole beehive noise from which this impression of being enclosed, of being covered like a chick beneath a calabash that one would beat.]

In portraying the chaos of the marketplace, Kourouma draws upon the power of the tam-tam in two distinct manners, approaching the rhythmic vessel from both the outside and the inside. Comparing the sounds of the busy market to a "tam-tam de fête," Kourouma creates a jubilantly festive ambiance filled with vibrant layers of sound and drummed rhythms. The percussive cadences surround market-goers, filling receptive ears and bodies with the energy of drumbeats to the extent that one feels inside of the drum, or in this instance, inside of a calabash that is being used like a drum. Kourouma repeatedly connects the tam-tam—a powerful expressive device—to the various emotional responses it elicits. While in the marketplace, he suggests a "tam-tam de fête," in other passages, Kourouma presents an array of diverse situations and emotional responses. In one passage, he relates Salimata's admiration for her *marabout* (a wise and respected Muslim, often reputed to have magical powers) to "un tam-tam de joie" (69) (a tam-tam of joy), and, in another, he likens the names of forgotten villages to "des tam-tams de regrets" (100) (tam-tams of regrets).

In *God's Bits of Wood* and *The Suns of Independence*, Sembene and Kourouma masterfully incorporate the sonorities of rhythmic and musical phenomena into their respective texts. Through prominent texted representations of the rhythms of heartbeats, drumbeats, and dance steps, as well as the everyday sounds of singing, working, and music making, Sembene and Kourouma succeed in promoting local cultural conventions and aesthetic sensibilities while sounding off, as it were, as a means of creating alternative spaces for identity negotiation that lie beyond the confines of binary categorical constructs and Western hierarchical paradigms. As such, by transposing resonant rhythmic and musical elements within the frame of the francophone novel, Sembene and Kourouma create sounding texted spaces that inspire and ignite social activism and identity appropriation within and beyond the transpoetic transcultural space of the text. Resplendent with the freedom of multiple rhythms, musics, and possibilities, Sembene's and Kourouma's resonant texts have challenged, provoked, and motivated generations of thinkers, citizens, and activists, and will continue to do so for readers who enter the space of the text with perceptive eyes, receptive ears, listening hearts, and open minds.

# 3 / Rhythm, Music, and Identity in *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*

As we travel through space and time, rhythm and music provide us with meaningful points of reference and relation. Although we remain physically grounded in a perpetually shifting present time frame, such suggestive sounding phenomena mentally transport us to alternate temporal and spatial contexts. I experience this in my own life on a regular basis. Last Saturday, for example, I was at a bon voyage party for a very dear friend when Craig David's 2001 single "Walking Away" came on the sound system. Although I was enjoying a very present moment with friends, sharing experiences and creating memories in a specific time and place, David's single reminded me of my time spent in Keur Momar Sarr, Senegal, in the summer of 2001. It was a song I had heard many times over the course of that summer and, upon hearing it, I was struck by a flurry of memory impressions.

In particular, the song reminded me of an enjoyable yet ill-fated weekend I had spent in Louga, the setting for Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes*. Since it was the closest city to Keur Momar Sarr (about 50 kilometers away), I traveled to Louga every now and again to buy supplies that weren't readily available in the village. I liked the feel of Louga—it was unlike any other city I had ever visited before. It had a really working-class feel, and it reminded me of Detroit in many ways (my family is from southeastern Michigan), albeit much hotter and less desolate. Craving interaction and activity, I found myself drawn to the bustling marketplace in the heart of the city where shoppers could buy pretty much anything—foodstuffs, fabric, car parts, cosmetics, household items, livestock, electronics,

and bootleg cassettes and CDs—as long as the price was right. Near the marketplace, there was a tiny nightclub called Le Millionnaire whose name still makes me smile every time I say it. When I first came upon Le Millionnaire, it had been a while since I had enjoyed urban nightlife, so I made it my personal mission to go there.

One weekend, Soda Diouf, a woman from my village, invited me and another woman to spend the weekend with her family in Louga. I gladly accepted her invitation. That Friday, we all piled into the back of a cramped makeshift public transport truck and started off on the road to Louga. Upon our arrival in Louga, we traveled the short distance to Soda's family compound. Once there, we were greeted with two heaping plates of ceebu-jën prepared by the co-wives of the family and some water. The ceebu-jën was delicious, but of course, more than I could possibly eat. It was a hot, dry day, and I remember drinking plenty of water from the family's water pump. I was under the (mistaken) impression that Louga was serviced by the same water treatment facility as Keur Momar Sarr.

Later that night, I went out to eat with Soda and some friends at a *dibiterie*.[1] As we enjoyed a delicious meal of grilled lamb with a mustard sauce and fried potatoes, I heard Craig David's voice singing "Walking Away" over a crackling radio. A few of us even sang along to the familiar refrain. The song is sad but hopeful, narrating David's decision to move on in the wake of an unhappy relationship. Nevertheless, the story of the song wasn't what resonated to me at the time. Rather, it was a combination of David's strong and beautiful voice and the plaintive yet hopeful life-is-hard-but-beautiful tone of the song that appealed to me. I was really enjoying the moment—an ideal combination of good food, good company, and good music—but that didn't last long. At some point in the dinner, it suddenly felt as if the room was starting to spin. I felt dizzy and nauseous. Concerned, Soda and her friends accompanied me back to the compound. It didn't take long for me to realize that I was falling terribly ill, so I took some high-octane medicine and spent much of the night in bed.

The next morning, I was still feeling down and out, but I wanted to make the most of my weekend with Soda and her family. I laid low for most of the day, sharing stories in French and practicing my elementary-level Wolof with Soda's relatives in between frequent naps. I was trying my best to recuperate in time for the "pinnacle" event of the weekend—a night out at Le Millionnaire. Still feeling I bit shaky, I somehow managed to gather my forces for a night of music and dancing with friends, and I'm

1. A dibiterie is like a butcher shop and restaurant in one, where diners enjoy meat (usually lamb) grilled over a wooden fire.

so glad I did. We danced for much of the night as the DJ played a great variety of music, ranging from Senegalese *mbalax*[2] artists like Youssou N'Dour, Coumba Gawlo, and Viviane; Senegalese rap and hip hop artists like Postive Black Soul, Bideew Bou Bess, and Daara J; and American, French, and British rap and R & B artists like Snoop Dogg, Eve, MC Solaar, and Craig David. This time when I heard "Walking Away," I was smiling and dancing, enjoying a memorable night out with friends.

I heard David's song so many times that summer that I have now come to associate it with my 2001 Senegalese experiences. Of course, "Walking Away" is not the only song that brings me back to northern Senegal in 2001. There are others, like Youssou N'Dour's "Birima," Wyclef Jean's "911," and just about any song with a *dialgaty* rhythm.[3] Although the *mbalax* and *dialgaty* songs are born of Senegalese musical traditions and innovations, Craig David's and Wyclef Jean's songs represent influences from Europe and the Americas. The ensemble of songs—each individually associated with its own set of subjective memory impressions and emotions—conveys the multiplicity of musical styles and influences operating in twenty-first-century Senegalese popular culture. When I hear them, something kicks in my mind that brings me back to that particular place and time.

As we travel through space and time, sound- and song-associated memory impressions serve as meaningful points of reference, connecting the distant spaces and epochs of past memories and experiences to our present frames of reference. Effectively orienting us in the present while linking us to past, these sounding cues help us come to understand who we are and how we relate to other people and the world. In the two novels we explore in this chapter, Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes* and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*, rhythmic and musical phenomena serve as important elements in shaping the struggle to negotiate autonomous identity configurations in the respective zones of twentieth-century Senegal and Guadeloupe. Filled with the sonorities of instrumental and vocal music, the rhythms of drumbeats, the sounds of quotidian work and chores, and the random noises of everydayness, both novels resonate with intricate layers of sonorous polyphony. For Nalla, a young Senegalese boy trying to gain a sense of self in a changing Senegal, and Ti Jean, a young Guadeloupean man who struggles to find himself as he embarks on a quest of epic proportions, rhythm and music operate as important agents of identification. Often functioning as audible points of

2. *Mbalax* is used to characterize a genre in which rhythms and instrumentation from traditional Senegalese music are incorporated into modern jazz, rock, and/or pop ensembles.

3. The *dialgaty* is a popular dance rhythm in Senegal that is often played at celebrations and sometimes just for fun.

reference, divergent rhythmic and musical signals contribute to the fluctuating senses of malaise and uncertainty both protagonists experience as they attempt to navigate identificatory divides separated by distant spaces and disparate epochs.

In analyzing the relationships among rhythm, music, and identity in *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*, we introduce but also revisit a number of important theoretical elements in this chapter. Following a brief discussion of theories regarding rhythm, music, and subjectivity, we also examine the importance of dialogism in the novel in light of the various linguistic, oral, and musical elements that Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart incorporate into their respective texts. We direct further attention toward developing the conception of the novel as a transpoetic transcultural space, a texted space in which diverse aesthetic, linguistic, and sociocultural elements intermingle. In these imaginative conceptual spaces, Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart open zones for communication and exchange in which dominance hierarchies are deconstructed, and where autonomous identities are (re)negotiated, (re)configured, (re)appropriated, and (re)affirmed. A space of pure possibility, the transpoetic transcultural space draws inspiration from a variety of theoretical models, namely Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Rhizome, Édouard Glissant's Relation, and Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic, all of which are reconsidered in addressing questions of identity in *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*. In exploring the implications of the simultaneous quest for and questioning of identity experienced by both Nalla and Ti Jean, it is important to examine sounding linguistic, rhythmic, and musical elements, and determine how they operate as agents of identification with implications both inside and outside the space of the text.

For Ti Jean, the young hero of Schwarz-Bart's text, rhythmic and musical cues serve as meaningful signposts, marking significant points along his path throughout his epic journey. After a beast with seven heads swallows the sun and the island of Guadeloupe, keeping local residents and landmarks captive in its belly, Ti Jean sets off to save his homeland, his mother, and his beloved Égée. Simultaneously searching for a sense of self while disoriented in space and time, Ti Jean wanders through disconnected spaces and disjointed epochs. Indiscernibly sliding among the realms of reverie and reality, Ti Jean travels to faraway places—both lands and dreamlands—and witnesses multiple histories—both actual and alternate—through the course of his journey. As he makes his way to an unknown destination, losing himself in a seemingly endless series of real and imaginary spaces, a sense of complete confusion results, as everything Ti Jean knows or believes to know is called into question. Unwittingly thrust into a quest for identity, Ti Jean is compelled to question the very nature of

identity itself. Lost amidst the blurry boundaries that distinguish the self from the other, the past from the present, and fact from fiction, in embarking on his quest to save the people and places he knows and loves, Ti Jean must also renegotiate a sense of self.

Traveling to Africa, Europe, and the Antilles during the course of his journey, Ti Jean's voyages parallel those of Schwarz-Bart's own life, which led her to spend time in France, Senegal, and Switzerland in addition to her family's native Guadeloupe. Born in 1938 in Charentes, France, to a teacher mother and a soldier father, Schwarz-Bart returned with her family to Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, at the age of three. After spending her childhood in Guadeloupe, she relocated to Paris, where she completed her university studies and met her husband, André Schwarz-Bart, who encouraged her to write. After co-authoring *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes* (1967) (A Plate of Pork with Green Bananas) with her husband, Schwarz-Bart published two novels independently, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) (*The Bridge of Beyond*) and *Ti Jean L'horizon* (1979) (*Between Two Worlds*). Resonating with the sonorities of Antillean music and orality, both texts approach questions of identity in Guadeloupean cultural contexts. Schwarz-Bart has also written *Ton beau capitaine* (1987) (Your Beautiful Captain), a one-act play that deals with the problems of racism, migration, exile, and longing, and *Hommage à la femme noire* (1989) (*In Praise of Black Women*), a multivolume encyclopedic work she co-authored with her husband. Her most recent work appears in the anthology *Nouvelles de Guadeloupe* (2009) (Short Stories from Guadeloupe), in which stories by Schwarz-Bart, Gisèle Pineau, Ernest Pépin, and Fortuné Chalumeau explore complicated dimensions of Guadeloupean identities in twentieth- and twenty-first-century contexts.

Drawing upon Antillean oral traditions, Schwarz-Bart's title character, Ti Jean, is inspired by and named for a prominent figure in Afro-Antillean folklore, Ti Jean. Like another protagonist of Creole folktales, Compère Lapin (Brother Rabbit), Ti Jean is a cunning character who uses ruseful tactics to subvert the authority of those who try to oppress him. As Raphaël Confiant describes, unlike their African counterparts including the Wolof Leuk (Rabbit), who typically works "à préserver et à renforcer la cohésion du groupe, du village ou de la tribu" (to preserve and reinforce the cohesion of the group, of the village, or of the tribe), prominent Antillean protagonists like Compère Lapin and Ti Jean "développe tout au contraire une philosophie du 'chacun pour soi' faite de ruse, d'hypocrisie et de cynisme" (Confiant 1995, 8) (develop on the contrary a philosophy of "every man for himself" made of ruse, hypocrisy, and cynicism). Although there are multiple oral and transcribed renderings of the Ti Jean cycle of tales, as Fanta Toureh explains, there are points of commonality that connect the

varying accounts of Ti Jean's exploits: "Les contes, textes oraux indépendants les uns des autres, renferment des points communs . . . Ti Jean, dans l'imaginaire populaire, incarne la ressource individuelle face à l'ordre répressif" (Toureh 1986, 180) (Folktales, oral texts independent from one another contain common points . . . Ti Jean, in the popular imaginary, incarnates individual resourcefulness in view of repressive order).

In *Creole Folktales*, Patrick Chamoiseau presents his own rendering of a popular Ti Jean story, a transcribed version of the oral folktale.[4] In Chamoiseau's adaptation of the folktale "Ti Jean L'horizon," Ti Jean tricks his cruel *béké* (a Creole term historically used to designate a wealthy white landowner born in the Antilles) "godfather"[5] into accepting a death by way of drowning in a sack in the ocean after escaping a similar fate himself. Ti Jean's close call happens at the beginning of Chamoiseau's rendering of the tale, when his *béké* "godfather" attempts to dispose of the clever and rebellious young man by convincing him to travel to the bottom of the ocean tied up in a cloth sack in search of great riches. Suspecting his godfather's nefarious intentions, Ti Jean cuts a hole in the sack and manages to escape after being left to die in the ocean. Upon his surprising return, Ti Jean fabricates a story to tell his "godfather" about the bountiful treasures he found in the depths of the ocean. Seeking to secure the wealth for himself, the greedy and gullible *béké* volunteers to be bound up in a sack and thrown into the ocean—where he dies—freeing Ti Jean, his family, and his community from his tyranny.

The motif of the crafty and revolutionary individual who fights injustice for the greater good of himself, his family, and his community is common to Chamoiseau's rendering of the "Ti Jean L'horizon" folktale and Simone Schwarz-Bart's novel. For her part, Schwarz-Bart acknowledges the influence of local storytelling traditions on her writing. In an interview with Isabelle Constant, Schwarz-Bart explains how her novel was born out of the folktales her family told her when she was a child:

> Ah, *Ti Jean L'horizon* est un conte créole très court. Mon oncle me racontait toujours l'histoire. Tous les soirs il aimait nous effrayer, quand nous étions enfants, enfin moi il m'effrayait, c'était réussi, il me racontait toujours l'histoire de la vie qui s'achève et l'histoire de l'enfant qui s'en va à la recherche du soleil . . . Il était suffisamment

4. It is important to note that the devouring beast with seven heads that also appears in *Ti Jean L'horizon* also figures into Chamoiseau's *Creole Folktales* collection in the "L'il Fellow the Musician" story (Chamoiseau 1994).

5. In Chamoiseau's version of the tale, Ti Jean's Caucasian "godfather" is really his biological father. After denying sanguinary affiliation with his illegitimate child, Ti Jean's biological father designates the title of "godfather" for himself.

> persuasif pour nous faire douter même de la réapparition du soleil du lendemain. Et je suis partie de ce petit noyau là pour faire mon conte à ma façon. (Constant 2002, 112)
>
> [Ah, *Ti Jean L'horizon* is, in short, a Creole folktale. My uncle used to always tell me the story. Every night, he loved to frighten us, when we were children, he ended up scaring me, he succeeded, he always told me the story of life that is ending and the story of a child who goes out in search of the sun . . . He was sufficiently persuasive in making us even doubt the reappearance of the sun the next day. And I took off from this little kernel in making the story my own.]

Although she credits Antillean oral traditions as a source of inspiration for her novel, in crafting her version of the Ti Jean story, Schwarz-Bart accords her Ti Jean with positive, altruistic character traits. Although clever like his folktale counterpart, the Ti Jean of Schwarz-Bart's novel uses the power of ruse to achieve a positive result for his family, his community, and his island, much like the Senegalese Leuk.

A timeless struggle, the quest of the individual to displace an oppressive authoritarian presence as a means of gaining personal autonomy and reconciling questions of identity is a theme that translates well across time and space, regardless of oral or written genre distinctions. As Kathleen Gyssels suggests, although Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon* is born out of a rich tradition of orally transmitted tales, she nonetheless succeeds in crafting "un roman prolifique . . . qui pose des questions modernes, voire modernistes, à l'audience" (Gyssels 1996, 10) (a prolific novel . . . that poses modern, even modernist questions to the audience). In writing about *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Schwarz-Bart acknowledges the complicated dimensions of the questions she presents, characterizing her novel as "une aventure extraordinaire, une histoire d'amour, une histoire de sorcellerie, un ouvrage de science fiction . . . mais . . . aussi une quête de l'identité, un voyage que j'aurais fait au bout de ma nuit antillaise pour tenter de l'exorciser" (*Ti Jean*, back cover) (an extraordinary adventure, a love story, a magic story, a work of science fiction . . . but also a quest for identity, a voyage that I would have made at the edge of my Antillean night in an attempt to exorcise it.)

Invoking the shrill screams of the ghosts of the islands as a means of confronting questions of identity in Antillean contexts, Ti Jean's hallucinatory quest, equally nightmarish and dreamlike, seeks to negotiate the protagonist's pursuit of an autonomous sense of identity in an ever-changing world. Guided by unknown forces, Ti Jean's voyage leads him across vast distances and disparate times, obscuring the domains of reverie and reality as he attempts to discern some sense of self, some sense of truth amidst

the prevailing climate of confusion and crisis. Ultimately creating what Bernadette Cailler refers to as "une H(h)istoire nouvelle" (Cailler 1982, 289) (a new [his]story), Ti Jean must negotiate the distances that separate real and imaginary spaces as well as the intervals that dissociate past, present, and parallel times to establish his own frames of reference and develop his own hopes for the future. Throughout the course of his travels, rhythmic and musical cues play important roles, serving as signposts that help to orient the young hero in familiar and unfamiliar territories as he aimlessly wanders on his quest for (and consequent questioning of) identity.

Although manifest in a different text and context, Sow Fall also explores questions of identity through the motif of voyage in *L'appel des arènes*. For Nalla, the young protagonist of Sow Fall's novel, journeys through space and time are primarily configured through oral stories told to him by and about the people in his life. As relatives and friends share their memories and experiences with him, Nalla is compelled to confront the conflicting perspectives and problems of the adult world. An only child born to parents who repatriated to Senegal after spending several years in Europe, Nalla suffers from feelings of isolation, particularly after his mother forbids him from playing with neighborhood children she finds distasteful. When Nalla later finds companionship and guidance through Malaw, a national wrestling hero, his parents are quick to scorn his growing interest in the culture and traditions of one of Senegal's primary sporting pastimes. Divided among his love and respect for his unyielding parents, his affinity for Senegalese customs and history, and his desire to arrive at some sense of identity—to feel some sense of belonging—Nalla must negotiate the spaces and times etched in his imagination by the words of others.

Described by Madeleine Borgomano as "une émouvante quête pour réintégrer le paradis perdu" (Borgomano 1984, 55) (a moving quest to return to paradise lost),*L'appel des arènes* traces Nalla's path as he travels about the city from day to day in search of a sense of self and a sense of belonging in postcolonial Senegal. Written in 1973, in the decade succeeding Senegalese independence, the novel presents conflicting visions of a changing country, as seen through the eyes of the young protagonist and his parents. Set in Louga, an important trading crossroads in the brushlands of northeastern Senegal, the novel attempts to reconcile divergent philosophies, perspectives, and cultural practices in constructing new visions of individual and regional or national identities. Strongly driven by representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena, particularly by repeated references to the intricate rhythms of drumbeats, Nalla's identificatory quest causes his father, Ndiougou, and his mother, Diattou, to reassess their own attitudes and experiences, which effectively plunges them both into a state of identity crisis. In the end, one parent emerges with a renewed sense of self,

while the other ends up on the brink of self-destruction. Not surprisingly, it is the one who opens his ears, his mind, and his heart to the rhythms of the tam-tams who finds happiness, and the one who closes her ears, her mind, and her heart to the vibrant drumbeats who meets with despair.

Like Schwarz-Bart, Sow Fall draws upon local popular culture and oral traditions in crafting the story of Nalla and his simultaneous quest for and questioning of identity in postcolonial Senegal. Prominently incorporating representations of vocal and musical performances in her descriptions of Senegalese wrestling, and evocations of oral storytelling traditions in her characterizations of familiar and friendly interactions, Sow Fall insists on the importance of rhythm, music, and orality throughout *L'appel des arènes*. Such motifs resurface in Sow Fall's larger body of literary works, which includes the novels *La grève des bàttu* (1979) (*The Beggar's Strike*), *L'Ex-père de la nation* (1987) (The Ex-Father of the Nation), *Douceurs du bercail* (1998) (Sweetness from Home), and *Festins de la détresse* (2005) (Banquets of Distress). In these novels, Sow Fall explores dimensions of identity and authority while examining cultural traditions, language practices, and social problems in an ever-changing Senegal. In a more recent text, *Un grain de vie et d'espérance* (2002) (A Speck of Life and Hope), Sow Fall considers cultural perspectives and practices in essay form, reflecting on the art and joy of cooking and eating in present-day Senegal.

Born in Saint-Louis, Senegal, in 1941, Sow Fall spent her childhood in Saint-Louis and then Dakar, where she completed her secondary education. Although she completed her *licence de lettres modernes* in Paris, she returned to Senegal in 1963, where she resides today. In addition to her career as a writer, Sow Fall has worked in education, been involved in local organizations, and served on multiple advisory boards, including, but not limited to, the Commission Nationale de Réforme de l'Enseignement du Français (National Commission to Reform the Teaching of French), the Bureau Africain pour la Défense des Libertés de l'Écrivain (BADLE) (African Office for the Defense of Writer's Liberties), and the Centre International d'Études, de Recherches et de Réactivation sur la Littérature, les Arts et la Culture (CIRLAC) (The International Center for Studies, Research and Reactivation on Literature, Arts and Culture). Sow Fall founded the Centre Africain d'Animation et d'Échanges Culturels (CAEC) (The African Commission of Cultural Activities and Exchange), an organization that seeks to promote education, discussion, and debate on cultural, literary, and intellectual topics and that houses subsidiary organizations for African writers, anthropologists, interpreters, and translators. Committed to culture, education, and the arts, Sow Fall's work as a writer, an educator, and an activist demonstrates her lifelong engagement to serve as an advocate for Senegalese political, linguistic, and cultural

policy issues on local and international levels. This commitment is readily apparent in *L'appel des arènes*, in which Sow Fall examines personal and social dimensions of identity as Nalla struggles to negotiate a sense of self in postcolonial Senegal.

## Rhythm, Music, Subjectivity, and the Novel

In exploring the roles of rhythm and music in the novel, let us return to the idea that rhythm and music can operate as languages in their own right. Whether characterized as explicit, encoded systems classified as drum languages and literatures, or abstract, expressive compositions that suggest rather than describe, the expressive capacities of music should not be overlooked, particularly within the frame of the novel. Returning to Jacques Derrida's view of *écriture*, one that is open to "oral, vocal, musical, rhythmic or prosodic" phenomena (Derrida 1996, 124), the complex interrelationships between writing, language, and identity take on new dimensions. In this respect, Derrida shatters the rigid binary categories that attempt to polarize and oversimplify notions of written and oral, Occidental and Oriental, and the self and the other, among others, freeing subjects to negotiate the complicated conceptual spaces situated in-between and beyond limiting binary constructs. Reminding readers, "Notre question, c'est toujours l'identité" (31) (Our question is always identity), Derrida later characterizes his conception of *écriture* as a transgressive "mode of appropriation":

> L'"écriture", oui, on désignerait ainsi, entre autres choses, un certain mode d'appropriation aimante et désespérée de la langue, et à travers elle de tout idiome interdit, la vengeance amoureuse et jalouse d'un nouveau dressage qui tente de restaurer la langue, et croit à la fois la réinventer, lui donner enfin une forme (d'abord la déformer, réformer, transformer), lui faisant ainsi payer le tribut de l'interdit ou, ce qui revient sans doute au même, s'acquittant auprès d'elle du prix de l'interdit. (59–60)
>
> ["*Écriture*," yes, we will designate it as such, among other things, a certain mode of loving and hopeless appropriation of the language, and through it of every forbidden idiom, the loving and jealous vengeance of a new dressage that attempts to restore language, and believes at the same time to reinvent it, to finally give it a form (first to deform, reform, transform it) making it also pay the toll of the forbidden or, that which no doubt returns to the same, repaying to it the price of the forbidden.]

Filled with the freedom of possibility, for Derrida, rhythm, music, and

other forms of what he refers to as *écriture* are subversive primarily in their capacity to approach that which is forbidden, that which escapes the confines and conventions of language. Whether written, recounted, sung, drummed, or played on instruments, such écriture is fundamental to the process of identification, transferring the authority of language to the *écrivain*—the writer, the storyteller, the singer, the drummer, or the musician. Typically defined as the French term for writer, in this context the term *écrivain* designates an individual who practices *écriture*, regardless of its genre or form. Whether manifest in the *prise de parole*, the *prise de plume,* or the *prise de pilon*, *écriture* is always a *prise de pouvoir.* When considered in this light, a *prise de parole* involves the act of speaking, a *prise de plume* the act of writing, and a *prise de pilon* the act of producing percussive rhythmic phenomena. Each act is also a *prise de pouvoir*, an act of empowerment with the potential to disrupt hegemonic authority by opening zones in which existing dominance hierarchies are neutralized and deconstructed, spaces in which autonomous identity configurations are conceived and negotiated.

Accessible by both the *écrivain* and his or her readers, viewers, or listeners, the space of *écriture* initiates, and even necessitates, dialogue. Whether transmitted and received through an audio mechanism, a visual medium, or a combination of the two, *écriture* serves as a two-sided interface, bridging the divide that traditionally separates the *écrivain* from his or her audience. As such, through *écriture*, in all of its various shapes and formats, the *écrivain* solicits the involvement and engagement of audience members. Regardless of the conditions of performance or mode of production—whether a reader is seated in front of a text, or a spectator is standing in front of a live performance—the audience is compelled to act upon perceiving and receiving *écriture*. In following with Maurice Merleau Ponty's assertion, "Perception est toujours action" (Merleau Ponty 1969, 90) (Perception is always action), an *écrivain*'s reader, viewer, or listener is always active so long as he or she remains engaged with the *écriture* in question. The activity of the audience, whether implicit or explicit, serves to magnify the impact of the *écrivain*'s initial *prise de pouvoir*, perpetuating the cycle of communication, exchange, and negotiation in the time and/or space of *écriture* as well as in the extratextual realms of boundless possibility it creates.

When transposed in the frame of the text, rhythm and music are placed in a fixed context, both spatial and temporal. Even so, despite the contextual permanence implied by the set blocks of type on the written page, the fluid, ephemeral qualities of rhythmic and musical elements clearly resonate from the writer through the text to the reader, promoting a polyphonic aesthetic, the exemplification of what Mikhail Bakhtin refers to

as "orchestration." In this respect, in crafting a polyphonic narrative, the writer serves as a composer-conductor, interspersing the multiple layers of rhythms, voices, music, and noises that resonate in the minds and the ears of the readers. As Michael Holquist explains: "Bakhtin's most famous borrowing from musical terminology is the 'polyphonic' novel, but orchestration is the means for achieving it. Music is the metaphor for moving from seeing . . . to *hearing* . . . For Bakhtin this is a crucial shift. In oral/aural arts, the "overtones" of a communication act individualize it . . . The possibilities of orchestration make any segment of text almost infinitely variable" (Holquist 1981, 430–31). As Holquist affirms, the process of orchestration opens the text to a seemingly limitless range of possibilities. Since the activation and interpretation of an orchestrated text depend on the active involvement of its reader(s)—a double engagement implicating the processes of *seeing* and *hearing*—the possible readings of texted sounding phenomena are multiple and manifest. Varying in speed, volume, pitch, intensity, and complexity, among other categories, texted rhythmic and musical representations undeniably differ from one reading to the next, even in instances when the reader remains constant.

Bakhtin's implication of the reader in the multiple processes of reading, hearing, interpreting, and individualizing a polyphonic text corresponds with Henri Meschonnic and Gérard Desson's theory of intersubjectivity based on rhythmic analysis. An elaboration upon Meschonnic's theory of *lecture-écriture*, a method by which the reader "writes" his or her interpretation of a particular text through the active process of reading, intersubjectivity involves the reader in the interconnected tasks of rhythmic analysis and interpretation. Asserting that, upon reading a text, the reader encounters two interrelated subjectivities, that of the *text-as-subject* and that of the *reader-as-subject*, Meschonnic and Dessons argue that rhythm provides a primary basis for the interconnected text-based and reader-based systems of subjectivity. Thus, for Meschonnic and Dessons, in the space of the text, the task of rhythmic analysis plays an integral role in the negotiation of meaning:

> Une analyse de rythme n'est donc pas n'importe quoi. Conduite dans le texte, mais par lui, elle se fonde sur une réalité intersubjective (une relation entre un texte-sujet et un lecteur-sujet) qui peut être, chaque fois, décrite concrètement. Cette réalité, qui appartient au texte dans le moment de la relation qu'il suscite n'est pas un sens caché, qu'il s'agirait de découvrir, mais une valeur qui s'invente, d'une invention qui révèle le texte à sa propre inventivité, à sa propre capacité d'invention, c'est-à-dire à sa capacité d'inventer la lecture qu'on en a. Cette inventivité est la part d'infini historique qui fait qu'un texte est

> une oeuvre, et continue d'agir comme une oeuvre, bien après qu'elle a été écrite. (Dessons and Meschonnic 1998, 188–89)

> [An analysis of rhythm is therefore not just anything. Driven in the text, but by it, it is based on an intersubjective reality (a connection between a text-subject and a reader-subject) that can be, each time, concretely described. This reality, which belongs to the text in the moment of the connection it sparks, is not a hidden meaning that must be discovered but a value that invents itself, of an invention that reveals the texts in its own inventivity, in its own capacity for invention, that is to say, in its capacity to invent the reading that one has. This inventiveness is the part of historical infinity that establishes that the text is a work, and continues to act as a work well after it has been written.]

For Meschonnic and Dessons, rhythmic elements, by way of their flexibility and variability, escape the static rigidity of fixed one-to-one interpretations. The reading(s) of the rhythm of the text and the rhythms in the text are completely dependent on the activity of the reader. As he or she engages in the capacity of a reader-subject with the text-subject, the reader is transported by the rhythm, not toward some predetermined meaning, but rather, toward innovation and inventiveness. Thus, a reader's willingness to engage with the text and the rhythm of the text contributes to the overall experience of reading, receiving, and interpreting a polyphonic written work.

## Rhythm and Identity in *L'appel des arènes*

Inextricably bound up with notions of identity and the politics of identification, the representational capacities of rhythm and music seem limitless. Extending into the domains of politics, religion, language, culture, and ethnicity, rhythmic and musical phenomena often serve as audible cues that signal group affiliations and aspirations of belonging. Charged with multiple nuances and messages, a single melody or cadence is laden with the potential to speak volumes. Since this capacity is common to both vocal and instrumental musical styles, it is not necessarily the voice that communicates the message, as Derrida affirms through his vast designation for the term *écriture*. Although song lyrics comprise an important component of many musical styles and can be interpreted much like prose or poetry, the instrumental and rhythmic components of songs are filled with expressive elements that evoke emotions and communicate messages in their own right. While such sounding phenomena are subjectively received and processed by individual listeners who each interpret audible

cues according to their unique set of experiences, impressions, and relationships, at times, rhythmic and musical elements are invoked to indicate group affiliations, audibly fortifying the ties that connect individuals to the collective whole of a group. Affirming group associations in a variety of domains including, but not limited to, politics, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, cultures, and subcultures, rhythmic and musical cues play significant roles in shaping the politics of identity. Even so, just as familiar music and rhythms have the power to include, unfamiliar rhythms and songs have the power to exclude cultural and/or subcultural outsiders. Whether used to include or exclude, in both *L'appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*, such audible elements prominently figure into the texts, serving as meaningful points of reference as Nalla and Ti Jean embark on their respective identificatory quests.

For Nalla, who marvels at the thought of everything related to wrestling—the history, the lore, and the excitement of battle—the recognizable rhythms of the arena's tam-tams mentally transport him to the space of the arena. The mere sound of drumbeats in the distance creates a heightened state of distraction for Nalla, as all of his thoughts are directed toward the total sensorial experience of the arena and its rhythms. Abandoning himself to the faraway rhythms, at times, "Nalla se sent vibrer comme le tam-tam fou, fou, fou" (*Appel*, 15) (Nalla feels himself vibrating like the crazy, crazy, crazy tam-tam). At other times, he feels as if he "vi[t] au rythme des arènes, et se grisant de l'air des arènes" (15) (is living to the rhythm of the arena, and intoxicating himself with the air of the arena). So filled with respect and admiration for the wrestlers and their craft, not just in combat but also in crafting and performing *bàkk*—boastful verses in which the wrestlers sing about their familial lineage and their skills in battle—Nalla dreams of one day becoming a great wrestler like Malaw, his friend and mentor.

For Nalla's parents, the echoes of tam-tams also elicit the sounds of the arena, although their impression of the wrestling subculture is far from favorable. When confronted with his son's apparent obsession with the call of the arena, Nalla's father, Ndiougou, refers to the tam-tams as "frivolités" (frivolities), and Nalla's interest in wrestling as a "caprice d'enfant" (child's caprice) (70). Later, when Nalla reveals his desire to become a great wrestler, his father tries to dissuade him, offering the young boy a bicycle, a motorcycle, and even a car, provided that he abandon his newfound interest in wrestling (112–13). Unlike Nalla, who idealizes the wrestling subculture evoked by the echoing rhythms of tam-tams, his father, Ndiougou, and his mother, Diattou, frown upon the music and everything it represents—the traditions, the sport, the athletes, and the fans.

While for those outside of the arena, the rhythms of tam-tams act as

audible signals that announce the inevitable rise and fall of wrestlers on a dusty battlefield, for those inside of the arena, the driving drumbeats serve a greater purpose, fortifying spectators and combatants alike. An integral part of the rites and rituals of wrestling, the rumbling tam-tams represent the "call of the arena," where the wrestlers dance and sing before engaging in battle in front of a crowd of cheering spectators. Also described as the "appel de la terre" (139) (call of the earth), the vibrant drumbeats summon spectators to the space of the arena, inviting them to participate in an important social ritual with implications that extend well beyond the range of sport. More than a mere accompaniment to the actions taking place therein, the tam-tam serves a multiplicity of purposes in the space of the arena. Aside from the initial announcement or invocation, performed as a means of welcoming spectators and competitors to the big event, a variety of drums including *tamas* (28) and tam-tams carried on shoulder straps (37) resound throughout the day.[6] Effectively narrating the drama taking place on the playing field, musicians frequently shift the mood of the music, at times playing "morceau[x] mélancolique[s]" (150) (melancholy piece[s]), and at others, beating out harsh, "rauque" (raucous) rhythms (151) on their instruments. As the long hours between the first and final matches wear on, musicians direct and maintain the energy of the audience, varying the volume, style, and intensity of their performances in view of heightening the level of excitement in the moments before each match begins. Similarly, for the wrestlers, the ever-present tam-tams of the arena seem to provide a source of strength, like a powerfully charged superhuman pulse.

In *L'appel des arènes*, Sow Fall most effectively demonstrates the significance of rhythm and music in Senegalese wrestling through her portrayal of Ndiougou's experience as a member of the crowd. Emphasizing the dual importance of vocal and instrumental genres, Sow Fall fills the space of the arena with multiple layers of sonorous polyphony, infusing the text with a resonant sensibility. Far from ornamental, these prominent rhythmic and musical elements play a fundamental role, not only in directing the energy and activity inside the arena, but also in raising questions of identity with implications both inside and outside the space of the arena.

Resistant to wrestling and the proletarian subculture that surrounds it, Ndiougou, a prominent physician, reluctantly enters the arena in the hopes of salvaging his relationship with Nalla, his only child. Completely unprepared for all of the sights, sounds, sensations, and emotions the day has in store for him, Ndiougou enters the arena with the sole intention of

6. Also known as the "talking drum," the *tama* is a drum with a variable pitch held in the crux between the arm and the ribs and played with a small curved stick. It is common to many Senegalese ethnic groups including the Wolof, Serer, Malinké, Toucouleur, and Mandinko.

observing Nalla, if only to assure himself that the boy is still capable of enjoying himself in spite of his deep and lingering depression (147). Ticket in hand, Ndiougou is instantly overwhelmed by the size of the crowd and the heat of the midday sun. As he searches for a place amidst the oversize crowd, his initial sensation is one of intense physical discomfort:

> Prenant son courage à deux mains, il s'est engagé dans la bousculade et, tel un navire en perdition, il a suivi passivement les bonds et les ressacs de la foule. Il a échoué dans les arènes. Elles sont pleines à craquer. Impensable de chercher à monter sur la tribune couverte. Il a eu la vertige: la grande foule et la chaleur accablante. Il a fermé un moment les yeux, le temps que son étourdissment passe. (149)
>
> [Taking his courage with two hands, he went in to get knocked about, like a ship in distress, he passively followed the back and forth motion of the crowd. He was stranded in the arena. It was so full it was bursting. Unthinkable to try to go up to the covered stand. He felt dizzy: the large crowd and the oppressive heat. He closed his eyes a moment, the time for his dizziness to pass.]

As Ndiougou enters the arena, Sow Fall privileges tactile sensorial elements, insisting on the physical malaise he experiences as he seeks to find his place in the crowd. Later, as Ndiougou wanders about, completely disoriented, sensorial elements remain at the forefront, emphasizing his physical and psychological discomfort amidst the sea of bodies that fill the arena. It is only after he finds a seat next to one of his colleagues, a nurse named Sogui, that he begins to relax, opening himself up to the power of the music in spite of his attempt to maintain a detached, objective air.

Throughout the day, music fills the space of the arena, washing over the crowd like sonorous ocean waves. Despite variations in genre and style, the rising and falling swell of music builds in size and strength from one match to the next, serving to heighten the level of energy and enthusiasm both in the crowd and on the playing field. By the time the much-anticipated final match between Malaw and Tonnerre is set to begin, the level of excitement and anticipation has reached a fever pitch. As Ndiougou sits, anxiously awaiting the onset of the main event, he is jarred by the sound of a flurry of thundering drumbeats:

> [T]out à coup, Ndiougou s'est demandé s'il n'était pas victime d'une hallucination. Les tambours rauques du Sud ont roulé comme une tornade et il a vu se dresser simultanément des milliers et des milliers de branches d'arbres portant leur feuillage touffu, au milieu des hourras. Comme une fôret qui se lève et qui danse. Le spectacle est fascinant. Ndiougou en a senti son souffle s'accélérer. (151)

[Suddenly, Ndiougou wondered if he wasn't the victim of a hallucination. The raucous drums of the South rolled in like a tornado and he simultaneously saw thousands and thousands of tree branches standing up, wearing their leafy foliage, amidst cheers. Like a forest rising and dancing. The sight is fascinating. Ndiougou felt his breath quicken.]

As the sounds of drumbeats fill the space of the arena, the crowd rises to its feet, immediately responding to the "call of the arena," the "call of the earth," with a frenzied barrage of cries and cheers. In the blink of an eye, in the beat of a drum, the crowd has completely transformed. The jubilant crowd dances and cheers, exchanging the restlessness of anticipation for the joy of celebration, simultaneously adding resonant layers of sounding voices and body movements to the infectious rhythms of tam-tams. At first, Ndiougou is so stunned by the spectacle that he doesn't believe his eyes and ears. When he realizes that he is not the "victim of a hallucination," Ndiougou surrenders himself to the rhythms of the drums and the movements of the crowd. Imbibed with the energy of the arena, Ndiougou's breathing accelerates. The physiological shift bears psychological implications as well, marking an important turning point in Ndiougou's character development. Impacted by his experience of music in the arena, Ndiougou abruptly abandons his status of observer-outsider and makes the transition to participant-insider, despite his initial disdain for the sport. Ndiougou maintains his participant status after the final match, staying on to partake in a festive celebration. When he finally rejoins Nalla around two o'clock in the morning, he promises they will return to the arena together. At the end of the day, Ndiougou leaves the arena irremediably changed by the sights, sensations, and sounds that contributed to his experience. No longer limited by his preconceived disdain for popular sport and local traditions, Ndiougou has opened his heart, his ears, and his mind to a richer, more complex performance of identity and experience of life.

In addition to the rhythms and music generated by musicians and spectators, the space of the arena is filled with other rhythms and other voices—those of the wrestlers themselves. As pairs of wrestlers prepare to square off before crowds of cheering fans, they are given the opportunity to boast about their fighting records, their wrestling skills, and their family lineages. Such performances, also referred to as *bàkk*, are defined by Sada Niang as follows:

Le *bàkk* est un *tagg*[7] dont l'interprétant est en même temps le

7. Niang defines a *tagg* as : "Un discours élégiaque dont la fonction est de rehausser l'interlocuteur, en flattant son honneur et sa dignité. Le *tagg* rappelle à l'interlocuteur

> bénéficiaire. Il se déclame en public, au son du tam-tam, lors d'une séance de lutte et tente d'intimider l'adversaire par la liste, généralement longue, de tous les braves hommes dont il a déjà été le vainqueur. (Niang 1992, 113)
>
> [The *bàkk* is a *tagg* in which the performer is simultaneously the beneficiary. It is declaimed in public, to the sound of the tam-tam, during a wrestling session and attempts to intimidate the adversary with the list, generally long, of all the brave men he has already conquered.]

Steeped in a rich tradition of Senegalese orality, *bàkk* constitute an important component of the social performance of wrestling. Typically accompanied by the rhythms of drumbeats, *bàkk* effectively combine vocal and instrumental elements, promoting an audibly resonant sensibility, both on and off the playing field. Transposed in the frame of the francophone novel, *bàkk* reflect local aesthetic perspectives that contribute to the transpoetic and transcultural qualities of the text.

Sow Fall incorporates *bàkk* throughout *L'appel des arènes*, interspersing blocks of narration and dialogue with rhythmically charged vocal performances. In each representation, the *bàkk* are visually distinct, presented in italicized print with each line indented. They are further set apart from the body of the text, disconnected above and below by blank lines. The presentation and spacing provides a frame for the text, showcasing each *bàkk*, but also allowing readers to shift gears as they make the transition from narrative to oral modes of discourse within the space of the text. Prominently featured in scenes taking place in the arena, *bàkk* play an important role in representing the experience of Senegalese wrestling. A meaningful cultural activity in Senegalese social contexts, the sport of wrestling involves more than the just physical struggle between two athletes. In fact, the wrestling matches themselves are often over in the blink of an eye. Just as significant are the intricate social performance rituals surrounding the sport, including the rhythms, the music, and the movements of *bàkk*.

Although *bàkk* comprise a key component of Sow Fall's portrayals of major wrestling events, their performance is not limited to the space of the

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la noblesse de sa généalogie, les exploits de ses ancêtres et le somme implicitement de faire honneur à son rang en se montrant généreux à l'égard du locuteur" (Niang 1992, 112). (An elegiac speech whose function is to elevate the interlocutor, while flattering his honor and his dignity. The *tagg* reminds the interlocutor of the nobility of his genealogy, the exploits of his ancestors, and the implicit sum of honoring his rank while proving himself generous toward the speaker.)

arena. *Bàkk* are also pronounced by wrestlers in other public and private venues, inspiring the students and fans of the sport who endeavor to commit them to memory. As an avid supporter of the sport, Nalla has memorized several *bàkk* that he eagerly shares with friends and family members. The animated performance pieces represent a significant part of Nalla's understanding and appreciation of the sport, and he often includes them in his discussions about wrestling. In one passage, Nalla pays tribute to his favorite wrestler, Malaw, by interpreting one of Malaw's signature *bàkk* as he describes his love of wrestling to his parents:

> Tu vois maman, il y pénètre comme un tigre échappé d'une cage, tout couvert de lait caillé, de la tête jusqu'aux pieds. Brandissant une longue bande d'étoffe blanche dans laquelle sont cousus beaucoup de gris-gris, il sautille pesamment en chantant:
>
> *Malaw Lô fils de Ndiaga Lô*
> *Qui me bravera dans Louga Lô*
> *À Diaminar où l'on ne dit que Lô*
> *Moi Malaw Lô 'Kor' Madjiguène Lô*
> *Le plus fort le plus brave le plus beau . . .* (28)
>
> [You see, Mom, he gets into it like a tiger escaped from a cage, all covered with *lait caillé* (milk curds), from head to toe. Brandishing a long band of white fabric in with lots of *gris-gris* (amulets worn for good luck or protection) sewn inside, he jumps around with heavy steps while singing:
>
> *Malaw Lô son of Ndiaga Lô*
> *Who will defy me in Louga Lô*
> *À Diaminar where they only say Lô*
> *Moi Malaw Lô "Kor" Madjiguène Lô*
> *The strongest the bravest the handsomest . . .* ][8]

As Nalla relates Malaw's prematch practices, he is careful to report a combination of audio and visual elements. While his observant eye focuses on the wrestler's movement, watching as he jumps about like a tiger brandishing a white stole covered with spiritually charged *gris-gris*, his attentive ears concentrate on the wrestler's song, seizing upon the significance of his omnipotent lyrics. In this respect, Nalla accords Malaw's actions and words with equal importance—so much that—as he proudly sings the wrestler's *bàkk* for his mother and father, he begins to imitate Malaw's movements. Dancing and jumping around as he sings, Nalla catches a glimpse of him-

8. In translating the *bàkk*, I have left the Wolof words untranslated as a means of imitating the bilingual effect created by Sow Fall.

self in the mirror, and instead of seeing himself, he sees the wrestling hero he wants to become:

"Nalla danse, sautille, lourdement, les deux bras en l'air, se regardant dans la glace. Sa respiration est haletante. Métamorphosé. Il est Malaw Lô, le lutteur hors classe, le lion du Kajoor " (28). (Nalla dances, jumps around, clumsily, his two arms in the air, watching himself in the mirror. He is breathless. Metamorphosed. He is Malaw Lô, the wrestler in a class of his own, the lion of Kajoor.) Through the repetition of his *bàkk*, Nalla pays tribute to Malaw, praising his impressive accomplishments and cultivating his developing status as a national hero. Much like the griots, who praise distinguished citizens and preserve historical information through *tagg* and other oral modes of contextualization, Nalla perpetuates the significance of the oral tradition through his performance of the *bàkk*, demonstrating its relevance to contemporary histories and social practices.

When transposed in the space of the text, Malaw's *bàkk* is decidedly different from its original version. Translated into French and transcribed on the written page, the transposed performance piece takes on transpoetic and transcultural dimensions, opening spaces for negotiation and appropriation. Although the majority of Malaw's *bàkk* are presented in French, respecting French lexical, morphological, and syntactic conventions, segments of the performance piece are left untranslated. A practice Sow Fall describes as a "wink" directed toward her Senegalese readers (Gadjigo 1987, 224), designed to create a sense of national and cultural complicity, the inclusion of Wolof lexical elements serves to orient the text in a localized cultural context while promoting Wolof linguistic and aesthetic conventions. Of particular interest in the aforementioned *bàkk* is the verse "Moi Malaw Lô 'Kor' Madjiguène Lô" (28). Although the word *Kor* is translated in a footnote as "*aimé de*" (loved by), the word *Madjiguène* is left unexplained, leaving space for ambiguity and confusion. For those unfamiliar with the Wolof language, the word *Madjiguène* might only be interpreted as a name, the name of a woman who loves Malaw. Quickly glossed over without further scrutiny, uninitiated readers typically jump to the next line, "*Le plus fort le plus brave le plus beau . . .* ," without giving *Madjiguène* further thought. Presented in standard French, the last line of the Malaw's *bàkk* stands in sharp contrast with the preceding line, which contains only one French lexical element—the pronoun *moi*, which morphologically resembles its Wolof equivalent *man*. To a Wolofophone reader, the line could just as easily read completely in Wolof: "*Man Malaw Lô 'Kor' Madjiguène Lô*," emphasizing the distinction between the two lines of text.

Although, in passing from Wolof to French, uninitiated readers are able to return to a linguistic comfort zone, they miss out on lexical subtleties Wolof-speaking readers do not. In the case of *Madjiguène*, for example, the

name conveys special meaning to readers familiar with Senegalese naming practices and traditions. When interpreted from a Wolofphone perspective, *Moi Malaw Lô "Kor" Madjiguène Lô* takes on subtle but meaningul dimensions. In Senegalese naming practices, the last name Lô indicates someone of Pular origin, whereas Madjiguène is a first name typically used by Wolof and Serer groups. In this respect, Madjiguène Lô represents a marriage between the Pular and Serer peoples or the Pular and Wolof peoples. The ambiguity in the name Madjiguène leaves room for interpretation, effectively connecting northern Senegal's three main ethnic groups, which may be a wink on Sow Fall's part at Senegalese unity.Moreover, the name Madjiguène conveys certain character connotations, as immigration activist Madjiguène Cissé explains:

> Je suis d'une ethnie sérère, mon prénom est typiquement oualof, et c'est un prénom tiado.[9] . . . Un prénom tiado, c'est le prénom de quelqu'un qui n'est ni chrétien, ni musulman. Nous avons résisté à toutes les entreprises de conversion, que ce soit au christianisme ou à l'islam. Notre résistance est à ce point légendaire . . . Bref, nous sommes des récalcitrants. (Cissé 1996)

> [I am of Serer origin, my first name is typically Wolof and it's a Tiado first name . . . A Tiado first name is the first name of someone who is neither Christian nor Muslim. We have resisted all attempts to convert us, whether to Christianity or to Islam. Our resistance is at this point legendary . . . Simply put, we are nonconformists.]

As Cissé explains, the first name Madjiguène is associated with legendary resistance and nonconformity in Senegalese cultural contexts. Although subtle, Sow Fall's wink here seems to suggest that Madjigène and Malaw's passion and appreciation for traditional Senegalese music, sports, and the arts represents a nonconformist perspective in late twentieth-century Senegal, particularly in the face of pop culture influences and trends imported to Senegal from Northern or Western nations. When read in this light, readers come to appreciate how Malaw Lô is loved not just by Madjiguène, but by all of the nonconformists who negotiate their own ways of being in the world in relation to other peoples, practices, and perspectives.

Similarly, a bolder interpretation could be derived in following with the second line of the *bàkk*, "*Qui me bravera dans Louga Lô*," in which Lô's family name is used to add extra emphasis, connoting Malaw's possession

9. Tiado (also spelled ceddo) is a term used to indicate animist believers in Senegal who refuse to align themselves with the dominant religions in Senegal—Islam and Christianity.

of or power over the city. In this light, Malaw's *bàkk* takes on a brasher dimension, one that is not readily apparent from the French. Far from ornamental, Sow Fall's Wolof wink adds layers of meaning to the bombastic oration while simultaneously infusing the French text with the rhythmic musicality of Wolof language and orality. As Malaw proclaims his prowess throughout the *bàkk*, he incorporates his family name Lô as a powerful vocal percussive device, punctuating each line of the performance piece in dialogue with the drums and with his dance steps.

Although the vocal components of the *bàkk* play a considerable role in shaping Sow Fall's resonant transpoetic work, the musico-rhythmic elements she presents in association with the oral performances are not to be overlooked. In developing this idea, it is useful to return to Niang's definition of *bàkk*, which, through the incorporation of the qualifier "au son du tam-tam" (Niang 1992, 113) (to the sound of the tam-tam), insists on the equal importance of vocal and instrumental phenomena in characterizing the genre. Like Niang, Sow Fall insists on the audible interplay between coexisting voices and drumbeats in her texted representations of *bàkk* in *L'appel des arènes*. In many passages, Sow Fall explicitly evokes the rhythms of tam-tams in the blocks of text directly preceding and succeeding the transposed *bàkk*. This augments the effect of the aforementioned visual framing techniques Sow Fall employs as a means of accentuating the performance pieces. As such, in addition to the visual frame, Sow Fall effectively constructs a sonorous rhythmic frame that privileges an audio aesthetic sensibility. She accomplishes this through vivid descriptions of rhythms, drumbeats, and the instruments used to produce them. The audio frame is further enhanced by texted representations of the boisterous crowd responses surrounding the performances, as Sow Fall expressly elicits an array of audibly resonant reactions including cheers, cries, dancing, and applause.

In one example, Nalla listens as his friend André recounts the exploits of Mahanta Bally, a legendary wrestler who was undefeated in battle. Before and after reciting Mahanta's *bàkk*, André vividly describes the sounds of the arena, invoking an audio frame that resonates to readers as well as the characters in the text:

> Des acclamations délirantes l'accueillaient lorsque, dans les arènes, il évoluait deux pas du pied droit, un du pied gauche, pointant tour à tour l'index vers les quatre points cardinaux et mugissant sous le timbre solennel des tambours:
>
> *Dioung . . . Dioung . . . Dioung*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung à l'est*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung à l'ouest*

> *Dioung Dioung Dioung au nord*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung au sud*
> *Mahanta Bally ici debout*
> *Fils de Karaman Bally toujours debout.*
> Un vacarme fracassant envahissait alors les arènes . . . ”   (46)

> [Delirious cheering welcomed him when, in the arena, he glided two steps with the right foot, one with the left foot, pointing in turn his index finger toward the four cardinal points and roaring under the solemn pitch of the drums:

> *Dioung . . . Dioung . . . Dioung.*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung to the east*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung to the west*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung to the north*
> *Dioung Dioung Dioung to the south*
> *Mahanta Bally here standing*
> *Son of Karaman Bally always standing.*
> A deafening noise then flooded the arena . . . ]

In the paragraph preceding the *bàkk*, André elicits three distinct percussive sounds—the cheering crowd, the solemn drumbeats, and the dancing footsteps of Mahanta—setting the tone for his oral performance. André also insists on relating Mahanta's movements as he dances before the crowd, specifying "two steps with the right foot, one with the left foot, pointing in turn his index finger toward the four cardinal points." More than mere gestures, Mahanta's movements communicate without words—much like the drumbeats—in this instance foreshadowing the content of his *bàkk*. As Robert Farris Thompson explains: "West African dances are *talking dances*, and the point of the conversation is the expression of percussive concepts" (Thompson 1999, 76). Connecting the rhythms of drumbeats with the deliberate movements of the wrestler and the cacophonous cries of the crowd, Sow Fall masterfully crafts an audiovisual narrative frame, setting the stage for Mahanta's performance.

As Mahanta performs his *bàkk*, he vocalizes the percussive elements—the combined rhythms of drumbeats and dance steps—that preface his oration. Referencing his hand motions, he summons the four cardinal directions in the first four lines of his *bàkk*. As he sings, he introduces each of the cardinal points with the phrase *dioung dioung dioung*, an onomatopoeia used to designate the sound of the tam-tam. The phrase *dioung dioung dioung* also suggests a Wolof word—*dioung dioung*—a large, double-headed drum played with a heavy stick traditionally used in Senegalese contexts to announce the arrival of royalty. Senegalese writer

Mariama Bâ uses an orthographic variant in presenting the royal tam-tam in her novel *Une si longue letter* (*So Long a Letter*): "Elle avait un masque tragique, dans ces lieux de grandeur qui chantaient le passé, au son des 'djou-djoung'" (*Si longue lettre*, 45) (She had a tragic mask, in these places of greatness that sang the past to the sound of "djou-djoungs"). Not limited to the sounds of regal drumbeats, the onomatopoeia doubly invokes the percussive sounds produced by Mahanta's feet, "two steps with the right foot, one with the left foot." Generating percussive elements with his body and with his voice, Mahanta channels the enigmatic force of the drum, an instrument accorded potent supernatural powers in many West African oral traditions (see Kamanda 1996, 197–200). Infused with the rhythms of drumbeats and dancesteps, it is as if Mahanta becomes a drum in his own right, to such an extent that, when Nalla makes reference to the wrestler, he identifies him as "faisant son Dioung Dioung" (*Appel*, 46–47) (doing/making his Dioung Dioung). Fueled by multiple layers of rhythmic polyphony in the space of the arena, Mahanta is an undeniable force to be reckoned with as a performer and an athlete, leaving amazed spectators and fallen opponents in his wake.

While, in *L'appel des arènes*, the rhythms of tam-tams are repeatedly associated with wrestling and the subculture that surrounds it, it is important to recognize that the drumbeats and songs performed and appropriated by the wrestling community are by no means exclusive to the wrestling arena. For Sow Fall, there are greater questions at hand, questions of representation and identification in a changing postcolonial Senegal. Writing to expose rather than to justify Senegalese cultural phenomena, as Sow Fall explains, the process of writing is an act through which she reveals herself, her country, and its people: "[L]a création romanesque . . . [n'est] pas un besoin de justification mais un acte par lequel on se révèle, on révèle son pays à l'autre. On révèle son environnement, on révèle son peuple" (Gadjigo 1987, 220). (Fictional creation . . . [is] not a need for justification but an act through which we reveal ourselves, we reveal our country to the other. We reveal our environment, we reveal our people.) As her characters struggle to orient themselves as individuals, citizens, and community members amidst a social climate charged with transformation and uncertainty, rhythmic and musical phenomena play an instrumental role in directing their respective paths toward self-discovery or self-destruction. In this respect, the rhythms and rituals of the wrestlers and their fans have implications outside the physical space of the arena, and beyond the context of wrestling.

As Tim Edensor points out in *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, popular sporting events and the cultural forms and social rituals that surround them play an important role in developing and

maintaining national identity constructs: "Sport is increasingly situated in the mediatised matrix of national life, is institutionalized in schools, widely represented in a host of cultural forms and is an everyday practice for millions of national subjects. These everyday and spectacular contexts provide one of the most popular ways in which national identity is grounded" (Edensor 2002, 78). For Edensor, the significance of popular sport lies beyond the thrill of the game, the excitement of the crowd, and the dynamics of the sport itself. Operating on a national level, the dramas unfolding in the space of the arena foster a spirit of togetherness among athletes and spectators alike, one that ultimately transcends the intensity of competition. In a world where successful professional athletes are elevated to the status of national heroes, popular sport acts as a collectivizing agent, promoting a sense of patriotism and community among fans. In this capacity, popular sport, much like popular music, has the power to bring diverse peoples together, creating a sense of group cohesion, regardless of differences in age, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

Masterfully combining the binding elements of popular sport and popular music, all the while texting them in the frame of the novel, Sow Fall sets the stage for an exploration of questions of collectivity and nationalism in late twentieth-century Senegal. Vividly portraying the complexity of an important national pastime, she infuses the text with the vibrant rhythms and music of the wrestling arena—multisensorial swirls of sights and sounds—and connects them with larger questions of identity. In Sow Fall's texted realm, the space of the arena becomes a site for equivocation, negotiation, and innovation, a place where spectators momentarily lose themselves as anonymous parts of a collective whole only to emerge with a greater understanding of themselves and each other. As Suzanne Crosta explains, the arena represents a space where individuals are "called to blend" together, or even "to melt" together: "Les arènes et les luttes qui s'ensuivent représentent une présence et une activité collective où l'individu est appelé à s'y fondre" (Crosta 1988, 62). (The arena and the wrestling matches that unfold there represent a presence and a collective activity where the individual is called to blend in.)

The blending process Crosta describes is readily apparent during Ndiougou's very first visit to the arena. As he finds a seat alongside a nurse named Sogui and his friends, important questions of identity emerge. As the group, already crammed together "comme des sardines" (150) (like sardines), makes room for the respected doctor, Ndiougou becomes just another member of the crowd and momentarily loses his elevated social status. The ensuing sense of instability unleashes an identity crisis of sorts, as the doctor is called to question his sense of self and his relationships with others. Somewhat ill at ease among the masses assembled in the arena,

Ndiougou struggles with his own identificatory malaise, manifest in his inability to reconcile his unwavering belief in the superiority of European cultural practices and his bitter disdain for Senegalese social customs. As he sits, lost in the sea of the mosaic crowd, Ndiougou, who finds himself surrounded by strange and familiar faces representing a variety of social groups and divergent ideological perspectives, is compelled to reconsider his divisive attitudes. As the day wears on, he scans the blur of faces in the crowd and is surprised to recognize several prominent figures, all imbibed with the excitement of the arena. Among them, he sees Saer—a prominent psychiatrist who spent twenty-five years in Europe and is married to a white woman, Fara, one of the most maligned state inspectors, who is said to be heartless, and Monsieur Gartinet, a white university professor known for his racist attitudes. He also recognizes Anthiou—a trial lawyer known for his charisma and eloquence, along with Nalla and his benevolent tutor Monsieur Niang. Gathered together in the space of the arena and united through a common interest in music and sport, the spectators experience a momentary breakdown of socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and ideological dividing lines during the wrestling events. Whether or not these relational transformations will endure after the end of the match is up to the spectators themselves. In this capacity, those who choose to open their ears, hearts, and minds to the rhythms of the drums and the music of the *bàkk* possess the power to contribute to the breakdown of operative social hierarchies existing outside the space of the arena. Even so, this breakdown will not happen automatically or immediately. Rather, as Sow Fall maintains, intentional and persistent engagement is required on the part of those seeking to promote social change.

Moved by the sights, sounds, and sensations of the arena, Ndiougou emerges a changed man. His newfound appreciation for the music and movement of the wrestling arena not only provides him the chance to reconnect with his only son, but also invigorates a sense of respect for local cultural practices and traditions. As Odile Cazenave affirms: "[M]oving from the intimate inner space, to the open and public space, enables him to rediscover his origins and identity" (Cazenave 1991, 58). By opening his ears, his mind, his body, and his heart to the sounding realm of the arena, Ndiougou reintroduces meaningful cultural elements into his life. He no longer denies himself the opportunity to enjoy the sounds of Seneglese musical traditions and innovations such as "melodious voices" singing *xalams* (lullabies) and dancing girls "flirting with the *tama*" (talking drums) (*Appel*, 108). Now receptive to the rhythms, songs, and dances of everyday life, Ndiougou begins to develop a sense of belonging, both as a citizen of the city Louga and the nation of Senegal. This is a sense his son Nalla has already started to cultivate on his own. Through their

shared experience of wrestling and its rhythms—their mutual response to the "call of the arena," "the call of the earth"—Ndiougou and Nalla successfully reconfigure their respective understandings of each other, themselves, and their relationships with others and the world. Although the paths of their respective physical and psychological journeys differ greatly, through a mutual enjoyment of wrestling and the musico-social rituals that surround it, the father and son are able to arrive at a point of understanding, one that will serve as a meaningful frame of reference and forum for dialogue in the future.

While Nalla and Ndiougou are able to find peace with themselves and reconcile their relationship with each other, Nalla's mother, Diattou, is not so fortunate. Unwilling to be moved by the rhythm of the tam-tams, Diattou refuses to enter the space of the arena and remains disdainful of her family's and neighbors' interest in the sport. By stubbornly maintaining her disapproval, she not only denies herself the opportunity to bond with her son, her husband, and members of the community, but she also disavows an occasion for self-discovery: "[Elle] ne pourr[a] jamais savoir ce qui se passe en [Nalla] lorsque résonne le tam-tam et que la voix limpide des griotes célèbre la force, le courage et l'honneur des dieux des arènes. L'extase des sons, des couleurs et du mouvement, [elle] ne la sentir[a] jamais" (108). (She could never know what happens to [Nalla] when the tam-tam resounds and that the lucid voice of the *griotes*[10] celebrates the strength, the courage and the honor of the gods of the arena. The ecstasy of sounds, of colors and of movement, [she] would never feel it.) Deprived of the intense sensorial experience of the arena, the physical and emotional rush generated by polyphonic swirls of drumbeats and singing, Diattou loses the chance to resolve her feelings of loneliness and isolation. Unlike Nalla and Ndiougou, who share a newfound understanding of one another due in part to a common rhythmic point of reference, Diattou, who blocks her ears from and remains unaffected by the call of the arena, is left suffering in silence and solitude, her future uncertain, at the end of Sow Fall's novel.

## Rhythm and Identity in *Ti Jean L'horizon*

Rhythmic and musical elements also play a prominent role in *Ti Jean L'horizon*, shaping the protagonist's identificatory quest across disparate spaces and disjointed epochs. As he wanders through indiscernible realms of reverie and experience, rhythmic and musical cues provide important

10. In French, *griote* is a word that designates a female griot who practices her art through a combination of music, storytelling, and dance.

reference points that serve to orient the young hero in unfamiliar places and times. Unlike Nalla, who travels around his city in search of a sense of self and a sense of community, Ti Jean unwittingly embarks on his epic journey after an unlikely set of circumstances arises. When a giant beast with seven heads swallows the sun and the island of Guadeloupe, Ti Jean is compelled to act. Driven by his desire to rescue his beloved, Égée, and his mother, Éloise, from their uncertain fates inside the belly of the giant beast, Ti Jean sets off in search of something unknown. Unaware that his voyage will lead him to wander across, beneath, and beyond the ocean, and to err through immemorial, alternate, and unforeseeable times, Ti Jean ardently takes the first steps of his voyage. More than an attempt to be reunited with his loved ones, Ti Jean's journey immediately becomes a simultaneous quest for and questioning of Antillean identity, one through which truths will be constructed, shattered, and transformed.

After deciding to combat the beast with seven heads from the inside out, Ti Jean creeps inside the mouth of the giant, sliding down its esophagus, softly landing somewhere in the creature's entrails. The scene that awaits Ti Jean deep inside the belly of the beast is completely unexpected. Not only is there is no Égée, no mother Éloise, and no island of Guadeloupe, but the insides of the beast are like nothing anatomically conceivable. Instead of the glistening pinks, reds, and grays of the beast's internal organs, Ti Jean finds himself surrounded by a breathtaking landscape, one that appears paradoxically enigmatic yet familiar:

> Toutes les choses avaient une allure à la fois insolite et familière. Palmiers et cocotiers, fromagers qu'il avait reconnus dans sa chute ne lui offraient plus le même visage. Vus de terre, ils semblaient plus grands que ceux de Guadeloupe, avec quelque chose de rude et de heurté qui n'existait pas là-bas. Quant à l'air âcre et chaud, à l'espace qui l'entourait, à la disposition des étoiles dans le ciel, ils étaient étrangers au pays, bien que Ti Jean éprouvât au fond de lui-même qu'ils ne lui étaient pas tout à fait étrangers, à lui, considéré dans l'intime de son estomac: n'avait-il pas déjà respiré cet air, ressenti l'angoisse de cet horizon, contemplé la disposition mystérieuse des étoiles dans un ciel non pas transparent, comme celui de Fond-Zombi, mais éclaboussé par endroits d'une encre très noire. (*Ti Jean*, 140–41)

> [Everything had a familiar yet unusual appearance. Palm trees and coconut trees, kapok trees that he recognized in his fall no longer offered him the same face. Seen from earth, they seemed larger than those of Guadeloupe, with something rough and uneven that was

> not found there. As for the acrid, warm air, the space that surrounded him, the position of the stars in the sky, they were foreign to the country, even though Ti Jean felt deep inside himself that they were not completely foreign to him, considered in the pit of his stomach: hadn't he already breathed this air, felt the anxiety of this horizon, contemplated the mysterious position of the stars in a sky not transparent, like that of Fond-Zombi, but spattered in spots with a very black ink.]

Although, in describing his initial descent, Schwarz-Bart privileges Ti Jean's gaze as he surveys the unusual yet familiar landscape, she later evokes the realm of sensation by narrating Ti Jean's emotional and physical responses to his new surroundings. Her characterizations of the "acrid, warm air" he inhales and the strange, anxious feeling he detects in the pit of his stomach create a climate of physical unease, which corresponds with the young hero's feelings of frustration and confusion during his wayward voyage. Favoring visual and tactile elements, Schwarz-Bart avoids eliciting audible cues, perhaps as a means of heightening Ti Jean's disorientation and confusion as he stands lost in a parallel universe and an alternate time, left to negotiate an alternative history in the land of his ancestors. In later passages, the author prominently incorporates resonant rhythmic and musical elements, which serve to emphasize familiar and unfamiliar aspects of Ti Jean's experience, accentuating his coinciding feelings of connection and isolation in the land of his ancestors, in the Niger River Valley.

As he struggles to get his bearings in his new location, Ti Jean soon encounters a young boy, Maïri, who is trapped in a dangerous situation. As the terrified boy stands cornered by a lion positioned to attack, Ti Jean springs into action and successfully rescues the boy. The grateful boy invites Ti Jean to accompany him to his village, which happens to be situated near the birthplace of Ti Jean's grandfather, a powerful sorcerer known as Wademba. As Maïri and his rescuer walk along the path leading to the village, the young boy claims to recognize Ti Jean from somewhere. Confounded by the allegation, Ti Jean immediately responds to the charge, assuring Maïri that he has never before set foot in the region, neither in the realms of reverie or reality. An astonished Maïri finds it difficult to believe Ti Jean, particularly since he is at a loss to believe that a man could proficiently express himself in a foreign language he claims to have never heard before.

Although the first sounds she presents in the land of the ancestors are those of vocal dialogue, in the passage following Ti Jean and Maïri's conversation, Schwarz-Bart fills the space of the text with the resonant rhythms of drumbeats. As the pair travels toward Maïri's village, the rumblings of

tam-tams erupt in the distance. While Maïri efficiently receives and comprehends the message contained in the drumbeats, the communication remains unintelligible to Ti Jean's uninitiated ears, revealing his status as an outsider. Disassociated from his surprising communicative competency in the local spoken language, the intricate patterns of the local drum language effectively construct an audible barrier, distinguishing Ti Jean as an outlander, a nonmember of the local village community, in spite of his local linguistic capacities and his striking physical resemblance to his late grandfather.

Although, upon perceiving the faraway tam-tams, Ti Jean realizes that the drumbeats in question are not intended for dancing, the meaning of the intricate rhythm escapes him. This prompts him to ask Maïri for a translated version of the drummed message: "Que dit le tam-tam?" (149) (What is the tam-tam saying?). The first message, emitted near the territory of Maïri's people, takes on hospitable dimensions, proclaiming, "un ami est sur le chemin" (149) (a friend is on the way). Nevertheless, as the communiqué is transmitted across the distances that separate neighboring villages, the message subtly transforms, taking on a more menacing tone as it is disseminated from village to village. By the time it reaches the village of the rival Sonaqués, the drummed communication, increasingly volatile, warns, "un étranger qui a la face de Wademba est sur le chemin" (149) (a stranger with the face of Wademba is on the way). Unbeknownst to Ti Jean, who is as unfamiliar with the local history as he is with the local drum language, the Sonaqué transmission leaves room for alternative interpretations, but only to those who know the story of Wademba's tragic fate. Since he is unaware of the series of unfortunate events that befell Wademba in his homeland at some point in a past, present, parallel, or alternate time, Ti Jean fails to conceive the gravity of the Sonaqué announcement. Unversed in reports that narrate Wademba's assassination in the region by a shot from an enemy arrow, Ti Jean is deceived by the duplicitous message that suggests an enemy has returned to the region.

As Urbain Amoa explains in *Poétique de la poésie des tambours* (Poetics of the Poetry of Drums), drummed messages transmit "proverbes, sentences, circonlocutions, [et] devises" (Amoa 2002, 121) (proverbs, maxims, circumlocutions, [and] mottos), rather than speaking in direct terms. Although achieved in a nonverbal manner, relying on the rhythm and tonality of drumbeats rather than written or spoken language, such forms of drummed discourse demonstrate undeniable parallels with the musico-vocal stylings of West African griot traditions. Kofi Agawu affirms Amoa's assertion in arguing for the study of African languages as a key to understanding and interpreting African musics (Agawu 2001). In his description, Amoa further characterizes drum languages as an "initiated"

discourse in so far as "dans ce discours [tambouriné] la phrase équivaut au mot" (Amoa 2002, 121) (in [drummed] discourse, the phrase is the equivalent of the word). Elaborating on Frédéric Titinga Pacere's notion of bendrology, which Pacere defines as "la science, les études méthodiques, les figures de rhéthorique relatives au tam-tam bendré, et la culture de ce tam-tam, voire les messages tambourinés" (Pacere 1991, 12) (the science, methodical studies, the rhetorical figures relative to the *bendré* tam-tam, even drummed messages), Amoa figuratively implicates both the eyes and ears of the receptor of drummed discourse: "Le langage du tam-tam est, comme le dit Pacere, un discours; pour le comprendre il faut avoir *trois yeux* pour voir ce qui n'est pas écrit et comprendre le non-dit auquel renvoie le silence que le tam-tam observe dans sa communication avec son entourage" (Amoa 2002, 121). [The language of the drum is, as Pacere says, a discourse; in order to understand it, one must have *three eyes* to see what is not written and to understand the unsaid to which echoes the silence the tam-tam observes in its communication with its entourage.] In his discussion, Amoa underscores the importance of the interpretive mode in analyzing drummed discourse. Not simply a question of translating encoded drumbeats into words, Amoa likens the process of interpreting drummed information to the practice of reading a text, but with an added dimension, a third eye to focus on the silent, "untold" or "unsaid" spaces.

Given the complexities of drummed discourse and the equal importance accorded to sounding and silent phenomena, Ti Jean's inability to comprehend the tam-tam's message despite his communicative competency in the local spoken language reveals itself as more than a question of language, which in turn, raises larger questions of identity. Although he looks and speaks like a Ba'Sonaqué, Ti Jean's outsider status is visibly apparent, due in part to his unfamiliarity with drummed discourse, but also his unawareness of the oral histories and traditions referenced by the sounds and silences of drumbeats. His unease is further augmented as he accompanies Maïri en route to the Ba'Sonaqué village. As he listens to the young boy's rendition of the "Histoire de la flèche qui atteignit Wademba" (Story of the Arrow That Hit Wademba), Ti Jean vocally responds to a rhetorical question contained in the story: "[E]nfants, entendez-vous la flèche voler dans le ciel?" (*Ti Jean*, 154). ([C]hildren, do you hear the arrow flying in the sky?) As the sole audience member, Ti Jean effectively interrupts Maïri's story with his reply, taking a moment to engage him in direct dialogue. "Je vois bien cette flèche dans le ciel, mais je ne comprends pas du tout sa trajectoire : hélas, le nègre peut-il se mettre lui-même dans les chaînes?" (155). (I see that arrow in the sky, but I do not understand its trajectory at all: alas, the black man can he put himself in chains?). During their conversation, Ti Jean once again discloses his foreign status, when he

utters a word unfamiliar to Maïri's ears—*nègre* (155) (black man). Instantly aware of Maïri's discomfort, communicated through the *nondit*—the unsaid—of his abrupt and prolonged silence, Ti Jean attempts to remedy the situation by calling the young boy "frère" (brother), and importuning him to continue with his story, but this only ends up complicating things further. Before resuming his story, Maïri rejects the label of "brother," incredulously addressing the implications of the affiliation by transforming Ti Jean's affirmation into a question, "frère?" (155).

Disoriented and perplexed, Ti Jean longs to be reunited with his beloved Égée and mother Éloise, wherever and whenever they are. Nevertheless, with no way of reconnecting with them in sight, Ti Jean resigns himself to adjust to his new surroundings despite his feelings of apprehension and isolation. Upon arriving in the first village, Ti Jean immediately takes a sensorial inventory of the village environment, mentally cataloguing the sights, sounds, and smells into groupings of familiar and unfamiliar. In her narration of events, Schwarz-Bart once again privileges the visual, later insisting on Ti Jean's olfactory, auditory, and physio-emotional responses. With his eyes, Ti Jean observes that the huts, which, from afar, resemble that of Wademba, are much different, much more magnificent, when viewed from up close. As he wanders about, admiring the colorful huts, Ti Jean compares them to the rundown lodgings of his grandfather's village in Guadeloupe: "Errant parmi toutes ces merveilles, Ti Jean les comparaît involontairement aux cases du plateau d'En-haut, pauvres papillons défraîchis, sans couleur, réduits à la carcasse pour s'être trop débattus dans les ronces d'un autre monde" (162). (Wandering amidst all of these marvels, Ti Jean involuntarily compared them to the huts of the plateau Up-above, poor faded butterflies, without color, reduced to carcasses after struggling too much in the brambles of another world.)

Although his visual recollections of his grandfather's home in Guadeloupe pale in comparison to his first visual impressions of the Ba'Sonaqué village, Ti Jean is immediately struck by the scent of a familiar aroma, that of "un plat de gombos aux boyaux salés, avec un bouchon d'herbes nageant par-dessus . . . tel exactement que le préparaient les gens de Fond-Zombi, tel" (162) (a dish of okra with salted tripe with a plug of herbs swimming on top . . . exactly how people of Fond-Zombi prepared it, exactly). As he indulges in a dish common to the inhabitants of Guadeloupe and the Niger River Valley, Ti Jean momentarily loses himself in the sensorial experience of the meal. As he savors the meal, the echoes of the clicks, clacks, and thumps of the preceding meal preparation resonate in his subconscious mind, reminding him of the effort and care that go into each dish, which reminds him of home—wherever and whenever that is. Looking inward rather than outward, Ti Jean reflects on all that he has seen and heard since

his arrival in the land of his ancestors. Familiar with the local spoken language and cuisine, yet unfamiliar with the local drummed language, oral traditions, and histories, Ti Jean is frustrated with his inability to negotiate an insider status in the land of the Ba'Sonaqué. Still in a state of disbelief, he is overcome in the middle of the meal by his emotions, causing him to cry out "Je ne suis pas un étranger, pas un étranger . . . " (162) (I am not a stranger, not a stranger) in a fit of rage.

In a later passage, Ti Jean's ears detect the resonantly intricate rhythms of women working, the sounds of which generate a strange sense of nostalgic recognition. Vibrantly manifest in the everyday clicks, clacks, smacks, and thumps of pestles against mortars or laundry against rocks, the polyphonic rhythms brought forth by the Ba'Sonaqué women bear an eerie resemblance to the quotidian cadences produced by the mothers, sisters, and daughters of his native Fond-Zombi:

> À l'entrée du village, deux femmes écrasaient du grain dans un mortier de bois, leurs rondes épaules tout illuminées de sueur. Un coup elles chantaient au rythme du pilon, et un coup elles pilonnaient au rythme variable de leur chant, en une sorte de danse subtile, aérienne, ainsi que faisaient les commères de Fond-Zombi en pilant café, cacao, farine de manioc, ou en voltigeant linge contre les roches blanches de la rivière; et le coeur de nostr'homme se serra, se serra devant ces images familières, comme si les deux mondes s'étaient tendu la main sans se voir, siècle après siècle, par-dessus l'océan. (177–78)
>
> [At the entrance of the village, two women were crushing grain in a wooden mortar, their round shoulders all illuminated with sweat. With one blow they sang to the rhythm of the pestle, and one blow they pounded to the variable rhythm of their singing, in a sort of subtle, aerial dance, just like the *commères* of Fond-Zombi did in crushing coffee, cocoa, manioc flour, or in fluttering laundry against the white rocks of the river, and our man's heart tightened up, tightened up before these familiar images, as if the two worlds had been holding hands without seeing each other, century after century, above the ocean.]

Moved by the strangely similar rhythms of women working on both sides of the Atlantic, Ti Jean finds a point of connection with the Ba'Sonaqué people. This marks an important turning point in Ti Jean's African experience, signaling his transition from outsider to insider, in spite of his earlier failures to recognize the intricate communicative patterns of drummed discourse. In this respect, soon after finding a nonvocal rhythmic point

of commonality, Ti Jean is welcomed into the Ba'Sonaqué village, where he will spend the equivalent of a lifetime. In tune with the rhythms of everydayness, in this instance, Ti Jean's ability to successfully identify (with) and interpret the nonvocal dimensions of the sounds of women working is significant, particularly since, traditionally, drums and other talking instruments are invested with an agency that, according to Meki Nzewi, Israel Anyahuru, and Tom Ohiaraumunna, "carries a more neutral and commanding authority than vocal music communication by a performer with human identity" (Nzewi, Anyahuru, and Ohiaraumunna 2001, 92). On that fateful day, Ti Jean's acceptance is solidified when Ba'Sonaqué villagers give him the name Ifu'umwâmi, which means "Il-dit-oui-à-la-mort-et-non-à-la-vie" (He-says-yes-to-death-and-no-to-life) in the ancient Ba'Sonaqué language (179).

As the villagers celebrate Ti Jean's newfound inclusion in Ba'Sonaqué society, Ti Jean notices yet another rhythmic parallel connecting the disparate spaces of Fond-Zombi and the Niger River Valley, which he perceives through the familiar rhythms and movements of dancing. The dance, described as "un pas vif et heurté qui rappelait, oui, la danse des mouchoirs, à la fin de la saison des cannes" (180) (a lively, uneven step, that recalled, yes, the dance of the handkerchiefs, at the end of the cane season), serves to fortify Ti Jean's sense of belonging as a new member of the Ba'Sonaqué community. Providing an additional point of rhythmic commonality, the strikingly familiar dance strengthens Ti Jean's relationship with the villagers, promoting a spirit of collectivity. Operating much like a language, the sight and sensation of familiar dance steps engages Ti Jean in rhythmic dialogue with the citizens of his newfound community. As Judith Lynne Hanna suggests, engaging in common dance steps, much like conversing in a shared language, engenders social cohesion: "Dance is a social phenomenon. As is the case with much linguistic behavior, it sometimes operates without people being aware of it . . . As individuals create verbal language and respond to it without being conscious of how they do it, so may they create and respond to dance. In this sense it lives, develops, and persists as a collective phenomenon" (Hanna 1979, 29).

For Ti Jean, the recognizable rhythms of familiar dance steps forge stronger bonds than those created through his knowledge of the local spoken language. This is attributable to the memories Ti Jean associates with the sensorial experience of watching the dancers and participating as a spectator in the event. Unlike the local language, which fails to access Ti Jean's domain of past experiences, the dance evokes the familiar sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of specific moments and locations in time-space—in this instance, the annual celebrations that mark the end of the sugar cane harvest in the village of Fond-Zombi.

In considering the importance of rhythmic and musical phenomena in Ti Jean's ever-changing world, Schwarz-Bart incorporates the organic, ephemeral qualities of individual performances as well as the seemingly boundless possibilities for rhythmic and musical composition and improvisation. Nonetheless, despite variations and innovations across styles and genres, Schwarz-Bart maintains that the affective experience of rhythm and music is one possible constant in a highly variable equation, for performers and spectators alike: "C'est comme les chansons de gros ka, à un moment donné on a pu penser que la veine était tarie et puis maintenant il y a des tas de jeunes qui font des chansons absolumment extraordinaires avec le même talent, le même désespoir" (Constant 2002, 110). [It's like the *gros ka* (*gwo ka*) songs, at a given moment one could have thought that the vein had dried up and then now there are lots of young people who make absolutely extraordinary songs with the same talent, the same despair.]

For Schwarz-Bart, the sensorial qualities of rhythm and music are intrinsically connected to the realm of emotive experience, which may explain why Ti Jean is so affected upon perceiving the familiar rhythms of quotidian events and momentous celebrations during his voyage to the land of his ancestors. By insisting on the emotional effects of rhythm and music rather than their aesthetic impressions, Schwarz-Bart places particular emphasis on the expressive and communicative dimensions of sounds and silences. In this respect, both incidental everyday cadences and structured rhythmic compositions operate much like the encoded rhythms of drummed discourse. Nevertheless, unlike drummed discourse, which functions as a language and requires a degree of fluency or proficiency on the part of the drummer and his or her listener, musico-rhythmic genres have the capacity to communicate something to each and every listener, regardless of language, culture, knowledge, or experience. Through the shared experience of rhythm or music, performers and perceivers create points of connection and correspondence, allowing for communication and exchange across cultures and generations.

Through the representation of strangely similar rhythmic phenomena—both the variable melodic cadences of women working and the vivacious, irregular rhythms of dance steps—Schwarz-Bart establishes a transcultural link that connects the peoples of West Africa and the Caribbean, despite the passage of distance and time. This is a point the author herself suggests through the personified image of two worlds imperceptibly holding hands "century after century beneath the ocean." Nevertheless, in representing undeniable transcultural parallels between the peoples of Fond-Zombi and the Niger River Valley, Schwarz-Bart carefully maintains the differences that distinguish the two groups, in spite of their transcultural connections and rhythmic points of commonality. In this respect, the two cultures

are decidedly different, as evidenced by Ti Jean's difficulties adjusting to his new sociocultural setting. Without connoting inherent homogeneity or rootedness, in designating a transatlantic link that connects Ti Jean's Guadeloupe and Wademba's Niger River Valley, Schwarz-Bart opens a realm of boundless possibility in which communication takes place across vast distances and disparate epochs, allowing for negotiation, innovation, and exchange in sounding forums.

Although Ti Jean finds comfort in the rhythmic similarities that bridge the gaps between distant spaces and disparate epochs—linking the Niger River Valley of an alternate past to the Guadeloupe of Ti Jean's faraway present—he is ultimately disappointed by his voyage to the land of his ancestors. After spending many decades as a member of Ba'Sonaqué society and marrying four women—one of whom resembles his beloved Égée—Ti Jean is left feeling disillusioned and unfulfilled. This is a point Schwarz-Bart illustrates, once again, through rhythmic representations and associations. In one such passage, Schwarz-Bart elicits Ti Jean's memories of the rhythms and music that filled his faraway past as a means of demonstrating his failure to psychologically assimilate himself as a member of Ba'Sonaqué society.

> Alors il se levait, accompagnait le roi vers la place du village, sous le baobab de palabres, où les conversations faisaient immédiatement place à la danse. Chaque fois, nostr'homme se promettait d'en rester aux figures traditionnelles des Ba'Sonaqués. Mais la voix du tambour le mystifiait, l'emportait insidieusement vers un autre temps, un autre lieu, une autre musique intérieure; et le voilà qui se mettait à battre l'espace à mouliner la nuit de grands gestes qui disaient, parlaient ce qui s'appelle, chantaient les mondes et les arrière-mondes, les bois qui sont derrière les bois, les tremblements et les éboulis, les chutes. . . . (204)

> [Then he got up, accompanied the king toward the village square, beneath the baobab of discussions, where conversations immediately gave way to dancing. Each time, our man promised himself to remain with the traditional figures of the Ba'Sonaqués. But the voice of the drum mystified him, carried him insidiously toward another time, another place, another interior music; and it was there that he began to beat the milling space the night of great movements that told, spoke what is named, sang worlds and nether-worlds, woods that lie behind the woods, tremors and landslides, waterfalls . . . ]

While outward appearances suggest Ti Jean's successful integration as a member of Ba'Sonaqué society, in his mind and in his heart, he unwittingly

maintains the status of outsider. As he sits surrounded by festive swirls of music and dancing, Ti Jean denies himself the collectivity of the shared rhythmic experience, effectively isolating himself from the members of his community. Despite his efforts to concentrate on Ba'Sonaqué traditions, the voice of an allegorical drum intervenes, mentally transporting him to other places and other times. As his thoughts drift toward his own interior struggle, Ti Jean reproaches his own idealizations of a utopic ancestral Africa, in a process Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi describes as "an invitation to reject, or at least to relativise, the homogenizing discourse of an immutable and eternal African past" (Mudimbe-Boyi 1993, 212). Disillusioned, Ti Jean equally reprimands his own failure to appreciate his native Guadeloupe for what it was (or what it is), born out of what Mudimbe-Boyi characterizes as the "necessity for a reconciliation with one's interiority" (212). Unable to reconcile his African present and his Antillean past, Ti Jean's identificatory anguish is amplified when he is ultimately betrayed by the Ba'Sonaqué. Tried as a sorcerer after having transformed himself into a raven in an attempt to flee from an unhappy marriage and an uncomfortable existence among the Ba'Sonaqué, Ti Jean is convicted and stoned to death. Notably, it is Maïri, the young man whose life he saved upon his arrival in the Niger River Valley, who throws the first stone.

Ti Jean's death at the hands of Maïri can be read as a critique of la Négritude, a literary, cultural, and political movement headed by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas in the 1930s. Hailing from Martinique, Senegal, and French Guyana respectively, the poets sought to encourage transatlantic solidarity in promoting writers from Africa and the African Diaspora. In particular, the writers advocated Pan African unity as a means of confronting the problems and injustices of colonialism, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in France, its colonies, and around the world. Whereas la Négritude provided a starting point for African and Afro-Caribbean writers to gain visibility and increase awareness in political, sociocultural, linguistic, and aesthetic domains during the final decades of colonialism, many writers soon found the essentializing moniker Négritude limiting. In Caribbean contexts, many writers responded by developing critical and literary works that supported the notion of Antillanité, rooting identities in the geographic spaces of the Antilles, all the while recognizing the global network of influences in operation through migration, communication, travel, and exile. Although Édouard Glissant is best known for his endorsement of Antillanité, Simone Schwarz-Bart also explores dimensions of the specificities of Antillean identities in her works. For Schwarz-Bart, the rejection of Négritude emerges as she acknowledges the importance of looking inward to the spaces of the islands before looking to exterior points of reference in Africa, Europe, or other

parts of the world. This motif is apparent in the case of the Ba'Sonaqué's ultimate rejection of and assault on Ti Jean. In this respect, his initial gaze outward to a faraway space situated in an ancestral past leads to an incomplete and inauthentic sense of collective and individual identity, which brings about his initial demise during his epic journey.

Through his death, Ti Jean unknowingly embarks upon another journey, as he travels from the ancestral lands of the Niger River Valley to the cavernous realm of the Kingdom of the Dead. Existing somewhere unknown, beyond the ephemeral and shifting spaces of dreams, nightmares, and hallucinations, Ti Jean finds himself in an obscure, cavernous universe. Devoid of the quotidian sonorities that fill the lands of the living, the Kingdom of the Dead is both silent and imposing. As Ti Jean wanders, lost for several eternities in the vast and solemn realm, rhythm and music take on sacred dimensions, and Dawa the "divine drummer" is revered as a messiah. Condemned to repeat their "danse sans musique" (218) (dance without music) day after day in the Kingdom of the Dead, Ti Jean and the other lost souls incessantly wait for the day when Dawa will take up his drum, simultaneously breaking the oppressive silence and illuminating the darkened sky.

After a lengthy period of introspection in the Kingdom of the Dead where he ends up living as the lover-captive of its monstrous queen, Ti Jean is liberated. Left, once again, to wander the earth "au risque de [s]e perdre" (236) (at the risk of losing [him]self), Ti Jean returns to Guadeloupe, only to find himself the target of arrows fired by Guadeloupeans of another time, whether it be past, present, future, or parallel. Alone and disoriented, Ti Jean begs for information, crying out "en quel temps sommes-nous? . . . en quel siècle? . . . siècle? . . . siècle? . . . " (248) (in what time are we? in what century? . . . century? . . . century? . . . ) as the terrified locals flee the scene. Upon finding himself a stranger among his own people, Ti Jean's sense of identificatory anguish is amplified. In narrating Ti Jean's moment of panic and incertitude as he stands lost in a familiar location at an unknown time, Schwarz-Bart emphasizes his isolation by creating an echo effect through the repetition of the word *siècle*. This audible echo effect is accentuated by graphic elements on the written page—the question marks that punctuate each frantic interrogation, and the ellipses that indicate the silence Ti Jean encounters when no one responds to his frantically repeated question.

Uncertain and scared after a disheartening homecoming, Ti Jean decides to transform himself into a birdlike creature so that he may fly back to the shores of Africa. Half-man, half-bird, the young hero completes his journey across the Atlantic Ocean, although when he arrives, he discovers himself not in Africa but in France. There, he encounters yet another horrific and hallucinatory landscape, one that is filled with "vieilles

rues malséantes, malodorantes" and "blancs, osseux et pouilleux" (252) (old unseemly, foul-smelling streets [and] bony and flea-ridden whites). Contemplating what he sees in disbelief, Ti Jean is once again fired upon in his liminal state, this time by machine guns. Alone and in exile, he experiences a heightened sense of identity crisis that is heightened by the lack of familiar rhythmic points of reference, both in Guadeloupe and in France. Instead of being greeted by the everyday rhythms of people working or the recognizable patterns of lively dance steps, during his post-mortem travels to Guadeloupe and to France, Ti Jean is confronted with the harsh sonorities of gunfire and arrows piercing flesh. The violence evoked by these hostile noises recalls the sounds of the stones thrown by the Ba'Sonaqué people thumping against flesh, bone, and sand in the moments preceding Ti-Jean's brutal death as a condemned man in Africa. Equally malevolent, the sonic variations produced by piercing arrows and calamitous machine guns return Ti Jean to a traumatic sounding space in which the noises of death unleash an excruciating series of emotional and sensory reactions. Devoid of memory impressions and contextual cues, these traumatic sounding moments amplify Ti Jean's identificatory anguish. Received as an enemy in the land of his ancestors, the land of his home, and the land of his governance, Ti Jean is left once again to wander, lost in space and in time. Unable to identify with the hostile sonorities of his surrounding environments, Ti Jean continues to search for that which escapes him, not only his home and his family, but also his sense of self.

As Ti Jean struggles to negotiate an autonomous sense of identity amidst the prevailing atmosphere of chaos and confusion, he gains insight from conversations he shares with the spirit of Eusèbe the Elder, one of his grandfather Wademba's friends. During the course of their dialogue, Schwarz-Bart evokes rhythmic and musical sonorities, which provide important sonic reference points and also serve as meaningful resonant signals of inevitable transformation and change. In a passage that will prove itself key to Ti Jean's understanding of himself, Eusèbe encourages the young hero to summon the power of the drum by slowly reciting an incantation:

Esprit de la terre
Vaste vaste vaste
Je m'adresse à toi
Et tu me comprendras
Oiseau qui passes dans la nuit
Et parles la langue des hommes
Je m'adresse à toi
Et tu me comprendras. (264–65)

[Spirit of the earth
Vast vast vast
I speak to you
And you will understand me
Bird that passes in the night
And speaks the language of men
I speak to you
And you will understand me.]

As Ti Jean calmly summons the spirit of the earth, he incorporates percussive vocal techniques through the repetition of the words "vaste vaste vaste." By invoking the power, authority, and transcendence of drumming and drum languages, Ti Jean succeeds in connecting with the spirit of the earth, which subtly announces its presence through "une musique sereine" and "des sonorités voilées de tam-tam" (265) (a serene music [and] veiled tam-tam sonorities). Before gently fading off into the distance, the voice of the spirit "ouvrait son âme d'enfant à d'autres mondes, irrémédiablement" with its "chant plein de gloire, de tristesse et de gloire" (265) (open[s] [Ti Jean's] child soul to other worlds, irremediably [with its] song full of glory, of sadness and glory). Once again, Schwarz-Bart summons the resonant power of music to signal an important turning point in the text, leading up to the moment when Ti Jean develops a strong sense of self, both as an individual and as a member of the Antillean and global communities. For Schwarz-Bart, this identificatory process is by no means definitive, by no means complete. A constant performance in progress, the work of identification involves a complicated series of overlapping beginnings, endings, and reference points beyond and in between origination and completion. Schwarz-Bart emphasizes this point in the final chapter of *Ti Jean L'horizon*, "La fin et le commencement" (The End and the Beginning), in which we find Ti Jean reflecting on the successful yet unpredictable completion of his quest to slay the giant beast with seven heads:

> Durant toutes ces années, qui avaient eu pour lui la durée d'une vie, rêvant à Fond-Zombi, il avait toujours envisagé son retour comme une fin, comme le terme de l'histoire que lui avait annoncé Wademba, au soir de sa mort, une histoire qui se nomme tristesse, obscurité, malheur et sang avait dit le vieillard sur un ton étrange, navré peut-être, cependant que l'enfant posait sur lui des yeux brûlants d'impatience. Mais il voyait maintenant, nostr'homme, que cette fin ne serait qu'un commencement ; le commencement d'une chose qui l'attendait là, parmi ces groupes de cases éboulées, ces huttes, ces abris de fortune sous lesquels on se racontait à voix basse

> et l'on rêvait, déjà on réinventait la vie, fiévreusement, à la lueur de torches, simplement plantées dans la terre . . . (314)
>
> [During all those years, that had lasted for him the duration of a lifetime, dreaming of Fond-Zombi, he had always envisioned his return as an end, like the term of the story that Wademba had foretold to him, on the evening of his death, a story named sadness, obscurity, unhappiness, and blood that the old man had told in a strange tone, heartbroken perhaps, while the child laid on him his eyes burning with impatience. But he saw now, our man, that this end would only be a beginning; the beginning of something that awaited him there, among these groups of ramshackle huts, these shanties, these shelters of fortune under which they were telling tales in low voices and they were dreaming, already they were reinventing life, feverishly, under the glimmer of torches, simply planted in the earth . . . ]

In this light, for Ti Jean, each moment represents a possible beginning, ending or point in between or beyond, in which his understanding of himself and his relationships with others and the world is constantly shifting, open to a vast domain of possibilities. This is the lesson Schwarz-Bart shares with her readers as they reach the ending-beginning of *Ti Jean L'horizon*.

## Rethinking Rootedness

Before squaring off with the beast with seven heads and successfully reuniting with his beloved Égée, Ti Jean must first negotiate an autonomous identity construct that reconciles the distant spaces and disjointed epochs visited during the course of his unlikely journey. Prompted by the assertion "Ce que tu es, toi seul peux le savoir, toi seul" (268) (That which you are, only you can understand it, only you), through Ti Jean's journey, Schwarz-Bart formulates a roots-revision model comparable to Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome, Glissant's Relation, and Gilroy's Black Atlantic as a means of addressing questions and configurations of individual and collective identities.[11] Revealed by Ti Jean in his final conversation with Eusèbe the Elder, Schwarz-Bart's model reclaims the symbol of the allegorical ancestral tree, transforming it to reflect Antillean historical, sociocultural, and aesthetic considerations. Formulated as a final message from Ti Jean to the deceased Wademba, Schwarz-Bart's model negotiates multiple interactive influences from geographical, historical, linguistic, and sociocultural sources.

11. This notion is further discussed in my article "Rethinking Rootedness in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*" (Huntington 2007).

> Nous sommes peut-être la branche coupée de l'arbre, une branche emportée par le vent, oubliée; mais tout cela aurait bien fini par envoyer des racines, un jour, et puis un tronc et de nouvelles branches avec des feuilles, des fruits, . . . des fruits qui ne ressembleraient à personne. (274)
>
> [We are perhaps the branch cut from the tree, a branch carried by the wind, forgotten; but all of that would have ended by sending roots, one day, and then a trunk and new branches with leaves, fruits . . . fruits that would not resemble anyone.]

In her roots-revision model, Schwarz-Bart favors the image of a wayward and solitary branch, one that was separated from an ancestral tree long ago. Transported a great distance across the ocean, the displaced branch eventually develops roots of its own and begins to produce its own unique flora. Emphasized through the use of the first-person plural *we*, Schwarz-Bart affirms a sense of historical and sociocultural collectivity among the diverse peoples of the Antilles, connecting Ti Jean's timeless quest for identity to contemporary questions of Antillean identity. Moreover, Schwarz-Bart simultaneously celebrates the diversity of the Caribbean peoples and asserts a sense of localized cultural autonomy, manifest in the representation of the distinctive character of the wayward tree's fruits and flora. Although autonomous, the Antillean tree is by no means isolated. Rather, the new plant reflects the multicultural heritage of the Caribbean, recognizing the complicated network of transcultural ties to Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas in the past and the present.

Through the appropriation of the image of the ancestral tree in a written literary format—a symbol that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "dominates Occidental reality" and "Occidental thought" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 27)—Schwarz-Bart succeeds in displacing occidental authority, shifting the balance of power to autonomous Antillean sources who also claim the tree as an important symbol in folklore, identification, and relationality. Unlike single-source roots models that limit subjects to identify with a single point of geographical or cultural reference, Schwarz Bart's model permits subjects to negotiate interconnected systems of influences in shaping identities. Like Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome, which acknowledges "all sorts of *becomings*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 32), Schwarz-Bart's roots-revision model affirms a multiplicity of possible identifications on collective and individual levels.

Although in form, Schwarz-Bart's roots-revision model more nearly resembles the organic shapes of the Rhizome, in purpose, it more closely corresponds to the localized focus of Glissant's Relation, an outgrowth of

his notion of *creolization*. Described by Glissant as "des contacts de cultures en un lieu donné du monde et qui ne produisent pas un simple métissage, mais une résultante imprévisible" (Clermont and Casamayor 1998) (culture contacts in a given place in the world and that do not produce a simple *métissage* but an unpredictable result), creolization is inextricably connected to the Relation, the dynamic network of historical, linguistic, and sociocultural influences that interact in shaping identities. Although based in the Antilles and designed to address the specificity of Antillean identity, the principles of creolization and the Relation are applicable in other geographical settings and social contexts. As Glissant posits, "Le monde se créolise" (The world is creolizing):

> Quand je dis que le monde se créolise, toute création culturelle ne devient pas créole pour autant, mais elle devient surprenante, compliquée et inextricablement mélangée aux autres cultures. La créolisation du monde, c'est la création d'une culture ouverte et inextricable, et elle se fait dans tous les domaines, musiques, arts plastiques, littérature, cinéma, cuisine, à une allure vertigineuse. (Joignot 2004, 27)

> [When I say that the world is creolizing, each cultural creation does not become Creole as such, but it becomes surprising, complicated and inextricably mixed with other cultures. The creolization of the world, it is the creation of an open and inextricable culture, and it fashions itself in every domain, music, visual arts, literature, cinema, cuisine, at a vertiginous pace.]

Similarly, in designing the roots-revision model that she presents in the narrative frame of *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Schwarz-Bart looks first to the spaces of the Caribbean islands, insisting on an Antilles-centered identificatory model in which identities are performed, recounted, (re)negotiated, and (re)configured. Nonetheless, much like Glissant's Relation, Schwarz-Bart's roots-revision model could be extrapolated in considering questions of identity in multiple contexts, particularly in view of the motifs and processes of immigration, communication, wandering, and exile in communities around the world.

In developing her dynamic, roots-revision configuration, Schwarz-Bart rejects the single-source ideal set forth by conventional notions of rootedness, allowing for transformation across distance and time, a point Paul Gilroy insists on in designing his theoretical model the Black Atlantic. Asserting that cultural capital is neither stable nor immutable, Gilroy argues that even remarkably similar cultural and transcultural phenomena

are inevitably transformed with the passage of distance or time: "How are we to think critically about artistic products and aesthetic codes which, though they may be traceable back to one distinct location, have been changed either by the passage of time or by their displacement, relocation or dissemination through networks of communication and cultural exchange?" (Gilroy 1983, 80).

Insisting on complex systems of transcultural communication and exchange rather than a single point of origin, Gilroy, like Schwarz-Bart, recognizes the constant interplay between collective and individual modes of identification as necessitated by roots-revision models. Although at first glance, this strategy may seem to favor collective identity over that of the individual, Schwarz-Bart repeatedly acknowledges the ever-changing network of interactions and interdependencies that influence individuals and cultures at large. This is a point she accentuates in representing Ti Jean's sensorial impressions and his rhythmic and musical reference points over the course of his simultaneous quest for and questioning of identity. Similarly, throughout Ti Jean's wanderings, Schwarz-Bart maintains the equal importance of introspection and observation, the inward and outward gazes that contribute to a balanced sense of subjective identification. Such autonomy, according to Michel Giraud, is essential to resolving problems of identification in Antillean sociocultural contexts: "Seule doit être conquise, puis préservée, la liberté des choix collectifs mais aussi individuels d'identification, en assurant au plus grand nombre possible les conditions matérielles, symboliques et intellectuelles de son exercice" (Giraud 1997, 809). (Only must be conquered, then preserved, the freedom of collective but also individual identification choices, assuring to the largest possible number the material, symbolic and intellectual conditions of their exercise.) By focusing on Ti Jean's individual experiences rather than those of a larger social group, Schwarz-Bart insists on the role of the individual as the primary negotiator in configuring identities in the transcultural transpoetic space of the text. In this respect, she aligns herself with thinkers like Giraud in asserting the importance of autonomously appropriated notions of identity, particularly in working toward finding operative and cooperative solutions for often problematized questions of Antillean identity.[12]

Through her revision of the ancestral tree metaphor, Schwarz-Bart opens questions of Antillean identity to infinite influences and possibilities, successfully negotiating the divide Christine Chivallon refers to as

12. For an expansion of the problematization of Caribbean identities, see also De Souza and Murdoch 2005; and Heady 2005.

"*Territoire-racine* versus *réseau-errance*" (Chivallon 1997, 769) (Territory-root versus network-wandering). In Schwarz-Bart's view, Antillean, Diasporic, and migrant subjects cannot be limited to identify with a single point of geographic, cultural, or ancestral origin. Rather, they are encouraged to negotiate autonomous identities that respect and reflect a multiplicity of influences from a variety of spaces and epochs, including the sounds and sensations that fill the everyday resonant worlds of their respective pasts, presents, and futures. For Schwarz-Bart, the framework of the novel provides an important interface through which readers are compelled to revisit problematic dimensions of identifications and identities. Open to unlimited communication and exchange, the transcultural transpoetic space of the text offers a point of interaction in which aesthetic, linguistic, and sociocultural conventions are blurred, challenging subjects to revise and reconfigure limiting identity constructs as prescribed by nations, cultures, and communities.

Similarly, in *L'appel des arènes*, Aminata Sow Fall incorporates comparable organic imagery as a means of representing the complexities of Nalla's search for identity in a changing postcolonial Senegal. Nevertheless, unlike Schwarz-Bart, who prefers a modified version of the ancestral tree metaphor to more accurately reflect the experiences of the Antillean Diaspora, Sow Fall presents a somewhat conventional roots-model in approaching questions of Senegalese identity. Designating the tree as a symbol of local history and traditions, Sow Fall maintains the importance of localized influences, which, in her view, serve as the primary basis in establishing individual and collective identity constructs. Sow Fall's model is particularly relevant in postcolonial West Africa as its nations vie for increased autonomy and authority in the face of continued political interference, economic exploitation, and cultural imperialist influences from European and other Northern nations.

Aside from differences in form, there are other important distinctions that separate Schwarz-Bart's and Sow Fall's theoretical constructs. Unlike Schwarz-Bart, who presents her roots-revision model near the culmination of Ti Jean's journey as a means of predicting the successful completion of his quest, Sow Fall's roots model appears in the midst of Nalla's and his family's identificatory anguish, foreshadowing further conflicts and confusion as Nalla and Ndiougou move to embrace local traditions and (re)incorporate them into their lives, while Diattou remains rigid in her refusal to consider or accept meaningful Senegalese cultural practices. Another important distinction lies in the presentation of the models. While Schwarz-Bart's model is vocalized by Ti Jean, signaling his success in negotiating an autonomously contructed identity, Sow Fall's model is written in a journal by Nalla's teacher Mr. Niang, giving the impression

of criticism rather than realization. In this respect, Mr. Niang implicates Nalla's parents—who seem just as lost as Nalla—in failing to promote the importance of connecting with local traditions to their son:

> L'homme perd ses racines et l'homme sans racines est pareil à un arbre sans racines: il se dessèche et il meurt. (Un homme qui a perdu son identité est un homme mort . . . ) Le refus de Diattou et Ndiougou, leur obstination à vouloir détourner Nalla des tam-tams, c'est le rejet d'une partie de leurs racines. Peut-être n'en ont-ils pas conscience . . . Et ils renieront progressivement d'autres parties de leurs racines sans jamais réussir à les compenser par des racines appartenant à d'autres. Ils se trouveront alors dans la position inconfortable de celui qui trébuche éternellement sur un fil suspendu dans le vide, ne pouvant poser le pied ni à droite, ni à gauche . . . C'est cela l'aliénation . . . Déséquilibre physique . . . Deséquilibre spirituel . . . Déséquilibre mental. (*Appel*, 72–73)
>
> [Man loses his roots and the man without roots is similar to a tree without roots: it dries up and it dies. (A man who has lost his identity is a dead man . . . ) Diattou's and Ndiougou's refusal, their obstinacy in wanting to divert Nalla from the tam-tams, it is the rejection of a part of their roots. Perhaps they are not aware of it . . . And they will progressively deny other parts of their roots without ever succeeding in compensating them with roots belonging to others. They will then find themselves in the awkward position of the one who eternally stumbles on a string suspended in space, unable to set his foot down neither to the right nor to the left . . . That is what alienation is . . . Physical imbalance . . . Spiritual imbalance . . . Mental imbalance.]

Decrying the failure of Nalla's parents to connect with Senegalese traditions, perspectives, and cultural practices, Mr. Niang insists on the importance of first embracing local cultures and histories while negotiating autonomous identity configurations, only later considering influences from international and intercultural sources. By characterizing a person without identity as dead, he emphasizes the urgency of embracing local linguistic, historical, and sociocultural phenomena as a means of gaining a sense of purpose and insight in view of questions of identity. Although Sow Fall recognizes the importance of multiple linguistic and cultural influences from international and transcultural points of origin, transition, and interaction, she maintains the significance of comprising a core of identificatory values rooted in local ideologies, traditions, and innovations. For Sow Fall, the longing identificatory gaze to Northern points of

cultural influence is highly problematic in African contexts. By presenting her model in the guise of a criticism, Sow Fall acknowledges the problems that Nalla and his parents face, but also indicates the steps necessary to remedy their identificatory precariousness.

In describing her model, Sow Fall further designates rhythmic and musical phenomena as key components in negotiating Senegalese identity in late twentieth century contexts. Through the explicit evocation of the vibrant rumblings of tam-tams in association with notions of rootedness, Sow Fall affirms that it is not only past cultural histories and traditions that shape identity, but also the present sonorities and rhythms of the everyday world. In this respect, by depriving themselves and their son of the sociocultural experience of local cultural rhythms, Sow Fall argues that Diattou and Ndiougou are disrupting the process of identification, both for Nalla and for themselves. Only after reconciling themselves with the rhythms, opening their ears to the "call of the earth," will they be able to appropriate autonomous identity constructs that reflect the multiplicity of diverse influences in their lives. This notion is evident throughout the text, as Nalla begins to explore questions of identity after responding to the percussive "call of the arena." His ensuing pursuit of and obsession with the rhythms and music of the wrestling subculture lead him to assemble the various sounding influences in his life and to ground them in a Senegalese historico-cultural context. Readers witness a similar process at work in the final pages of the novel, as Ndiougou emerges from the space of the wrestling arena—evidently affected by the rhythms of tam-tams—with a new sense of self and an improved relationship with his community after reconnecting with Senegalese traditions and cultural practices. As for Diattou, who remains rigid in her unwillingness to partake in collective rhythmic or musical manifestations, she risks a future of alienation, characterized by the prospect of physical, mental, and spiritual disequilibrium.

In presenting their respective conceptions of roots and rootedness, both Schwarz-Bart and Sow Fall insist on the importance of establishing a single point of local origin, a localized base upon which exterior elements and influences can later be added as branches, fruits, and flora. Without this grounded foundation in a local cultural context, for Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart, the identificatory process remains incomplete, leaving individuals unable to identify with collective groups (at home or abroad), or to negotiate operative identity constructs. Moreover, in promoting and reworking the traditional symbol of the tree, Schwarz-Bart and Sow Fall equally recognize its mutable organic nature, manifest in the necessity to balance multiple influences from different cultures, locations, and epochs. Strongly rooted in one's homeland, but free to wander across real and imaginary spaces, to traverse past, present, future, and parallel epochs,

and to gather multiple transcultural influences, subjects in Schwarz-Bart and Sow Fall's organic model systems possess the skills and the tools necessary to develop a strong sense of autonomy in confronting complicated questions of collective and individual identities.

Balancing inward and outward gazes, Aminata Sow Fall's and Simone Schwarz-Bart's respective tree models present practical yet intuitive approaches to questions of identity in the Francophone world, particularly as performed in the political and sociocultural contexts of the 1970s and 1980s. In looking to natural, organic motifs for inspiration, both writers open questions of identity to a multiplicity of sensorial and experiential possibilities as mediated through encounters with rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena. In this respect, by filling their novels with seemingly limitless resonant possibilities, both Schwarz-Bart and Sow Fall designate the sounding spaces of their texts as dynamic interfaces in which questions of identity are explored, communicated, untangled, and (re)negotiated. Sounding off on the ways identities are conceived, perceived, (de/re)constructed, and (re)configured, Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart invite readers to reconsider and question their approaches to conceptualizing individual identities, community affiliations, and global networks in local and international relational contexts.

# 4 / Music and Mourning in *Crossing the Mangrove* and *Solibo Magnificent*

The question of how to identity oneself and to whom is always a tricky one, involving an intricate process of communication on the part of the subject, recognition on the part of the other(s), and plays for positionality among the subject, the other(s), and multiple external agents, factors and circumstances. Questions of identity are further complicated since they tend to involve many separate but overlapping categories including but not limited to geography, nationality, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, age, gender, and cultural and subcultural group affiliations. While this identity problematic operates in every sociocultural context, for the purposes of this chapter, we will focus on dimensions of identity in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the respective settings for Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent* and Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove.*

In characterizing the islands themselves, it is difficult to choose the appropriate words without offending the taxonomic sensibilities of someone who calls Martinique or Guadeloupe home. Perhaps some of the most heated exchanges I have witnessed in academia have emerged from the question-and-answer sessions following lectures or panel discussions on Caribbean identity by prominent writers and scholars. For example, in April 2003 at the Frontières: Un festival d'écrivains franco-britanniques sur l'identité (Frontiers: A Festival of Franco-British Writers on Identity) in Paris, Guadeloupean writer Ernest Pépin discussed his ideas about Antillean identity, which rely on the notion of *créolité* (creoleness), a word that incites controversy on both sides of the Atlantic. The controversy behind the word seems to lie in its "creole" component, a term that has been firmly rooted in discussions of language, race, and social class in the

Caribbean islands.[1] In Pépin's view, the "creole" of *créolité* is not a limiting construct or category, but rather a dynamic process through which multiple mosaic identities are configured and respected. In an interview with David Cadasse, Pépin defined his view of *créolité*:

> C'est la prise de conscience de la diversité du monde caribéen. C'est également la volonté de repenser la notion d'identité. Parce qu'on ne peut réduire la créolité à la langue créole. Il ne s'agit pas que de ça. Il s'agit fondamentalement d'une théorie de l'identité mosaïque. Il existe une conception de l'identité en terme de propriété : ma langue, ma terre, ma religion. Mais elle nous enferme dans une logique d'exclusion. Il vaudrait mieux raisonner sur la base d'une identité mosaïque : mes terres, mes langues, mes religions. (Cadasse and Pépin 2004)
>
> [It is the acknowledgment of the diversity of the Caribbean world. It is equally the willingness to rethink the notion of identity. Because one cannot reduce creoleness to the Creole language. It is not a question of that. Fundamentally, it is a question of a theory of mosaic identity. There exists a conception of identity in terms of propriety: my language, my land, my religion. But it confines us in a logic of exclusion. It would be better to reason on the basis of a mosaic identity: my lands, my languages, my religions.]

Although Pépin is seeking to appropriate the term *creolité* to respect what he views as the mosaic identities of the Caribbean islands,[2] not everyone agrees with that use of the term, especially the Martinicans and Guadeloupeans, who prefer to align themselves with France.[3]

At the Frontières discussion, there was one woman in particular who began shouting at Pépin during the question-and-answer session. The Guadeloupean-born woman screamed, "I am French!" and then accused him of being an old man who was out of touch with the younger French-defined generation of Guadeloupean and Martinican youth. If the woman in question would have read or listened to Pépin's work, she may have arrived at a different conclusion. For Pépin, identity is not an either-or type

1. On this note, Véronique Porra has written an interesting article exploring the controversy of *créolité*: "Les voix de l'anti-créolité? Le champ littéraire francophone entre orthodoxe et subversion" (Porra 2001).

2. Pépin's understanding of *créolité* reflects the mosaic notion of *créolité* set forth in Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Jean Bernabé's 1993 text *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*).

3. Remember that Guadeloupe and Martinique are considered Départements Régionaux d'Outre Mer, or DROM (French Regional Overseas Departments), meaning that they are still governed by France.

of construct, but rather a process through which individuals constantly (re) negotiate and (re)configure multiple linguistic, historical, aesthetic, and cultural influences from disparate locations in past and present frames of reference. What Pépin takes issue with, however, is the operative hierarchical positioning that attempts to place France in a position of political, economic, linguistic, sociocultural, and aesthetic authority over its former colonial subjects in the Antilles and around the world. In his novel *Tambour Babel*, Pépin posits the *n'goka* (an alternate spelling of *gwo ka*—a drum used in traditional Guadeloupean drumming ensembles) as a powerful expressive device capable of shattering such operative hierarchies, leveling the playing field as it were and freeing subjects to configure autonomous identities in sounding spaces beyond the confines of Northern or Western critical paradigms. In this capacity, the drum language performed by a skilled *tanbouyé* on his *gwo ka* serves as a language to replace all other languages. For Pépin, the *gwo ka*, born out of the musical traditions and the physical spaces of the islands, has the power to topple existing power structures and to transform the ways in which individuals and cultures relate to and interact with one another. Echoing the invitation extended by Aimé Césaire in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Return to My Native Land*), "il est place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête" (Césaire 1983, 57) (there is room for all at the gathering of the conquest), Pépin asks his listeners to open their ears, bodies, hearts, and minds to the rhythms of the *gwo ka* as a means of resisting continued discrimination and inequality, opening spaces for transcultural innovation and communication, and promoting autonomous identity (re)appropriation and (re)configuration in communities located in the Caribbean and around the world.

Although very vocal at the Frontières discussion forum, the Guadeloupean-born, French-defined woman does not necessarily speak for an entire generation of Antillean youth. When I was in Martinique in March of 2007, I spoke with a group of students who informed me of a growing separatist movement in Martinique through which Martinicans are seeking independence from French political and linguistic authority. In fact, near the bus stop on the Schoelcher campus of the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane, I found a series of spray-painted stenciled black, red, and green graffiti blocks that read "MARTINIQUE, UN PEUPLE, UNE NATION, UN État" (Martinique, one people, one nation, one state). The two very different youth perspectives provide insight into the complicated dimensions of twenty-first-century Martinican and Guadeloupean identity. There are no easy answers here, only questions and possibilities.

During my informal inquiries about Antillean identity, the best (and perhaps most diplomatic) response I received came from a taxi driver from Anse-Mitan, Martinique. When I asked him if I could interview him

about Martinique and identity, he smiled and invited me to ride in the front seat passenger side of the taxi. We then shared an insightful conversation while stuck in a traffic jam on the way to the airport. The most striking thing he said to me during that ride was his response to my question, “How do you identify yourself?” His frank reply—”Well that depends on who you ask. If you ask my passport, it will tell you that I am French first and then Martinican and then Caribbean, but if you ask my heart, it will tell you that I am Martinican first and then Caribbean and then French . . . and even then maybe not French”—seemed to put everything I had read, heard, experienced, and observed into perspective for me. In this light, identity is not simply a question of me, you, him, her, or them. Rather, it is a question of *us* and how we navigate distinct but overlapping rhythmically mediated interfaces in political, linguistic, geographic, historical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural spheres to negotiate meaning and identities for ourselves, for others, and with each other.

In both *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, questions of Antillean identity are explored through the investigation of the life and death of a deceased central character whose identity is configured through the memories and experiences of surviving community members. In each work, death is narrated in disjointed fragments through a series of audible stories, songs, and conversations as well as flashes of perceptible memories, dreams, and nightmares. Faced with a jumble of disconnected impressions and anecdotes presented from a multiplicity of perspectives, the reader is left to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct a posthumous identity for the deceased. In both novels, the death of the subject is narrated through the thoughts and experiences of the Others—the cast of surviving characters—and interpreted in the mind of another (or an Other)—the reader—in another place, at another time. In this respect, it is not only the identity of the deceased that is called into question, but also the identities of the supporting characters inside the frame of the novel and the identity of the reader(s) outside the space of the text. Moreover, in contemplating questions of death and identity in the two novels, larger questions of Antillean, Creolophone, and Francophone identity emerge, as both Chamoiseau and Condé consider the problematic interface of language(s), culture(s), and identities in their narratives.

In *Solibo Magnificent*, readers immediately learn of Solibo’s death in Chamoiseau’s fictional police report, in a section entitled “Avant la parole, L’écrit du malheur” (Before the Word: The Writing of Misfortune). As a self-proclaimed “marqueur de paroles” (*Solibo*, 25) (word scratcher)—a transcriber of stories, songs, and speech, a describer of sounds, silences, and sensations—Chamoiseau is careful to distinguish the written document from the story he is about to tell. Viewed through the observing eyes

of Officer Évariste Pilon, the police report clinically inventories a death scene where "le cadavre d'un homme environ cinquante ans" (18) (the corpse of a man of about fifty years old) lies cold and rigid. Devoid of references to sounds and sensations, Pilon's report privileges the officer's sense of sight, detailing the appearance of the anonymous corpse, its condition and position, as well as the objects surrounding him. One notable olfactory description stands out among otherwise visual information in Pilon's rendering: "Une forte odeur d'urine s'y perçoit" (20) (A strong odor of urine was perceptible). The representation of the offensive odor of human body waste further dehumanizes the deceased, who lies on the ground encircled by scattered trash and debris. Objectified and anonymous much like "une ordure de vie" (25) (a piece of life's trash), the corpse presented in the novel's prologue is only identifiable by his frozen physical characteristics and the random objects in the vicinity.

As the story or "parole" section of *Solibo Magnificent* begins, Chamoiseau immediately shifts narrative perspectives, changing from the fact-based visual observations of a policeman to the dynamic multisensorial musings of a storyteller. This transformation is immediately evident as the first chapter of the novel is announced in the style and language of a traditional Martinican storyteller. Transposed into a written French-language format, in what Milan Kundera refers to as a "chamoisized" French (Kundera 1991), or what Marie-José N'Zengou-Tayo describes as a "chamoisification" of French (N'Zengou-Tayo 1996, 155), the voice of the storyteller laments the passing of a fellow storyteller or "Maître de la parole":

> Mes amis!
> Le Maître de la parole
> Prend ici le virage du destin
> Et nous plonge
> Dans la déveine . . .
> (Pour qui pleurer?
> Pour Solibo) (23)

> [My friends!
> The Master of the word
> Takes here the curve of destiny
> And plunges us
> In bad luck . . .
> (Crying for whom?
> For Solibo)]

Unlike the police report, which provides a clinical account of an anonymous death scene, the introduction to Chamoiseau's first chapter lyrically

mourns the loss of Solibo the storyteller before the chapter even begins. Negotiating the divide that often separates oral discourse and written texts as well as the craft of storytelling from that of writing, Chamoiseau immediately draws the readers/listeners into the narrative, implicating their engagement in the unfolding of events through the incorporation of apostrophe "mes amis!" (my friends!) and the use of the first-person plural pronoun *nous* (us). Like the novel's characters—the survivors and witnesses who are left to unravel the mystery of Solibo's death—Chamoiseau instantly plunges the readers/listeners into the ensuing confusion and misfortune.

As chapter 1 of *Solibo Magnificent* begins, Chamoiseau further establishes the complicity between writer and readers, storyteller and listeners, insisting on their active imaginative participation as Solibo Magnifique's story unfolds: "[D']abord, ô mes amis, avant l'atrocité, accordez une faveur: n'imaginez Solibo Magnifique qu'à la verticale, dans ses jours les plus beaux" (25). (First, oh my friends, before the atrocity, grant one favor: imagine Solibo only in the vertical, in his most beautiful days.) Directing his readers through the use of the imperative, Chamoiseau clearly identifies his expectations for his readers, explicitly involving them in the narration and negotiation of Solibo's posthumous identity. In crafting the ensuing narrative, Chamoiseau presents readers with a series of fragmented memories, conversations, and experiences as observed, overheard, and transcribed by the word scratcher–narrator. Acting as writer, transcriber, storyteller, ethnographer, and narrator, Chamoiseau inserts himself into the frame of his narrative as a character who participates in the acts of mourning and remembering in the aftermath of Solibo's death. In the police inventory of witnesses included in Chamoiseau's narrative, Chamoiseau's character is identified as "Patrick Chamoiseau, surnommeé Chamzibié, Ti-Cham or Oiseau de Cham, se disant 'marqueur de paroles', en réalité sans profession, demeurant 90 rue François-Arago" (30) (Patrick Chamoiseau, nicknamed Chamzibié, Lil-Cham, or Cham Bird, a self-proclaimed 'word scratcher,' in reality without profession, living at 90 François-Arago Street). Acting as a character-participant and narrator-transcriber throughout the noisy investigation, Chamoiseau engages his readers on multiple levels—as observers, accomplices, and confidants. Much like investigators or audience members, the readers/listeners are compelled to reconcile the disconnected evocations of sounds, silences, and sensations revealed through shared reminiscences and police interrogations as well as the rhythms, songs, and stories presented in the text. Nevertheless, unlike the novel's police investigator characters, who initially seek to uncover *how* Solibo died, the reader is ultimately driven to discover *who* Solibo was and, more importantly, how he shall be remembered. In this respect, as Chamoiseau

invites his readers to lose themselves and find themselves in the clamorous realm of *Solibo Magnificent*, he challenges them to confront dimensions of linguistic, sociocultural, geographical, and political identity in ways that go beyond the parameters of cultural norms and aesthetic conventions.

Born in 1953 in Fort de France, Martinique, Patrick Chamoiseau has written a significant body of critical and literary texts, much of which deals with discussing questions of Caribbean identity, particularly in view of notions of *créolité*. Central to much of Chamoiseau's theoretical and fictional works, *créolité* is a process by which Caribbean identities are configured through explorations of Creole folklore, languages, and oral traditions. The product of a multiplicity of influences from Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Caribbean, Chamoiseau's notion of *créolité* results in a mosaic Antillean identity with manifestations in linguistic, aesthetic, political, sociocultural, and ontological domains. Chamoiseau elaborates upon this notion of *créolité* in two theoretical works, *Éloge de la créolité* (1989) (*In Praise of Creoleness*), which he co-authored with Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, and *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997) (Writing in a Dominated Land), in which he prominently incorporates oral, rhythmic, and musical elements. Chamoiseau co-authored the philosophical treatises *Quand les murs tombent: L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* (2007) (*Raze the Walls: The Case for Outlawing Nationalism*), and *L'intraitable beauté du monde: Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009) (The Intractable Beauty of the World: Address to Barack Obama) with Édouard Glissant. Chamoiseau's fictional works include the novels *Chronique des sept misères* (1986) (*Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*); *Texaco* (1992); *Biblique des derniers gestes* (2002) (Biblical of the Last Acts); *Un Dimanche au cachot* (2007) (A Sunday in the Dungeon); and *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009) (The Nine Consciences of Malfini).[4] He has also published a collection of Creole folktales—*Au temps de l'antan* (1988) (*Creole Folktales*); a theatrical piece, *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse* (1981) (*Water Mama versus the Fairy Carabosse*); and three volumes of memoirs: *Antan d'enfance* (1993) (*Childhood*); *Chemin d'école* (1994) (*School Days*); and *À bout d'enfance* (2005) (The End of Childhood). Although Chamoiseau spent time in Paris as a law student, he has spent most of his life in Martinique, where he lives today.

Unlike Chamoiseau, Maryse Condé has spent much of her life away from Guadeloupe, where she was born in Pointe-à-Pitre in 1937. After completing a portion of her secondary studies in Pointe-à-Pitre, she relocated

4. As of press time, *Écrire en pays dominé*, *Biblique des derniers gestes*, *Un Dimanche au cachot*, *À bout d'enfance*, *Les neuf consciences du Malfini*, and *L'intraitable beauté du monde: Adresse à Barack Obama* had not yet appeared in English translation. The titles have been translated here for the benefit of nonfrancophone readers.

to Paris, where she went on to study at the Sorbonne. Later, Condé traveled to West Africa, where she spent twelve years teaching in Guinea, Ghana, and Senegal. She then returned to Paris, where she completed her doctorate at the Sorbonne Nouvelle and later served as a university professor in France and in the United States. Although many of her novels address themes of travel and wandering in view of questions of identity, *Crossing the Mangrove* (1989) represents a homecoming of sorts in that it deals with questions of Antillean identity from within the geographical specificity of Guadeloupean cultural contexts. A prolific writer, over the course of her career Condé has published many works, including the novels *Heremakhonon* (1976); *Ségou* (1985); *Moi, Tituba sorcière . . .* (1986) (*I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem . . .*); *Les derniers rois mages* (1992) (*The Last of the African Kings*); *Célanire cou coupé* (2000) (*Who Slashed Célanire's Throat? A Fantastical Tale*); *Histoire de la femme cannibale* (2003) (*The Story of the Cannibal Woman*); and *Les belles ténébreuses* (The Beautiful Dark Women). In addition to writing many essays considering questions of Caribbean identity and notions of Francophone community, Condé has also published a theatrical piece—*Pension les alizés* (1988) (*Trade Winds Boardinghouse*) and two memoirs: *Le coeur à rire et à pleurer* (1999) (*Tales from the Heart: True Stories from my Childhood*); and *Victoire, des saveurs et des mots* (2006) (Victory, Flavors and Words).[5] Condé currently resides primarily in New York City, where she serves as Professor Emeritus at Columbia University.

Like *Solibo Magnificent*, Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove* opens with an eyewitness account of a mysterious death scene, setting the stage for an exploration of questions of identity operating both inside and outside the frame of the text. Upon discovering the corpse of Francis Sancher lying face down in the mud, retired schoolteacher Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée is immediately overcome by a flurry of emotional and physical responses. Overwhelmed by the sight and smell of the corpse, she uncontrollably vomits in the tall grass alongside his body. Despite her disdain for the dead man and her discomfort with the death scene, she makes three signs of the cross and recites a prayer in Francis Sancher's honor. As she runs to alert her fellow villagers, her ears filled with the frantic pulsing rhythms of her heartbeat, she pushes thoughts of the dead man out of her mind and second-guesses her decision to take an alternate route on that fateful day.

In presenting the ensuing series of events in the first chapter, Condé spends little time discussing the deceased himself, and instead focuses on

5. As of press time, *Les belles ténébreuses* and *Victoire, des saveurs et des mots* had not yet appeared in English translation. The titles have been translated here for the benefit of nonfrancophone readers.

introducing the novel's diverse cast of characters—all local inhabitants of Guadeloupe's Rivière au Sel. In the few instances when his name is brought up in the first chapter, the initial mentions of Francis Sancher cast an unfavorable light on him. Described as the "implacable ennemi" (implacable enemy) of Moïse dit Maringoin (*Mangrove*, 18) (Moses aka Mosquito), Francis Sancher is disliked and even hated by many of his neighbors in Rivière au Sel, as the following passages suggest:

> Comme tous les habitants de Rivière au Sel, [Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée] avait haï celui qui gisait là à ses pieds. (14)

> [Like all of the inhabitants of Rivière au sel, (Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée) had hated the one who was lying there at her feet.]

> [I]l s'agissait d'un homme sur lequel pas un oeil, excepté celui de Vilma et de Mira, qui sait? ne verserait une larme. (17)

> [(He) was man for whom not one eye, except for those of Vilma and of Mira, who knows? would shed a tear.]

Reviled by the men and women of the local community, Francis Sancher has few known friends or allies at the time of his death. Although Condé repeatedly indicates that Francis Sancher is despised by most of the Rivière au Sel residents, she provides little biographical or background information about him. Aside from physical descriptions as to how he appears in death, Condé reveals little more than the words "Pain, Vin, [and] Misère" (24) (bread, wine, [and] misery) in reference to the deceased. Consequently, at the end of the first chapter of *Crossing the Mangrove*, the identity of Francis Sancher is just as mysterious as his seemingly inexplicable death. In the chapters that follow, readers are left to piece together fragmentary bits of music, memory, and dialogue presented in chapters named for individual characters that explore Sancher's histories and relationships with his lovers, enemies, and secret allies. Plunging her readers into the thicket of an allusive mangrove, Condé compels them each to navigate the complexities of intricately interconnected memories, histories, and emotions as presented from a multiplicity of divergent perspectives. As they work their way through the complex jumble of narrative twists and turns, readers figuratively undertake the perilous crossing of the mangrove, as they struggle to piece together the fragmented story of Francis Sancher's life, and subsequently negotiate a posthumous identity for the deceased.

As Édouard Glissant explains in *Traité du tout-monde* (Treaty of the Whole-World), the intricate organic structure of the mangrove does not lend itself to facile navigation. Upon entering the complex network of inextricably intertwined roots and branches, wandering subjects are

immediately overtaken by the mangrove's complicated physical construction. Like an immensely enigmatic three-dimensional labyrinth, the mangrove presents subjects with a perpetual series of obstacles, twists, and turns that confound the search for depth, the quest to find meaning:

> [N]ous nous en sommes emparés . . . Toujours cette odeur de boue rouillée, de détritus organique—toujours ce battement d'eau qui chauffe. Nous sillonnons la mangrove, nous la traçons de pistes et de routes. Nous la fouillons d'excavations, nous la remblayons. Nous tâchons mais en vain d'en atteindre les profondeurs. Elle s'est retirée derrière son mystère d'ordures. (Glissant 1997b, 69–70)

> [We have taken a hold of it . . . Always that odor of rusty mud, of organic garbage—always the beating of warming water. We crisscross the mangrove, we trace its paths and routes. We dig through it, we fill it in. We try but in vain to reach its depths. It is withdrawn behind its mystery of filth.]

In describing his conception of the mangrove, Glissant relies on multisensorial imagery, privileging olfactory, auditory, and tactile sensations over visual representations. As subjects work their way through the interlocking network of roots and branches, digging through the muck in search of something unknown, the smell of the mangrove fills their nostrils and the sound of water reverberates in their ears. Enigmatic by design, Glissant's mangrove presents itself as a perpetually shifting organic maze, one that fosters ambiguity and uncertainty. As subjects attempt to negotiate the impenetrable tangle of mangrove in search of what Glissant refers to as depth, they soon resign themselves to the impossibility of tangibility in the thick of the mangrove. Immersed in a space where definitions are ephemeral and fleeting, subjects emerge from the mangrove with equivocal responses to questions of identity, which in turn yields further questions, further questioning, further moments to recognize identity in process and identity as process.

This is where the importance of the hyphen in the title *Traité du tout-monde* comes into play. For Glissant, the hyphen comes to represent an abstract space of in-between-ness and beyond-ness, one in which multiple identificatory possibilities are activated.[6] In this respect, it is not sufficient to focus on the mangrove as an identificatory model for Antillean subjects. Rather, for Glissant, it is important to recognize the physical, abstract, linguistic, and musical spaces situated beyond and in between the geographic fixedness of the mangrove-rhizome:

6. For further discussion of the significance of the Glissantian hyphen, see Bongie 1998.

> Mais aussi, partout dans les espaces d'ailleurs: les Hauts de ciel qui s'égarent en galaxies, les brousses qui encombrent leur propre profondeur, les saveurs affolées des terres en culture, les savanes qui couvent des ombres compresses comme des bonsais, les sables au désert qui vous grandissent en esprit, les salines où étudier la géométrie pure, les mangroves qui lacent l'inextricable, les glaciers débordants, les fonds de mer d'où monte le soir qui vient, les toundras qui vous chavirent à l'infini, les mornes qui vous plantent tout dru. Singuliers et semblables, avec pour chacun d'eux non pas seulement son mot, mais son langage. Non pas seulement sa langue, mais sa musique. (Glissant 1997b, 240–41)

> [But also, throughout the faraway spaces: the Heights of the sky that wander off in galaxies, the brushes that obstruct their own depth, the panicked savors of agricultural lands, the savannahs that brood over shadows compressed like bonsais, the desert sands that magnify you in spirit, the salines where pure geography is studied, the mangroves that tie up the inextricable, the overactive glaciers, the depths of the sea from which the coming night arises, the tundras that infinitely capsize you, the hills that thickly plant you. Singular and similar, each with not just its word, but its language. Not only its tongue but its music.]

In this respect, for Glissant, it is no longer feasible to stay rooted in one's physical, linguistic, rhythmic, and/or musical domain. Rather, as "le monde se créolise" (the world creolizes), subjects must open themselves up to a multiplicity of transcultural influences, interactions, communications, and exchanges. Resonant with the possibilities of numerous and diverse languages, landscapes, and ways of being in the world, the boundless possibilities connoted through the transcending, mediating, sharing, and/or binding hyphen of the *tout-monde* creates opportunities for transcultural invention, communication, negotiation, and innovation that unpredictably manifest themselves in cultural practices, products, and perspectives, but most significantly in the performances and processes of autonomous identity configuration.

## Memory, Mourning, and Mosaic Identities

In dealing with death in both *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, the fragmentary view of identity and identities is reinforced through a reliance on memory. Since readers are faced with a mysterious death scene in the opening chapters of both works, the two narratives are primarily driven by the compulsion to configure a posthumous identity for

the deceased characters. Silenced by death, the lives and experiences of the dead are represented through the thoughts and words of those left behind. Unlike life experience, which allows for a perpetual process of subjective identification and redefinition, death transfers identificatory autonomy to an intersubjective community of surviving others who deconstruct and reconstruct identities for the deceased by assembling jumbled fragments of memory and lore. As Walter Benjamin explains, memory is problematic in that it shatters the stability of the present by recalling fragmentary elements—disconnected thoughts and sensations—and disintegrating impressions (Benjamin 1969, 160). Since memory relegates past predicaments and irresolution to the present, in dealing with death, survivors and witnesses open themselves up to precariousness and instability as they endeavor to reconcile the disjointed fragments of the past with the mazy complexities of an ever-changing present. Through the activity of reading, this process is transferred to readers, who become complicit witnesses to the memories, events, and experiences unfolding in the frame of the novel. Once implicated in the process, readers must in turn negotiate narrated fragments of memory and sensations to derive a sense of meaning as they work their way through the mysterious and disconcerting text.

In *Solibo Magnificent*, Chamoiseau explicitly addresses the problem of memory, particularly in view of questions of posthumous identity. Ephemeral and unreliable, as Chamoiseau explains, memory impressions of recollections, stories, riddles, and jokes are limited in that they yield an incomplete or fragmentary portrait of the deceased:

> Car, si de son vivant il était une énigme, aujourd'hui c'est bien pire: il n'existe (comme s'en apercevra l'inspecteur principal au-delà de l'enquête) que dans une mosaïque de souvenirs, et ses contes, ses devinettes, ses blagues de vie et de mort, se sont dissous dans des consciences trop souvent enivrées. (*Solibo*, 26)

> [For, if in his lifetime he was an enigma, today it is even worse: he only exists (as the principal inspector will realize beyond the investigation) in a mosaic of memories, and his stories, his riddles, his jokes in life and in death, were dissolved in all too often drunken consciences.]

Further denigrated by the blurry lenses of conditions like drunkenness and forgetfulness, for Chamoiseau, fragments of memory are problematic in that they typically result in more questions than answers. In the case of Solibo, this dilemma of memory is exacerbated. Already an enigma in life, in death, Solibo leaves behind an unfathomable legacy of mysteries and unanswered questions. As characters present a disconnected series of

memory fragments, filled with the sonorities of resonance, dissonance, and silence, readers are left to piece together the jagged pieces in assembling a composite mosaic identity for the deceased. While Chamoiseau uses the term "mosaic" in his characterization of Solibo's posthumous identity, it is important to distinguish the implications of the multiple interpretations of that term in view of identity configurations. Read within the specificity of the aforementioned citation, "mosaic" represents an incomplete composite identity, the result of piecing together memory impressions and stories as remembered and recounted by the community of witnesses and survivors in the aftermath of Solibo's death. In other works, including the *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*), Chamoiseau further posits the term "mosaic" as a reflection of the coconfiguration of coexisting multiple identities staged within the physical or ideological spaces of a common cultural context. In this sense, the different pieces of the mosaic come to represent the diverse individuals who comprise the cultural community. Simultaneously separated and connected by the spaces that bridge the gaps between mosaic pieces, members of the collective mosaic community constantly negotiate and renegotiate their positions and identities, perpetually changing the appearance of the mosaic. In the context of *Solibo Magnificent*, this collective mosaic identity as experienced by the community of witnesses, survivors, and mourners complements the idea of individual mosaic identity as created for Solibo.

In *Crossing the Mangrove*, Condé also evokes the problem of memory, as Rivière au Sel residents struggle with questions about Francis Sancher's identity in the aftermath of his suspicious death:

> Devant ce bouleversement, des interrogations superstitieuses naissaient en leur esprit. Qui était-il en réalité cet homme qui avait choisi de mourir parmi eux? N'était-il pas un envoyé, le messager de quelque force surnaturelle? Ne l'avait-il pas répété encore et encore: 'Je reviendrai chaque saison avec un oiseau vert et bavard sur le poing'? Alors, personne ne prêtait attention à ses paroles qui se perdaient dans le tumulte du rhum. (*Mangrove*, 251)

> [In the face of this upheaval, superstitious interrogations arose in their spirits. Who was he really, this man who had chosen to die among them? Was he not an envoy, the messenger of some supernatural force? Had he not repeated again and again: "I will return each season with a green and chatty bird on my fist"? Then, no one paid attention to his words that got lost in the tumult of the rum.]

In framing questions about the mysterious identity and uncertain intentions of Francis Sancher, Condé echoes Chamoiseau's concerns about the

fallibility of memory, particularly under the influences of alcohol and forgetting. Enigmatic in life and in death, Francis Sancher bequeaths few objects to surviving community members. Instead, he confers mostly questions and paranoia in the minds of his neighbors, who struggle to connect disparate memory fragments in constructing his posthumous identity. For some, the most haunting dimension of the reconciliatory process lies in the uncertainty of the wayward echoes of Francis Sancher's words, which now resound as a ghostly message from beyond the grave. Depending on the recipient, his pledge to return each year to Rivière au Sel, even after his death, may be perceived as a promise or a threat, depending on the state of their relationship in the days leading up to his mysterious death. Lost for many "in the tumult of the rum," the sonorities of Francis Sancher's recurrent words provide an isolated fragment, a fractional component to be incorporated with other memory fragments in forming a composite mosaic identity for the deceased.

## Rhythm, Music, and Identity as Process

As with the novels discussed in chapters 2 and 3—*God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, and *Ti Jean L'horizon*—rhythmic and musical elements operate as important identificatory agents in *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, providing audible points of reference and reflection to characters and readers alike. Filling the pages of the texts with resonant layers of harmony and cacophony, texted rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena promote a transpoetic transcultural aesthetic, opening spaces for communication, exchange, and invention in which identity constructs are negotiated and (re)configured on both individual and collective levels. Repeatedly performed in the space of the novel with each and every reading, such sounding phenomena are effective not only in shaping the sonorous realm inhabited by its characters, but also in staging the aesthetic experience undertaken by the reader each time s/he engages with the text.

In view of questions of identity, the experience of rhythm and music in the novel, which we may also refer to as *the reading experience*, imitates that of a rhythmic or musical *listening experience*. In this respect, rather than effectuating a mode of performing a static or preexisting identity construct, rhythmic and musical phenomena effectively activate an ongoing process of identification, with implications inside and outside the frame of the text. Although the reception and perception of music in the reading experience is processed differently than that of the listening experience, the identificatory implications are analogous, since both conditions engage the listener or reader in a continuous process of transformation

and negotiation. This dynamic is clearly explained by Simon Frith in his essay "Music and Identity," in which he maintains that music serves as a resonant catalyst for musicians and listeners alike, transforming their personal experience(s) of identity on individual and collective levels:

> [T]he issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience—a musical experience, an aesthetic experience—that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity. The aesthetic, to put this another way, describes the quality of an experience (not the quality of an object); it means experiencing *ourselves* (not just the world) in a different way. My argument here, in short, rests on two premises: first, that identity is *mobile*, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being; second, that our experience of music—of music making and music listening—is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*. Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind. (Frith 1996, 109)

"Both performance and story," in Frith's view, music shapes the ways in which identity is narrated and subsequently constructed on both individual and collective levels. Implicating both transmitters and receivers of musical information, as Frith suggests, the acts of music making and music listening engage performers and listeners in a fluid and ongoing process of identification negotiation. In this respect, both music makers and music listeners share in a subjective developmental experience through which relationships among individuals and groups are (re)considered and (re)configured, and through which self-appropriated identity constructs are (re)evaluated and (re)established. Although, in his characterization of musically mediated identity as process, Frith does not explicitly address the experience of music in literature, his insistence on the affinities among music, narration, and identity effectively connects the realms of sound, vision, imagination, and sensation. By relating music with performance and narrative strategies, Frith's ideas push the experience of music beyond auditory parameters, encouraging a broader understanding of music and its possibilities, one that certainly lends itself to the reading experience of music. Like the listening experience, in which music makers and music listeners engage in a subjective process of identification and transformation, in the reading experience, writers and readers partake in a similar experience of self-in-process through the experience of texted rhythmic and musical phenomena.

As Glissant suggests, the Antilles are "filled with the noise of the

'universe'" (Glissant 1969, 62), imbued with the resonant possibilities of polyphony, euphony, and cacophony. Transposed in the frame of the novel, the noises, rhythms, and musics of the Antilles take on important dimensions, promoting local sociocultural conventions and aesthetic innovations to an international audience. Fluid rather than fixed, representations of sonorous rhythmic and musical phenomena emphasize identity as process rather than product. Moreover, as Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman explain, music, "can provide a powerful resource" in "creating intertextuality" (Briggs and Bauman 1995, 594). Read in view of Bakhtin's concept of intertextuality, which emphasizes the role of the text as interface, transposed rhythmic and musical phenomena foster communication among the writer, the reader, and the text itself, activating a dialogue of sorts. As Julia Kristeva notes in her discussion of Bakhtin, intertextuality involves "*an intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (Kristeva 1980, 64–65). Like the concepts of the transpoetic and transcultural, Bakhtin's notion of intertextuality favors a seemingly limitless field of possibilities, allowing for multiple combinations of resonance and dissonance, manifest in a boundless series of shifting harmonious and cacophonous configurations.

In exploring questions of Antillean identity in their respective texts, both Condé and Chamoiseau incorporate overlapping layers of intertextual elements, effectively connecting the imaginative realm of the novel with cultural, historical, and aesthetic domains. For example, in *Crossing the Mangrove*, Condé makes intertextual references to French magazines such as *Maisons et jardins* (46) (Houses and Gardens), French catalogs like *La Redoute* (30), Antillean newspapers including *France-Antilles* (43), and American periodicals such as *Playboy* (177). She also makes mention of the French surrealist poet Saint-John Perse, who was born in Guadeloupe and had family ties in the Antilles (45). In another passage, Condé includes an intertextual reference to Patrick Chamoiseau during a conversation between two characters, Lucien Évariste and Francis Sancher. While inquiring about Lucien's writing, Francis asks him, "As-tu comme le talentueux Martiniquais Patrick Chamoiseau, déconstruit le français-français?" (228) (Have you, like the talented Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau, deconstructed French-French?). Through her evocation of Chamoiseau's Creole-infused *deconstructed French-French* writing, Condé promotes Antillean literature while also exposing her readers to the politicized aspects of language, writing, and identity in the Francophone Antilles.

Critics including Nicole Jenette Simek have characterized Condé's use of intertextuality as a form of cannibalism through which Condé challenges

the preconceived and received notions of identity and identification, particularly in view of Caribbean identity configurations. As Simek explains, in Condé's view, cannibalism is indicative of the double bind through which one comes "to tell someone's story . . . to consume and transform it, to place it within one's own history and assimilate it to oneself" (Simek 2008, 199). Cast through another lens, for Condé, cannibalism is a way of communicating in the language, literature, or music of another and appropriating it. As Simek asserts, Condé's literary cannibalism is significant in that it calls into question the idea of cannibalism as inherent acceptance or assimilation. In her view, through cannibalism, even in indeterminate settings, ingestion and digestion are unpredictable processes through which multiple potential outcomes emerge: "Rather than simply accentuating the freedom of the writer to cannibalize texts as he or she wishes, Condé's novels deploy indeterminacy as a means of questioning a certain form of cannibalistic reading, a certain way of digesting a text that leaves no room for ambiguity or opacity" (Simek 2008, 177). As such, Condé's use of intertextuality creates spaces for negotiation and interpretation as each reader engages with or digests the text and intertexts. In this way, through the use of intertextual strategies, Condé encourages a multiplicity of interpretive strategies and outcomes, effectively challenging political, aesthetic, sociocultural, and linguistic hierarchies at work inside and outside the frame of the text.

As for Chamoiseau, he, like Condé, provides intertexual references to the Antillean newspaper *France-Antilles* (*Solibo,* 101). In other passages, Chamoiseau incorporates intertextual strategies in referencing noteworthy texts connected to his narration of events in footnotes, namely his own novel *Chronique des sept misères* (43) (*Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*) and his collection of folktales *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse* (52) (*Water Mama versus the Fairy Carabosse*). In another passage, he pays tribute to Martinican poet Aimé Césaire. In mentioning Césaire, who, along with Senegalese poet Léopold Sédar Senghor and Guyanan writer Léon Damas, served as founding members of the Négritude movement in Paris from the 1930s to the 1950s, Chamoiseau hints at some of Césaire's important contributions to postcolonial Francophone literature: "[À] cette heure il devrait être en réunion avec les camarades du balisier pour discuter de la distinction fondamentale qu'établissait Césaire entre un *in-dépendance* et une *a-dépendance*" (188–89). ([A]t that hour, he should be meeting with his comrades of the *baliser* [a Martinican progressive party political group] to discuss the fundamental distinction that Césaire established between an *in-dependance* and an *a-dependance*.)

At another moment, Chamoiseau pays homage to Césaire in a more

subtle manner, by opening the narration of his second chapter with the intertextual phrase "Au bout du petit matin" (At the edge of little morning, or, At the edge of dawn), the same phrase Césaire uses to commence his legendary poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Return to My Native Land*). Written in 1939, Césaire's poem decries the injustices of racial prejudice and discrimination. Filled with imagery and impressions of Martinique, Césaire's poem is unflinching in its critique of European imperialism and racism in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, as a seminal poem of the Négritude movement, Césaire's poem celebrates a Pan African aesthetic while inviting all citizens of the world to unite against racism, xenophobia, hegemony, and injustice.

Although Chamoiseau's critical texts *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*); *Écrire au pays dominé* (Writing in a Dominated Land); and *Quand les murs tombent: L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* (*Raze the Walls: The Case for Outlawing Nationalism*) represent a theoretical departure from Césaire's Négritude, through his intertextual evocations, Chamoiseau nonetheless pays homage to Césaire's philosophical, critical, poetic, and political contributions. More importantly, however, the intertextual references to Césaire and the Négritude movement spark contemporary conversations about Martinican identity conceptions and configurations, which consequently extend to questions of identity in the Americas and throughout the world. Chamoiseau's main concern is to challenge the tendency to oversimplify complicated dimensions of identification through essentializing models like Négritude and to encourage people to embrace the complexities of Creolization as identity-in-process. As Chamoiseau explains:

> Today, for example, many Martinicans are more attracted by the theory of negritude which simplifies the problem, rather than by the idea of Creolisation. And black Americans, when we speak to them about Creolisation, they call themselves African Americans, that is to say it's almost as if they consider Africa to have moved to America whereas no, that isn't it at all. Therefore, we see all these different modalities, these modalities are different ways of conceptualizing the unity-diversity encounter and this makes all of us young when facing the new Chaos-World. (Morgan 2008, 451)

Through his incorporation of intertextual elements, particularly in reference to Aimé Césaire, Chamoiseau plays the multiple roles of storyteller-historian, narrator-ethnographer, and activist-agitator. While recognizing the merits of Césaire's legacy and influence, Chamoiseau compels his readers/listeners to reread, reconsider, and reconfigure the relevance of Césaire's

work in view of contemporary identity configurations in process operating within a dynamic global network of shifting sociocultural contexts.

In another intertextual passage from *Crossing the Mangrove*, Condé presents a classroom recitation of a poem written by Dominique Guesde, a Guadeloupean poet who published her works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (148). Unlike Césaire's politicized poems, Guesde's poems shy away from controversial issues, focusing instead on the beauty of Antillean landscapes. As Jacques Corzani explains in his essay "Poetry before Negritude," Guesde and her bourgeois contemporaries exercised a sort of self-censorship, avoiding mention of social problems so as to not inflame racial tensions in the early years after the abolition of slavery in the French Antilles (Corzani 1994, 472). Although devoid of a discussion of the historical context and the social conditions operating during Guesde's literary career, the presence of Guesde's verses in Condé's novel is nonetheless significant, as revealed in teacher Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée's explanation as to why she chose the poem: "[J']apprenais à mes élèves une récitation que j'avais découpée dans *La Guadeloupe Pittoresque*, car tout de même, je trouvais drôle qu'on n'apprenne jamais aux petits Guadeloupéens des choses de leur pays" (148). (I was teaching my students a recitation that I had cut out of *Picturesque Guadeloupe*, since in any event, I found it funny that we never teach little Guadeloupeans things about their country.)

As Léocadie Timothée points out, references to Guadeloupean art, literature, and history were formerly omitted from public school curricula in Guadeloupe. Instead, primary school lessons focused on metropolitan France in studies of language, literature, history, and culture. Léocadie Timothée includes Guesde's poem in a decided effort to promote a balance of perspectives from Guadeloupe and France in her classroom.

On a deeper level, Condé's inclusion of Guesde's poem also hints at one of her sources of inspiration. Presented in the frame of the text, Guesde's four-line poem praises the natural beauty of Guadeloupe in the structure of a French-language poem. Similarly, Condé's vivid descriptions of the natural features of the island juxtapose the sensorial experience of Guadeloupe's landscapes and the poetic aesthetic of her francophone novel. Nevertheless, unlike Guesde, whose poem avoids controversial themes, Condé does not shy away from political and social criticism. In her intertextual homage to Guesde, Condé demonstrates how far Antillean writers have come in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in terms of voice, visibility, and empowerment, while also insisting that there is still much work to be done toward achieving autonomy and equality in sociocultural and political domains in present-day Guadeloupe.

In addition to referencing Caribbean literature and periodicals, Condé and Chamoiseau represent a multiplicity of intertextual rhythms, musics,

and movements in their narratives. In *Crossing the Mangrove*, Condé makes mention of popular Antillean dances such as the *biguine* (an Antillean musical genre often described as folk-jazz) and the *mazurka* (a dance of Polish origin that became popular in the Antilles) (143), as well as representations of Antillean folklore. Such references are most prevalent in the chapter "Cyrille le conteur" (Cyrille the Storyteller), in which Condé presents Cyrille's version of events in the form of a traditional Antillean folktale. The opening lines "Yé krik, yé krak!"—the former being the storyteller's call and the latter being the listener's response—signal the start of Cyrille's oral storytelling protocol, effectively implicating the readers as listeners in Condé's text. From the onset, Cyrille welcomes his readers/listeners into the space of the transposed tale, extending formal greetings to his reading or listening audience members and accompanying performers: "Mesdames, messieurs, je vous dis bonsoir; je vous dis bien le bonsoir. La compagnie, bonsoir!" (153) (Ladies and gentlemen, I bid you good evening; I bid you good evening. The company, good evening!) In his tale, Cyrille gives a brief synopsis of his life story, punctuated with exclamations and questions directed toward the readers/ listeners. He describes a vagabond life of wandering and wondering during which he travels to Marseille, France, and Dakar, Senegal, at different points in his life before returning to Guadeloupe. As Cyrille recounts his return to the island, he merges African and Antillean folkloric traditions by incorporating animal characters from African folklore in a narrative frame inspired by Antillean orality:

> Je serais bien resté là, moi, en Afrique. Mais les Africains m'ont donné un grand coup de pied au cul en hurlant : 'Retourne chez toi !' et je me suis retrouvé ici devant vous, pour vous raconter ce conte que, quand même j'ai eu le temps d'entendre chez eux. 'Un jour, l'hyène, le singe et le lion . . . ' (154)
>
> [I would have stayed there, in Africa. But the Africans gave me a big kick in the butt while yelling: "Go back to your home!" and I found myself here before you, to tell you this tale that, in spite of everything I had the time to hear in their home. "One day, the hyena, the monkey and the lion . . . "]

In Cyrille's tale, the juxtaposition of African folkloric imagery and Antillean oral stylings constitutes an intertextual moment in itself which simultaneously promotes a transcultural aesthetic, establishing points of connection between the diverse peoples of Africa and the Caribbean, while sparking a multiplicity of questions regarding identity negotiation and configuration in Caribbean locations and around the world. Informed and

impacted by his travels to France and to Senegal, through his tale, Cyrille endorses a mosaic identity configuration model in which the fragmented bits of multiple cultural, linguistic, aesthetic, and experiential influences at home (wherever that happens to be) and abroad are configured (and perpetually reconfigured) to constitute a working sense of identity in-process or in-progress.

Condé extends the intertextual stylistic dimensions of Cyrille's tale in the following chapter, in which Vilma's mother, Rosa, takes on the voice of the storyteller-narrator in telling her own tale and in negotiating her own mosaic identity configuration. In doing so, Condé spurs further questions about and questionings of subjective yet ephemeral memories, perspectives, emotions, and experiences as recounted in stories in view of individual identities and community affiliations on local and global levels. As Renée Larrier explains, the move to position characters as witnesses, storytellers, narrators, and performers is significant in that it changes the ways in which perceptions about Caribbean communities are configured from insider and outsider perspectives: "Negotiating the spaces between creativity and advocacy, Francophone Caribbean authors position the I as a witness and or/performer who articulates and transmits what he or she saw, heard, experienced, or endured for posterity. In so doing, they restore subjectivity, construct a much-needed archive, disrupt conventional literary and cinematic representations, and change our understanding of Martinican, Guadeloupean and Haitian communities" (Larrier 2006, 148). This move is significant particularly in view of the multiple narrative strategies used to incorporate resonant intertextual songs, stories, drumbeats, and dance steps in both Condé's and Chamoiseau's novels. As the communities of witnesses and survivors in *Crossing the Mangrove* and *Solibo Magnificent* remember, recount, perform, and testify in a sounding texted forum, they change the ways in which identities are perceived and negotiated both inside and outside the frame of the text.

In *Solibo Magnificent*, Chamoiseau consistently incorporates sonorous intertextual phenomena, which add multiple layers of meaning to his novel. In some passages, he references specific Caribbean songs including "Ti-Manman chérie" (Dear L'il Mama), "Ginette," and "Dimanche matin" (Sunday Morning) (*Solibo*, 60–61), which situate events in specific temporal and spatial contexts and also contribute to the overall noisy aesthetic of the text. In the case of "Ti-Manman chérie," "Ginette," and "Dimanche matin," Chamoiseau sets up the dramatic soundtrack in characterizing police officer Bouaffesse's seduction of Lolita Boidevan (aka Doudou Ménar) in a dance hall years prior to the investigation of Solibo's death. On the night in question, as Bouaffesse and Lolita come to know each other and each other's

bodies on the dance floor, Chamoiseau sonically heightens the drama and the energy of Bouaffesse's seduction plot with a calypso-mambo, a cha-cha-cha, a *lafouka* (a hip-driven dance in which dancers find themselves in very close proximity to one another), and an Otis Redding slow dance in which sweet nothings are whispered from ear to ear. Although the musical cues provide pathways to memory impressions of the one-night encounter between Bouaffesse and Lolita, the seduction-night soundtrack stands in sharp contrast to the noisy events that unfold in the wake of Solibo's mysterious death. For Bouaffesse and Lolita, who is now known as Doudou Ménar, the sweet music of past memory impressions is all too quickly replaced by the unfeeling noises of police brutality against herself, Sucette, Congo, and many of the other witnesses who run the risk of injury, imprisonment, and even death as the corrupt investigation unfolds. As for Doudou Ménar, who dies after being assaulted by a group of police officers at the scene of Solibo's death, her memories of the delightful seduction songs evoked through a chance encounter with her long-lost lover are displaced by the final sounds she hears in the moments before her death—the thumps of a club against her body and skull. In the aftermath of her brutal and unjust killing, the sweet and sensual melodies of the seduction songs take on bitter dimensions in characterizing the tragic situation.

Furthermore, at multiple points throughout the text, Chamoiseau incorporates the oral stylings of Solibo Magnifique, featuring intercalated blocks of narration (in which Chamoiseau serves as the storyteller-narrator) and transcriptions of conversations with Solibo (in which Chamoiseau serves as the historian-ethnographer). Presented as an ensemble, the interwoven intertextual strata enhance the resonant quality of the text, opening spaces for transpoetic dialogue and expression. Moreover, by design, the transcribed conversations also spark a series of multiple negotiations and discussions across languages, cultures, genres, and generations. In one passage in particular, Chamoiseau includes Solibo's half of an exchange in which the two men discuss their creative processes and the implications therein:

> Oiseau de Cham, tu écris. Bon. Moi, Solibo, je parle. Tu vois la distance ? Dans ton livre Manman Dlo, tu veux capturer la parole à l'écriture, je vois le rythme que tu veux donner, comment tu veux serrer les mots pour qu'ils sonnent à la langue. Tu me dis: Est-ce que j'ai raison, Papa ? Moi, je dis: On n'écrit jamais la parole, mais des mots, tu aurais dû parler. Écrire, c'est comme sortir le lambi de la mer pour dire : voici le lambi! La parole répond: où est la mer? Mais l'essentiel n'est pas là. Je pars, mais toi, tu restes. Je parlais, mais toi tu écris en

> annonçant que tu viens de la parole. Tu me donnes la main par-dessus la distance. C'est bien, mais tu touches la distance . . . (53)

> [Cham Bird, you write. Me, Solibo, I speak. You see the distance? In your book Water Mama, you want to capture the word in writing, I see the rhythm that you want to give, how you squeeze the words so that they ring on the tongue. You tell me: Am I right, Papa? Me, I say: The word isn't written, but words, you should have spoken. Writing, it's like taking the conch out of the sea to say: here is the conch! The word responds: where is the sea? But the essential isn't there. I leave, but you, you remain. I was speaking, but you, you write while announcing that you come from the word. You give me your hand across the distance. It's all well and good, but you touch the distance . . . ]

For Chamoiseau, the transcriptions of his conversations with Solibo provide perspective into the constraints of his creative and documentary processes. As Solibo explains, the spoken word can never truly be represented by written words in a texted format. Although a writer can infuse his or her text with the rhythms of spoken language and musical instruments, creating a resonant effect from within the frame of a texted narrative, there is still something missing, something unquantifiable that happens in that moment of performance, energy, musicality, and dialogue. And yet, the challenges of this endeavor fail to deter Chamoiseau. Rather, he uses his intertextual conversations with Solibo as a means of exposing and exploring the limits of his craft as he looks for ways to bridge or move beyond the distances that separate written, oral, and instrumental literatures. In addition, these intertextual moments contribute to the multiple layers of vibrant polyphony contained in the pages of Chamoiseau's novel, which operates as a noisy interactive forum in which relational identities are autonomously (re)considered, (re)negotiated, and (re)configured.

As Mary Gallagher notes in *Soundings in French Caribbean Writing since 1950*, intertextual components are particularly significant in view of questions of Francophone Caribbean identity. Providing dimensions of depth that surpass the geographical confines of the islands, as Gallagher suggests, intertextuality effectively expands the scope of the Antillean identificatory paradigm, amplifying temporal and spatial dimensions while continuing to insist on the importance of relationality:

> The surfeit of intertextuality pervading late-twentieth-century French Caribbean writing creates a sense of extension, density, and relationality that at once compensates for the limits and marginality of island space and reflects that hyperrelational culture of the

> Caribbean. However, it also produces an impression of temporal depth; . . . the reverberation of textual memory, the vibration of the past propagated in the present, creating there a sense of duration and endurance . . . Furthermore, the textual and intertextual processes of writing trigger a dynamic entirely consonant with the transformations and processes of lived time, just as their infinite paradigmatic potential underlines the unpredictability associated with time. (Gallagher 2002, 271)

For Gallagher, intertextual elements create an imaginative expanse in which dimensions of time and of space are increased. Revealing dimensions of historical and spatial profundity by connecting past writings and resonances with present thoughts and experiences, intertexual processes effectively increase the amplitude of Caribbean expression.

Given the relational nature of the transpoetic transcultural space, the novel serves as an ideal forum for readers to engage in a performative dialogue with the text. Much like a listening experience, during which listeners receive and interpret audio information, through the reading experience, readers perceive and process textual cues, constructing an imaginative forum in which questions of individual and collective identity are explored in view of the writer, the characters, and the readers themselves. Directed by readers as they work their way through the text, the interplay among intertextual components and extratextual conditions is completely unpredictable, yielding different results with each and every reading. Such variability is attributable to inevitable contextual shifts propagated as subjects move through space and through time. As readers address the questions of identity that emerge from their encounters with the text, they are able to play out or perform identity in real and imaginative realms.

In considering issues of specificity regarding questions of collective identities, the autonomy involved in performing identity—through singing, dancing, writing, speaking, listening, reading, and reacting—is liberating, primarily since it allows subjects to independently reconcile individual perspectives and experiences with collective histories, and cultural groups. In his explanation of the performative dimensions of identification, Michel Giraud approaches problems of collectivized Antillean identity constructs, presenting performance as an effective mode of mediating and affirming independent identities within collective cultural systems.

> [Elles] se transforment aussi, mais pas nécessairement au même rythme, les identités culturelles qui sont au coeur de ce champ de manipulations, identités dont les individus jouent dans des voies souvent contradictoires, et de manière diverse selon les différents con-

> textes relationnels dans lesquels ils se trouvent engagés. (Giraud 1997, 806)
>
> [They also transform themselves, but not necessarily to the same rhythm, the cultural identities that are at the heart of this field of manipulations, identities that individuals play in often contradictory ways, and in diverse fashions according to the different relational contexts in which they find themselves engaged.]

In addition to the aforementioned spatial and temporal components essential to the (trans)formative process of identification, Giraud is sensitive to the rhythmic dimensions of the process, which he demonstrates in arguing that cultural identities transform at variable rhythms and/or on multiple trajectories. Just as subjects pursue unique time-space trajectories that shape experiential and contextual identificatory influences, subjects and systems tend to change independently of one another, each according to their own rhythm or rhythms. Moreover, in assigning performance as a mode of identification affirmation, Giraud acknowledges the complexities of this process through which subjects often find themselves at odds with cultural systems, with other subjects, and even with themselves. In this light, in developing and redeveloping identity configurations, it becomes necessary to tolerate conflict and ambiguity, to allow for dissonance and cacophony. Glissant puts forth a similar philosophy in *Traité du tout-monde* (Treaty of the Whole-World), suggesting that polyphonic possibilities are "la résolution unitaire et parfaite des diversités du son et de la voix, insuffisantes à elles-mêmes dans leur seule spécificité" (Glissant 1997b, 99) (the common and perfect resolution of diversities of sound and voice, insufficient themselves in their own specificity). Transcending time, space, and noise, Glissant offers this intersubjective and polyphonic mode of performing and negotiating identity as "perfection intelligible" (99) (intelligible perfection).

By prominently incorporating vibrant rhythmic and musical elements in the frame of their respective novels, Chamoiseau and Condé designate resonant texted spaces in which questions of identity, both interior and exterior, are explored on individual and collective levels. Although the relational dimensions of this transpoetic transcultural space situate the texts as part of a dynamic network of contextual influences at work both inside and outside the frame of the novel, questions of Antillean identity comprise the primary focus of *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*. In exploring the complicated dimensions of Antillean identities, Condé and Chamoiseau insist on identity as a fluid and ongoing process rather than a fixed typography or product. Moreover, they reject absolute and idealized constructions in favor of mutable and idiosyncratic

configurations. Pascale De Souza affirms this notion in her discussion of *Crossing the Mangrove*, likening Condé's writing to the act of "plonge[r] sa plume dans la mangrove pour rejeter les idées reçues" (De Souza 2000, 832) (plung[ing] her pen in the mangrove in order to reject received ideas). Similarly, in her analysis of *Solibo Magnificent*, Delphine Perret posits that Chamoiseau refutes "les tendances militantes qui chercheraient à donner une image rêvée de l'identité créole" (militant tendencies that would seek to give an ideal image of Creole identity) and simultaneously "nous rappelle qu'il y a bien des relations de ressemblance entre conteurs, d'une culture à l'autre" (Perret 1994, 826–72) (reminds us that there are connections of resemblance between storytellers . . . from one culture to another).

Rather than accepting identity as a fixed typography or stereotype determined by linguistic, geographic, historical, or political criteria, Condé and Chamoiseau challenge limiting identity constructs in promoting identity as perpetually negotiable through the eyes of the Self and the eyes of the Other. This is not to say that Condé and Chamoiseau promote identical approaches to addressing questions of Antillean identity, of Creole identity, or of Caribbean identity at large, as there are distinctions between the philosophies of the two writers. Although Condé and Chamoiseau both maintain the relationality of Caribbean identity and identities, particularly in view of identity as process or performance, their approaches vary in considering questions of Caribbean and Antillean identity. Whereas Chamoiseau promotes *créolité* (creoleness), a localized movement that insists on the importance of the Creole language, local oral traditions, and popular culture in view of mosaic conceptions of Caribbean identity and identities, Condé favors a more expansive approach that considers a vast network of cultural influences impacting Caribbean cultures at home and abroad. Condé goes so far as to reject the notions of *créolité* set forth by Chamoiseau, Confiant, Bernabé, and others, explaining that she views the designation as limiting:

> Pour ce qui est de la 'créolité' . . . je ne veux pas qu'on me définisse et qu'on m'impose un canon littéraire. Je pense que je suis un être complexe de par ma situation de colonisée, de par une série d'influences qui font ce que je suis, et qu'il faut donc me laisser absolument libre d'exprimer les facettes de ma personnalité. Qu'on ne vienne pas me dire que le créole est ma langue maternelle. Qu'on ne vienne pas me dire que le français est une langue de colonisation. En tant qu'écrivain, il n'y a pas de langue maternelle. Pour un écrivain toutes les langues sont des langues étrangères parce qu'avec ce matériau qu'il n'a pas élaboré, il faut trouver le moyen de faire entendre sa voix. (Sourieau 1999, 1094)

> [As for what "creoleness" is . . . I do not want people to define me or to impose a literary canon on me. I think that I am a complex being through my situation as colonized, through a series of influences that make me what I am, and it is thus necessary to leave me absolutely free to express the facets of my personality. Do not tell me that Creole is my mother tongue. Do not tell me that French is a language of colonization. As a writer, there is no mother tongue. For a writer, all languages are foreign languages because with this raw material, one must find the way to make one's voice heard.]

Interestingly enough, Chamoiseau's recent critical works have demonstrated a theoretical approach that supports similar freedoms in identification—French, Antillean, Caribbean, and otherwise—vocally promoted by Condé through the course of her career. In his recent collaboration with Édouard Glissant, *Quand les murs tombent: L'Identité nationale hors-la-loi?* (*Raze the Walls: The Case for Outlawing Nationalism*) Glissant and Chamoiseau challenge the idea of national identities, specifically in contemporary France and its overseas departments including Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guyana (where French remains the sole official language). Refusing the oversimplified categories of French, Creole, and Caribbean identity—which, as Glissant and Chamoiseau argue (2007, 11), have been used in the past to achieve racist and xenophobic ends—Glissant and Chamoiseau encourage increased autonomy and flexibility in contemporary identity configuration. Seeking to blur the geographical and ideological boundaries that divide nations, cultures, and peoples, in *Quand les murs tombent*, Glissant and Chamoiseau build upon theories presented in earlier works including Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation* (*Poetics of Relation*) and *Traité du tout-monde* (Treaty of the Whole-World), and Chamoiseau's *Écrire en pays dominé* (Writing in a Dominated Land). In particular, they allude to the power of music, literature, song, and the arts in creating spaces for identity negotiation that transcend the confines of geographic and political categories:

> Les arts, les littératures, les musiques et les chants fraternisent par des voies d'imaginaires qui ne connaissent plus rien aux seules géographies nationales ou aux langues orgueilleuses dans leur à-part. Dans la mondialité (qui est là tout autant que nous avons à la fonder), nous n'appartenons pas en exclusivité à des 'patries', à des 'nations', et pas du tout à des 'territoires', mais désormais à des 'lieux', des intempéries linguistiques, des dieux libres qui ne réclament peut-être pas d'être adorés, des terres natales que nous aurons décidées, des langues que nous aurons désirées, ces géographies tissées de matières et de visions que nous aurons forgées . . . Le chatoiement de ces lieux

ouvre à l'insurrection infinie des imaginaires libres : à cette mondialité. (Glissant and Chamoiseau 2007, 16–17)

[Arts, literatures, musics, and songs fraternize by paths of imaginaries that no longer know anything of single national geographies or self-righteous languages in their a-part. In the globality (that is there insofar as we have to constitute it), we do not belong in exclusivity to "countries," to "nations," and not at all to "territories," but henceforth to "places," linguistic turbulences, free gods who might not demand to be adored, homelands that we will have determined, languages that we will have desired, these geographies weaved from substances and visions that we will have forged . . . The glimmer of these places opens to the infinite insurrection of free imaginaries: to this globality.]

For Glissant and Chamoiseau, subjects are not limited to the spaces and places of their physical and political geographies. Rather, subjects are free to construct terrains and domains for identity negotiation in autonomously configured imaginary realms. Activated through the creation of and/or interaction with music, literature, and the arts, these imaginary realms open conceptual spaces for identity negotiation and appropriation which allow subjects to configure independent notions of selfhood and understandings of their relationships with others in/and the world. In this respect, for Glissant and Chamoiseau, globality is not determined by an organized ensemble of politically prescribed nations and territories, but through a haphazard collection of perpetually shifting self-appropriated imaginaries and identities.

For our purposes, it is important to keep in mind that, in spite of their differences, Chamoiseau and Condé have both problematized the concepts of Antillean and/or Caribbean identity. As we continue our analysis of *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, focus is directed toward this identificatory problematic. By negotiating Chamoiseau's gaze inward, which looks to the spaces of the Antillean islands for points of reference in identification, and Condé's gaze outward, which seeks to establish points of connection among Caribbean individuals and communities around the world, we begin to work our way through a figurative mangrove in exploring questions of Antillean identity. Losing ourselves at times, finding ourselves at others, in our discussion of *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, we insist on the transpoetic and transcultural qualities of the two novels, specifically in their capacities as forums for communication, negotiation, and exchange among individuals in local and global communities.

## The Sounds of Death and Mourning

In *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, texted representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena resonantly contribute to the narration of mourning and the performance of identity. Manifest in transposed fragments of sounds and memories, resonant rhythms and songs fill the spaces of the texts. Although devoid of the graphic notation musicians and composers use to transpose rhythmic and musical scores, the sounds of songs, rhythms, instruments, and voices clearly resonate in the frames of the novels, filling imaginative ears with layers of vibrant polyphony. In both works, such vivid representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena convey a sense of the local cultural contexts in a profound manner, one that draws perceptive ears and bodies into the multisensorial experience of the text. The swirls of sounds and sensations relate contextualized aesthetic conventions and innovations, serving as important points of reference as both characters and readers struggle to find meaning. Moreover, since both works treat the topic of death with a sense of mystery and immediacy, Condé and Chamoiseau sometimes assign ritual functions to rhythm and music. In other instances, as characters partake in the posthumous work of mourning and remembering, rhythmic and musical cues guide their endeavors to reconcile the past and the present in dealing with questions of life, death, and identity. The multiple layers of rhythms and musics serve as an expressive mode of catharsis, sparking acts of grieving, meditation, and reconciliation that shape characters' understandings of the deceased but also of themselves. Whether poignant, nostalgic, peaceable, or incendiary, as subjects receive and respond to multifacted rhythmic and musical phenomena, they partake in a performative mode of identification, negotiating identities for themselves as a disconnected means of connecting with a deceased Other.

Since readers immediately come face to face with an enigmatic death scene in both novels, the task of investigation begins even before the work of mourning does, at least in view of the organization of the narratives. This aspect is particularly apparent in *Solibo Magnificent*, which opens with a "procès verbal" (police statement) that visually details the graphic death scene and provides instructions as to how the police investigation will proceed. Lacking audible descriptions, the sole reference to rhythm or music lies in the mention of "un tambour de paysan" (*Solibo*, 19) (one peasant drum) included in the visual cataloguing of the site. Associated with other random objects in the vicinity including "quatre petites bouteilles en verre blanc, vides et ouvertes, une caisse d'emballage de pommes de terre, brisée, [et] des débris divers" (19) (four small clear glass bottles, empty and open, a packing crate of potatoes, broken, [and] diverse debris), the drum

and other potentially resonant devices are reduced to a defunctionalized status in the police inventory.

More subtly presented in *Crossing the Mangrove*, in the three days following Francis Sancher's death, his body "traîn[e] sur le marbre froid des tables d'autopsie, jusqu'à ce qu'un médecin appelé de La Pointe en désespoir" (*Mangrove*, 23) (hang[s] around on the cold marble of the autopsy tables, until a doctor called from La Pointe [à Pitre] in desperation) can release the body for the funeral. Even before the delivery of the body to the morgue, the six men sent to retrieve the body try to speculate as to the cause of death. Shocked by Francis Sancher's puzzling and untimely death, the men cannot help but contemplate the inexplicably bloodless condition of the body. As one local resident, Carmélien, incredulously exclaims, "Il n'y a pas de sang sur lui!" (There is no blood on him!), another member of the group replies only with a question, "Pas de sang?"(19) (No blood?). As the body of Francis Sancher lies dead in the morgue, community rumination about the mysterious condition of his body continues: "À l'en croire, en dépit des apparences, même s'il n'y avait ni sang ni blessure sur le corps, cette mort ne pouvait être naturelle" (23). (If we are to believe it, in spite of appearances, even if there was neither blood nor injury on the body, this death could not be natural.)

Although Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée initiates the work of mourning at Francis Sancher's death site by reciting a prayer for the deceased (14), the collective ritualized work of mourning effectively begins at his funeral on the fourth day after his death. As Marie-Celine LaFontaine explains, traditional Antillean funerary ceremonies are lively events, "musical manifestations" marked by a multiplicity of sounding phenomena (LaFontaine 1997, 908). Featuring oral songs with percussive vocal accompaniment (identified by LaFontaine as "chant avec tambour vocal" [singing with vocal drum]), funerary *véyé*, or *vénéré* (funeral wakes) are also audibly characterized by handclaps (referred to in Guadeloupean Creole as "*wake lanmen*"), rhythmic noises produced in the throat, and the scansion of rosaries (LaFontaine 1997, 912). As LaFontaine affirms, such soundings are significant in that they provide a meaningful mode of expression through which grieving community members voice their relationships with themselves, each other, and even the world: "C'est sa relation au monde qu'exprime celui (ou celle) qui chante, et la relation au monde de la collectivité qu'expriment les chants où sont par conséquent mises en scène les diverses expériences des acteurs sociaux" (914). (It is his [or her] relation to the world that he [or she] who sings is expressing, and the relation to the world of collectivity that the songs are expressing, where consequently the diverse experiences of the social actors are staged.) As LaFontaine maintains, through the act of singing, mourners perform

individual experiences and identities in a collective forum through which interpersonal relationships are reconfigured and social positionality is renegotiated. In this respect, as they collectively work to construct a posthumous identity for the deceased, the mourners effectively reposition themselves with respects to themselves, each other, and the world.

Returning to Condé's portrayal of Francis Sancher's funeral, LaFontaine's assertion takes on important dimensions if we consider what the funeral attendees communicate not only through their sounds but also through their silences. Although Condé presents the event as a noisy occasion filled with the sounds of praying voices and clicking rosary beads, at times, Francis Sancher's funeral is characterized more by the dramatic moments of silence that interrupt the ceremony than the noises of mourning themselves. In Condé's rendering of funerary events, there are two distinct moments of silence, both occurring upon the arrival of a socially marginal character. In the first instance, Francis Sancher's live-in lover, Mira, enters the space of the funeral in her first public appearance since the birth of their illegitimate child. For a single moment, the room falls silent, as onlookers lose themselves in their own thoughts, both curious and judgmental: "À son entrée, il y eut un grand mouvement de curiosité. Toutes les têtes se levèrent, tous les yeux se braquèrent, tous les doigts oublièrent de rouler les grains des chapelets" (24). (With her entrance, there was a great movement of curiosity. All heads looked up, all eyes stared, all fingers forgot to roll the rosary beads.) All eyes on her, Mira makes her way through the silent crowd, pausing a moment to make eye contact with Francis Sancher's other lover, Vilma, before taking her place in the women's prayer circle. Compassionate rather than defiant, as she raises her voice to chime in with the women as they begin a new prayer, Mira vocally asserts a position of group belonging in spite of her socially marginal status.

The second time silence befalls the crowd, mourners uncomfortably acknowledge the surreptitious arrival of Xantippe, a mysterious community outlander who lives alone in the neighboring woods. A social misfit, Xantippe is described as having only trees as friends (241). As with the quiet reception of Mira's arrival, the decided silence of the mourners accentuates Xantippe's borderline social status, emphasizing his position as social misfit.

> La présence de Xantippe créait toujours un réel malaise.
> Immédiatement, les bruits s'éteignirent dans un lac glacé de silence et certains envisagèrent de le pousser aux épaules. Toutefois, on ne verrouille pas la porte d'une veillée. Elle reste grande ouverte pour que chacun s'y engouffre. (26)

> [The presence of Xantippe always created a real malaise.

> Immediately, the noises faded in an icy lake of silence and certain people considered shoving him. However, the door to a wake is never locked. It stays wide open for everyone to get swallowed up inside.]

Unlike Mira, who is met with more curiosity than malice, Xantippe immediately generates sentiments of hostility and even impulses toward physical violence as he enters the funeral. Despite (or perhaps because of) his decidedly coldhearted and antagonistic reception, Xantippe refuses to engage with community members, remaining silent with his thoughts and making so little noise that even the sounds of his footsteps, which allow him to "se glisser sans bruit parmi les gens" (25) (slide noiselessly among the people), go unnoticed. Through his unwillingness to raise his voice as a member of the assembled community of mourners, Xantippe declines the prospect of mediating an alternative social standing, thus maintaining his position of social exteriority, of nonmembership in the Rivière au Sel community.

In addition to the erratic series of sounds and silences filling the space of the funeral gathering, Condé fills the text with the sonorities that echo inside the minds of the characters, who, one by one, lose themselves in their resonant thoughts and fragmented memories. The combination of noisy thoughts, rhythms, music, and chatter produces a cacophonic result, which adds to the general climate of disorientation and confusion. As realities, impressions, and imaginings intermingle in blurred memory moments, disjointed pasts are introduced into the immediacy of a complicated present, yielding a destabilizing effect for characters and readers alike. Critic Rosemary Erlam attributes this sense of instability to a doubling effect brought forth by sounding textual elements, noting: "Ce décor sonore remplace à l'occasion la trame narrative même, ce qui donne l'impression d'une deuxième réalité" (Erlam 1997, 35). (This sonorous decor occasionally replaces the narrative framework itself, which gives the impression of a second reality.) Expanding on Erlam's claim, it is possible to conceive not just two imagined realities, but a multiplicity of perceived realities commingling in the space of the text. With readers left to negotiate Condé's disconnected series of narratives, in which individual characters each present flurries of memories, thoughts, conversations, and daydreams, questions emerge from the correspondences and the incongruities among different memories and versions of events. In this respect, with each passing chapter, the reader is plunged deeper and deeper into the thicket of Condé's figurative mangrove, where often conflicting clues from disparate renderings of past events spark more questions than answers. Charged with the task of assembling jumbled fragments of memory as well as that of mediating multiple realms of real and imagined pasts

and presents, Condé's readers are left to explore complicated dimensions of identification while Condé's characters struggle to come to terms with the mysterious life and death of Francis Sancher.

Inextricably bound up in the work of mourning and the work of remembering, multiple identificatory processes and devices are in operation throughout *Crossing the Mangrove*. As Rivière au Sel community members grieve the loss of Francis Sancher and/or speculate as to the cause of his death, they contemplate their relationships with the deceased but also with each other. Gathered at the funeral ceremony, survivors engage in an interactive effort to configure a posthumous identity for Francis Sancher. Through their songs, thoughts, movements, and words, they endeavor to piece together a working identity for the deceased. As their gazes shift inward to acknowledge subjective sensations and experiences in past and in present domains, and outward to witness the interactions and activities of those assembled at the funeral, subjects subsequently (re)negotiate autonomous identity configurations and arbitrate alternative social positionality for themselves.

Although the sonorities of official funerary proceedings are not presented in *Solibo Magnificent*, rhythmic and musical phenomena prominently figure into the posthumous soundscape, producing a cacophonic effect, which contributes to the overall sense of commotion and confusion at Solibo's death scene. This tumult begins from the onset, as Solibo lay dead or dying. When Solibo falls to the ground after crying "*Patat' sa*,"[7] his crowd enthusiastically responds to his call by shouting, "*Patat' si!*" in response (34). Then, mistakenly thinking he is pretending to be dead, perhaps for dramatic effect, the crowd proceeds to serenade him with a "léwoz caverneux" (cavernous *lewoz*), led by Solibo's drummer Sucette (35).

As LaFontaine explains, the Creole term *lewoz* can be used to describe a specific genre of rhythmically charged music (one of seven traditional Antillean *gros ka*, or *gwo ka*, rhythms) as well as lively performances of the musical style, which she characterizes as "un ensemble de chants, de danses et de rythmes tambourinés exécutés au son ou à l'aide des tambours dits *gwoka* . . . ainsi que de petites percussions" (LaFontaine 1997, 908) (an ensemble of songs, dances, and drummed rhythms played to the sound or with the help of drums called *gwo ka* . . . as well as small percussion instruments). In Chamoiseau's rendering of the *lewoz*, Sucette and his *gwo*

7. As Delphine Perret explains, the Creole term *patat* has a double signification, connoting a sweet potato or female genitalia. She analyzes the eroticism of the death scene in "La Parole du conteur créole: *Solibo Magnifique* de Patrick Chamoiseau" (Perret 1994, 834).

*ka* take center stage, providing the resonant nucleus for the performance. This time, unlike the muted peasant drum-object presented in the opening police report, Sucette's drum is vibrantly clamorous, filling the night air with sound and spirit:

> [L]e tambouyé, soutenant ce qu'il croyait être un mime improvisé du Maître de la parole, déterrait du tambour un léwoz caverneux: yeux en absence, Sucette avait quitté sa chair pour investir le ka, ou alors le ka lui bourgeonnait au ventre. Une vibration fondait l'homme au baril, et le corps de Sucette ronflait autant que la peau de cabri. Sa bouche mâchait silencieusement les fréquences du tambour. Son talon sculptait les sons. Il utilisait les mains supplémentaires que les tambouyés recèlent, elles virevoltaient dans des échos de montagne, des brisures cristallines, une galopade de vie sur la terre amplifiante des tracées en carême, communiquant à qui savait entendre (qui s'était mis en état de liberté devant ce phénomène) l'expression d'une voix au timbre rhumier, surhumaine mais familière: *Oh! Sucette parlait là, oui . . .* (35)

> [The drummer, supporting what he thought to be an improvised mime of the Master of the word, unearthed from the drum a cavernous *lewoz*: eyes absent, Sucette had left his flesh to go into the *ka*, or then the *ka* burgeoned from his stomach. A vibration fused the man to the drum, and the body of Sucette roared as much as the lambskin. His mouth silently chewed the frequencies of the drum. His heel sculpted the sounds. He used the supplementary hands that drummers possess, they twirl in mountain echoes, crystalline cracks, a stampede of life on earth amplifying the paths of the dry season, communicating to those who knew how to hear[8] (who had placed themselves in a state of liberty before this phenomenon) the expression of a voice at a rummer's pitch, superhuman but familiar: *Oh! Sucette spoke there, yes . . .* ]

As he provides the rhythmic base of the *lewoz*, Sucette plays like a man joined in communion with his instrument, like a man inhabited by the rhythms of his drum. His eyes vacant, Sucette abandons himself to the rhythm, performing the *lewoz* with his entire body—his mouth, his feet, and his hands, subsequently creating the sounding effect of multiple hands beating a single drum. Technically astute, Sucette's dynamic solo is

8. In French, the word *entendre* conveys a double signification: In English, it could be translated as to hear and to understand.

correspondingly expressive, communicating a "superhuman" message to those who listen and understand, those who have opened themselves up to the experience of the rhythm.[9]

In an ironic twist of fate, Sucette's dramatic drummed interlude, conceivably initiated as a means of accentuating the theatrical impact of Solibo's histrionic gesture, unwittingly signals the storyteller's passage from life into death. Chamoiseau later seems to acknowledge the pivotal significance of this moment, reproducing Sucette's "cavernous *lewoz*" in the final section of the text entitled "Après la parole: L'écrit du souvenir" (After the Word: The Writing of Memory). Transposed in the frame of a single page, the "Séquence du solo de Sucette (au moment où Solibo Magnifique est rayé)" (Sequence of Sucette's Solo [at the moment when Solibo is wiped out]) serves much like a preface to Chamoiseau's transcription of Solibo's final unfinished performance. Acting like a percussive sign of change or transformation, the transcribed drumbeats provide a striking audiovisual segue as the novel shifts from Chamoiseau's narration of the investigation of Solibo's death to Chamoiseau's written rendering of Solibo's final oration. Presented like lines of lyrical verse, the "Sequence of Sucette's Solo" consists of nine lines of percussive onomatopoeia:

> Plakatak,
> Bling, Piting, Piting,
> Tak!
> Pitak, Bloukoutoum boutoum
> Bloukoutoukoutoum Pitak!
> Tak!
> Tak Patak! Kling
> Piting, Piting, Piting
> Bloukoutoum!    (231)

Disassociated from contextual clues presented earlier in the text during Chamoiseau's narration of Sucette's dynamic *lewoz* performance, Sucette's drum solo stands on its own in the frame of the text. Devoid of musical notation or verbal accompaniment, Chamoiseau's textual rendering of

9. Monique Blérald-Ndagano describes a similar effect in characterizing Creole drumming practitioners and practices: "[L]e *tanbouyen* ne joue pas que de ses mains qui tapent, frappent, giflent, caressent la peau du tambour. Il vibre tout entier: il ferme, roule les yeux, dodeline la tête, murmure, siffle entre ses dents, émet des boborygmes, des onomatopées. Il discute avec le tambour et le tambour discute avec lui, dit-on" (Blérald-Ndagano 1996, 63). (The drummer does not only play with his hands that hit, strike, slap, caress the skin of the drum. He resonates throughout: he closes, rolls his eyes, nods his head, murmurs, whistles between his teeth, emits rumbling noises, onomatopoeias. He discusses with the drum and the drum discusses with him, as we say.)

Sucette's drum solo emphasizes the rhythmic voice of the drum, what Solibo refers to as the "parole du ka." (240) (the word of the *ka*).[10] Although Chamoiseau repeatedly incorporates percussive onomatopoeia throughout the novel, punctuating his portrayal of events with resonant *vlap-vlap*s, *zip zip*s, *flap*s, and *sissap*s, his transcription of Sucette's drum solo is distinctive in that it exclusively privileges the subjectivity of the drummer in union with his drum. Faithful and relentless in the art of transcription, Chamoiseau incorporates, in his rendering of Sucette's drum solo, the same onomatopoeia that Martinican drummers use in transposing prescriptive and descriptive drummed *bèlè*, *tibwa*, and *gwo ka* performances.[11] For example, in their book *Notes techniques sur les instruments tibwa et tanbou dejanbe* (Technical Notes on the *Tibwa* and *Dejanbe* Drum Instruments), the Association Mi Mes Manmay Matinik includes conventional rhythmic cues used in sheet music along with onomatopoeic drum lyrics to guide performers in achieving desired sonorities for traditional songs. Their transcriptions—including phrases like "Tak pi tak pit tak tak tak" (Musique Danmyé-Kalennda-Bèlè de Martninique 1992, 54) and "Bang bang tin tin/ Be doum be doum" (57)—are similar to those used by Chamoiseau to convey the aesthetic of drumming and the rhythmico-musical language of drums and drummers. Through his decided inclusion of the transcribed drum sequence, Chamoiseau, a self-described "marqueur de paroles" (*Solibo*, 30) (word scratcher) strongly acknowledges the communicative dimensions of drumming in the Antillean cultural context. Seemingly nonsensical or unintelligible when viewed through the eyes of readers unfamiliar with the language of Antillean drumming, the texted series of *tak*s, *plakatak*s, *bling*s, *kling*s, and *bloukoutoum boutoum*s comprising Sucette's decontextualized drumspeak support drumming as a language in itself.

Accessible to those "qui sa[it] entendre" (who kn[ow] how to hear and/ or understand) its expressive rhythms (*Solibo*, 35), Chamoiseau's textual

10. In "Patrick Chamoiseau et le gwo-ka du chanté-parlé," Francis Higginson also argues that music is an important device in that it takes the discussion of identity beyond the confines of binary categories including, but not limited to, written versus oral, traditional versus modern, and Occidental versus Oriental (Higginson 2004). Although we approach similar questions in considering *Solibo Magnificent*, we incorporate different critical methodologies and establish distinct arguments in our respective analyses.

11. As Monique Desroches explains, the *bèlè* (traditionally associated with northern Martinique) and the *gwo ka* (traditionally associated with Guadeloupe) are similar, both constructed from barrels with animal skin stretched over the top. The *gwo ka* tends to be shorter and wider than the *bèlè*, which produces a deeper, heavier sonority (Desroches 1986, 28). The *tibwa* consists of two drumsticks constructed from a hard wood that are used to strike the side of a drum or a horizontally oriented bamboo stick (55).

representation of drummed language is equally intriguing and troublesome since, to a certain extent, the transcribed version of Sucette's drum solo exposes the limits of writing. Devoid of rhythmic or musical notation, Chamoiseau's written rendering of Sucette's solo allows for a high degree of variability in cadence and in pitch, much like textual portrayals of lyrical music. Unable to accurately reproduce the barrage of visual, aural, and sensorial information communicated through speech, gesture, rhythm, and song, written language relies on evoking an ensemble of imaginative impressions in the mind of reader, the possibilities of which are limitless but unpredictable.

In exposing the limits of writing, Marie-Christine Hazael-Massieux makes a similar observation in her discussion of textual adaptations of musical components of Creole folktales: "Il convient de souligner dès l'abord que les notations musicales sont rares dans les recueils présentant les contes créoles: le plus souvent celui qui a recueilli les contes ne livre au lecteur que les paroles de ces parties chantées, sans donner d'indications permettant de reconstituer l'air correspondant" (Hazael-Massieux 1985, 40). (It is appropriate to emphasize in approaching it, that musical notations are rare in collections presenting Creole stories: most often the one who collected the stories only reveals the words of these singing parts to the reader, without giving indications permitting the reconstitution of the corresponding tune.)

Although the problem of transcription is common to written versions of vocal and instrumental music, textual representations of the sounds of drums and other resonant instruments are more problematic than their oral counterparts. This problem is primarily attributable to the lyrical content of vocal songs, which bear meaning not only in their sounds, but also in their words. Instrumental music, by contrast, communicates exclusively through nonverbal resonances. When transcribed, the onomatopoeic instrumental verses have sonorous potential, but lack the representational possibilities of written lyrics. Despite the problems of transcribing instrumental rhythmic and musical phenomena, Chamoiseau's written rendering of Sucette's drum solo is meaningful in that it expressly contributes to the sonority of *Solibo Magnificent* and encourages intertextual parameters in the transpoetic space, while simultaneously exposing the limits of writing.

In acknowledging the limits of writing, Chamoiseau approaches his craft much like a live performer. Privileging the realms of sound and tactility, he attempts to infuse the text with vivid sensations and vibrant sonorities. At times, this process unleashes fragmented bits of chaos and contradiction, promoting the ambiguities and possibilities of performance through writing. As he explains in *Écrire en pays dominé* (Writing in a

Dominated Land), Chamoiseau views the processes of writing and reading much like the process of music making:

> Écrire-lire est devenu pour moi une transhumance de sensations totales qui soumet l'esprit solliciteur aux estimes chaotiques de la glace, du feu, de la terre, du vent, de l'ombre, des lumières . . . Cette miette de glace au coeur du feu. Cette terre saisie en plein vent . . . féerie dont on ne conserve que de petites bombes de rêve disséminées dans la lucide incertitude des phrases. Les musiciens le savent déjà. (Chamoiseau 1997, 42)

> [Writing-reading has become for me a transhumance of total sensations that subject the supplicant spirit to chaotic esteems of ice, fire, earth, wind, darkness, lights . . . This bit of ice in the heart of the fire. This earth seized in full wind . . . extravaganza of which one only retains tiny bombs of dream disseminated in the lucid uncertainty of phrases. Musicians know this already.]

In attempting to imitate or encapsulate what *musicians already know*, Chamoiseau endeavors to push the parameters of literary convention. By opening it up to a full range of sounds and sensations, Chamoiseau designates the space of the text as a transpoetic forum in which multiple sounding and silent phenomena intermingle. The resonant nature of Chamoiseau's work has prompted many critics to recognize its audible potential, including Alexie Tcheuyap, who remarks: "[*Solibo Magnificent*] is not only read but is also, especially heard" (Tcheuyap 2001, 51). Filled with the reverberations of scripted sonorities generated through recurrent representations of songs, rhythms, stories, and sound effects, *Solibo Magnificent* bursts the sound barriers of the written form, most notably through the transcribed rendering of Sucette's drum solo.

Commingling in the space of the text with French and Creole lexical elements, the striking representation of Sucette's drum solo increases the scope of the stylistic and lexical localization strategies Chamoiseau employs throughout *Solibo Magnificent*. In addition to incorporating elements from the Creole lexicon such as *Patat'sa* (243) and *Andiet sa* (95)—which is also included in a later passage using an alternative orthography, *Andjet sa* (136)—which he leaves untranslated, Chamoiseau also transposes Creole phrases and expressions into written French. One way Chamoiseau achieves the latter objective is by presenting Creole words and expressions and then translating or paraphrasing them into French. Infusing French writing with the vibrant rhythms and stylings of Martinican orality, Chamoiseau crafts a resonant text, resplendent with localized expressive sonorities. Audibly present in the vocal sounds of speaking, singing, and

storytelling, Chamoiseau further develops the sonorous dimensions of his text through prominent portrayals of everyday noises and rhythms. In his use of both narrative descriptions and onomatopoeic transcriptions of sounds, Chamoiseau creates a transpoetic textual soundtrack that operates throughout the space of the novel. Simultaneously reassuring and destabilizing, the texted soundtrack provides reader-listeners with multiple harmonies and cacophonies that serve to orient and disorient them as they work their way through the novel. The texted soundtrack is reassuring in the sense that it gives reader-listeners sonorous reference points that allow them to situate themselves in a somewhat specific time and place—in this case, the cultural context of twentieth-century Fort de France. Even so, in providing a temporal context for *Solibo Magnificent*, Chamoiseau is intentionally vague, creating the overall effect of a folktale—a story that took place right here in Martinique not so long ago. Fueling the sonorous arsenal Chamoiseau employs, the musical, rhythmic, and noisy components of the texted soundtrack put reader-listeners in tune with the sociocultural commentaries and criticisms Chamoiseau offers throughout the text on topics including but not limited to police brutality and government corruption, and prejudice and discrimination on the basis of language, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Equally destabilizing, the noisy musicality of *Solibo Magnificent* is disorienting in that blurs so many categorical boundaries. Sounding out in defiance of linguistic rules, aesthetic conventions, sociocultural norms, and hegemonic authority in *Solibo Magnificent*, Chamoiseau opens a seemingly limitless field of transpoetic and transcultural possibilities in which individual and collective identity constructs are questioned, (re)invented, (re)negotiated, (re)configured, and (re)appropriated.

In his most striking portrayal of Martinican orality, in the final section of *Solibo Magnificent*, Chamoiseau completes his work of "marqueur de paroles" (word scratcher) by transposing the final words of Solibo in a section entitled "Dits de Solibo" (Solibo's Ditty). Introduced by Sucette's onomatopoeic drum solo, Solibo's final transcribed performance conveys the frenetic oral style of the storyteller with minimal (one) narrative interruption. Showing rather than telling, Chamoiseau accomplishes this primarily through his use of punctuation (or lack thereof). Shunning commas and periods in favor of question marks and exclamation marks, Chamoiseau unleashes flurries of words that implicitly communicate the intensity of Solibo's performance, visually and audibly conveying the rhythms of Solibo's final oration. In his transcribed rendering of Solibo's story, Chamoiseau also indicates the responses of Solibo's crowd, which increase in volume and enthusiasm as the story approaches its climax. Once again, Chamoiseau employs typographic strategies to achieve this effect,

abruptly shifting from italicized crowd responses to plain-text uppercase responses.

As Solibo's speech nears its dramatic close, Chamoiseau is both faithful and relentless in the art of transposition, revealing the manner in which a living, breathing, speaking Solibo hinted at his death as he figuratively stood on death's doorstep staring death in the face. Presented from Solibo's perspective, in Solibo's words, Chamoiseau provides a rare glimpse of subjectivity in the face of death:

> et sous le tonneau Solibo sera en joie il ira au pays sans pays où le ciel a treize couleurs plus la dernière couleur où les mauvaises herbes poussent moins souvent que l'igname pacala où Air France n'a pas d'avions et où les békés pani pièce qualité modèle d'habitation d'usines de gros magasins où le charbon n'a pas besoin de feu et où le feu monte sans charbon où on voit des enfants qui volent avec des guêpes et des papillons où le soleil est un gwoka et la lune un pipeau où les nègres sont en joie en musique en danse en sirop sur le dos de la vie et où mes enfants où Solibo lui-même malgré sa grande gueule et sa grande langue et sa grande gorge n'aura plus besoin de . . . houg . . . PATAT'SA! . . . PATAT' SI! . . . (244)

> [and under the barrel Solibo will be in joy and he will go to the country without country where the sky has thirteen colors plus the last color where the weeds grow less often than *pacala* yams where Air France doesn't have planes and where the *béké*s *pani* model-quality-room plantations factories big stores where the coal doesn't need fire and where the fire rises without coal where children are seen flying with wasps and butterflies where the sun is a *gwo ka* and the moon a reed flute where black people are in joy in music in dance in syrup on life's back and where my children where Solibo himself despite his big mug and his big tongue and his big chest will no longer need . . . gasp . . . PATAT'SA! . . . PATAT'SI! . . . ]

In a flurry of words that directly precede his premature death, Solibo describes his own vision of an otherworldly paradise—a utopian "country without country" filled with color, music, and life. In this world, "where the sun is a *gwo ka* [drum] and the moon is a reed flute," where music and dancing fill the air, life is rosy for Solibo. A vibrantly resonant place, Solibo's paradise serves as a powerful illustration of the limitless possibilities unleashed in the transpoetic space of Chamoiseau's text. In this respect, the transcribed evocations of *gwo ka* drumbeats, reed flute melodies, and consequent dance steps burst aesthetic and stylistic constraints, creating an imaginative conceptual space in which identities and relationships are (de)

constructed and (re)configured. The resulting critique calls into question continued French dominance in Martinique in linguistic, sociocultural, economic, and political domains.

Using texted music and language as subversive tools, Chamoiseau affirms Martinican and Antillean autonomy while criticizing French authority in Martinique. Linguistically, he achieves this by inserting elements from the Creole lexicon into the frame of the French narrative. In the above passage, five Creole language elements—*pacala, béké, pani, gwoka*, and *patat'sa!*—attract the eyes (and ears) of Chamoiseau's readers. Unfamiliar to Creole language and cultural outsiders, such nontranslated lexical elements call attention to the critical components of Solibo's final elocution. The first example, *igname pacala*—a Martinican variety of yam—is important in that it situates Solibo's dreamworld in a specific geographic and cultural context. A subtle vegetal indicator, the *igname pacala* affirms Solibo's personal preferences, demonstrating his affinity for local rather than imported gastronomic delights.

Presented in a stream-of-consciousness style devoid of conventional capitalization and punctuation, *igname pacala* leads into the phrases "where Air France has no planes," and "where *békés pani* model-quality-room plantations factories big stores." Although the first phrase is clear to francophone readers, the second phrase contains two Creole lexical elements that serve to enhance or obscure its interpretation (depending on the Creole language knowledge base of the reader). The first Creole term, *béké*, designates a white island inhabitant descended from French colonist ancestors. The second Creole term, *pani*, translates in this context as "has no." Transcribed in the space of a written French text, *béké* and *pani* serve as sounding mechanisms that break down the authority of the French language and criticize the continued economic dominance of metropolitan France in its former Caribbean colonies. In this respect, the two Creole terms prominently signal the persistent economic inequities—most notably between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned people—that have operated in Martinique since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such inequalities are shattered in the utopian paradise that Solibo creates in his final oration. Moreover, Chamoiseau's rendering of Solibo's elocution simultaneously promotes the aesthetic sensibilities of Creole language and orality while according a sense of posthumous subjectivity to the deceased.

Although the forth Creole lexical element, *gwoka*, achieves a comparable linguistic effect and purpose, it is significant in that it represents two languages and literatures at the same time—the literature (and/or oraliture) of Creole traditions and the musical language (or instrumentaliture) of Creole drumming traditions. While the concept of drum languages and

literatures is well developed in West African aesthetic criticism—particularly in the works of Titinga Frédéric Pacere (bendrology) and Georges Niangoran-Bouah (drummology), which establish and explore the categories of drum languages and literatures in West African cultural contexts—recent works including Jean-Marc Terrine's *La ronde des derniers/Maîtres du bèlè* (The Round Dance/Whole Note of the Last Masters of the Bèlè) are developing comparable systems of discussing and describing drum languages and literatures in Antillean cultural contexts. As Terrine explains, the art of *bèlè* drumming is a *total art* that serves as a *witness* to Antillean cultures and identities (Terrine 2004, 20, 25):

> Dans leurs quartiers, ces paysans-artistes pratiquaient donc un art total [du tambour bèlè]. Total, non seulement parce qu'il réunit un certain nombre de disciplines artistiques (la musique, le chant, la danse, la scénographie . . . ) mais encore parce qu'ils rythment la vie quotidienne de la communauté : solidarité dans le travail (*lafouy tè*), dans les cérémonies (fêtes de Noël, veillées mortuaires . . . ), solidarité dans les attitudes et dans les croyances (art du détour et du sous-entendu, méfiance, rites et croyances magico-religieux, respect des aînés). (20)

> [In their neighborhoods, these peasant-artists practiced thus a total art [of bèlè drumming]. Total, not only because it brings together a certain number of artistic disciplines (music, song, dance, scenography . . . ) but also because it rhythms the quotidian life of the community: solidarity in work (*lafouy tè*), in ceremonies (Christmas celebrations, funeral wakes . . . ), solidarity in attitudes and in beliefs (art of indirection and innuendo, distrust, magico-religious rites and beliefs, respect for elders).]

Through Terrine's characterization of the multifaceted aesthetic, linguistic, political, historical, and social implications of drumming in Martinican cultural contexts, the importance of Chamoiseau's incessant incorporation of drum languages and drum literatures takes on deeper meanings. In this respect, the *gwo ka* sun of Solibo's final elocution provides more than a simple linguistic variant or symbolic motif. For Solibo, the *gwo ka* rhythms that accompany his final orations and the *gwo ka* sun he evokes therein bear witness to the intricate identificatory negotiations and affirmations that take place during Solibo's final performance—for the storyteller, the writer, the spectators, and the readers. More importantly, however, the chamoisified representation of Solibo's final story and its drummed accompaniment accords the deceased storyteller what the police report that opens the novel denies him: his subjectivity and his identity.

Like Chamoiseau, Condé combines both French and Creole lexical elements in crafting the resonant soundscapes of Rivière au Sel, subtly refashioning French linguistic conventions to promote a Guadeloupean linguistic aesthetic. Infusing the novel with a multiplicity of audible elements including textual representations of prayers, stories, and songs, Condé fills her text with multiple layers of vibrant sounds. On this note, Condé herself characterizes *Crossing the Mangrove* as "more lyrical" than her previous works, "with its description of nature and rural life in Guadeloupe" (Condé 1993, 698). In addition to the multiple singing, speaking, and sounding voices vividly portrayed throughout the novel, Condé incorporates the rhythms of drumbeats, footsteps, heartbeats, and handclaps. Such percussive devices contribute to Condé's textual soundscape; situating the text in a Guadeloupean cultural setting, they also provide a sense of local social norms and cultural values. Although she firmly grounds her text in the geographical space of the island, Condé nonetheless approaches questions of Antillean identity in a manner that transcends the generalized limits of political boundaries and linguistic distinctions. Through her representation of the songs, stories, and words of the community of mourners and the multiplicity of rhythms that surround them, Condé reveals identity as an ongoing play for perspective and positionality, as subjects endeavor to negotiate autonomous identity configurations on individual and collective levels.

For Condé, identity is not an existing or preexisting thing to be discovered in the thick depths of the mangrove, but rather, an ongoing process of movement, adaptation, and transformation. As Francis Higginson explains, "Pour Condé, il n'y a donc rien à redécouvrir mais plutôt un futur à produire" (Higginson 2002, 98). (For Condé, there is nothing to rediscover but rather a future to produce.) As the characters of *Crossing the Mangrove* perform the sounding and silent tasks of mourning and remembering, they release a disjointed ensemble of sound and memory fragments to be assembled, disassembled, and reconfigured in the mind of the reader. As subjects inside and outside the frame of the text—both characters and readers—struggle to piece together a posthumous identity for the deceased from the assorted memory fragments that survive him, they simultaneously engage in the process of negotiating working identities for themselves and for others. By implicating the reader in the process of identification, Condé opens questions of Antillean identity to a seemingly limitless range of transcultural and transgenerational possibilities.

## Configuring Rhythmic and Musically Mediated Identities

In both *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove*, rhythm and

music play important roles in the processes of mediating and performing social identities. Prominently incorporated in representations of mourning and memory, rhythmic and musical cues provide meaningful ways for characters to communicate their relationships with themselves, each other, and society at large. Although Condé and Chamoiseau express and explore this theme in subtly different ways, undeniable parallels connect representations of musically mediated relationships and identities in the two works. In this respect, through salient representations of sounds and silences, both Condé and Chamoiseau reveal the intricate dynamics of performing social identities and relationships and the impalpable complexities encountered as individuals attempt to affirm, reconcile, and reject intermittently inviting, ambivalent, and hostile collective affiliations.

In *Crossing the Mangrove*, vocal music serves as a primary means for individuals to express subjective desires in view of identity configurations and group affiliations. Articulated through one's choice of song as well as the decision to sing or not to sing, musical performance (or, in this instance, musical vocalization) acts as an indicator of individual identities and interpersonal relationships within a larger social context. In "Whoever We Are Today, We Can Sing a Song about It," Anthony Seeger supports this notion, suggesting inherent connections between musical performances and social identity configurations: "Musical performances are used by composers, performers, audiences, critics, governments and liberators (in sum, by all social actors) in ways they find meaningful. And while each group may be characterized by one kind of music, a given individual may claim membership in various groups and perform a variety of musical styles appropriate to them. Musical performance is thus part of larger social processes—among them oppression, resistance, and the creation and affirmation of social identities." (Seeger 1994, 12–13)

Through the sounds and silences of musical expression, subjects actively mediate autonomous identities within complex systems of dynamic social relations. In this respect, as individual subjects experience rhythmic and musical phenomena in a given social setting, their decided level of resonant or noiseless involvement in the process implicitly communicates their own subjective desires regarding social positionality. Whether conveying conformity or dissidence, ardor or apprehension, by participating (or not participating) in rhythmic or musical manifestations, social performers effectively negotiate interpersonal relationships and affirm autonomous identitites in varying social contexts.

In *Crossing the Mangrove*, the subjective vocalization of social identity through song is especially apparent in passages involving three social misfits—Mira, Sonny, and Xantippe. As they respectively reflect on their lives and their encounters with Francis Sancher, musical expression marks their

independent experiences of identity in the past and in the present. Evoked through disconnected representations of resonant memory fragments as well as narrative descriptions of sounding and silent social interactions in the space of the funeral gathering, musical cues provide insight into questions of identity and social positionality.

For Mira, the daughter of a wealthy landowner and his mistress-servant and the mother of Francis Sancher's newborn child, music provides a constant refuge from the social insults and injuries she endures on a regular basis. Ill at ease in local public spaces, Mira routinely retreats to a secluded ravine where, losing herself in an imaginative realm of her own design, she indulges herself in swimming and singing. Capricious in nature, Mira sings spontaneously improvised pieces addressed to no one in particular. This practice, which began when she was a young schoolgirl, effectively conveys her position of social nonconformity in past as well as present time frames:

> Quand elle était à l'école, avant qu'on ne finisse par la renvoyer, tout enfant, chérie de Loulou Lameaulnes qu'elle était, elle arrivait en retard après avoir vagabondé on ne sait où, elle s'asseyait à sa place et pendant que les autres enfants récitaient leurs tables de multiplication, elle chantonnait des chansons sans queue ni tête qu'on n'avait jamais entendu chanter à personne.
>
> *Chobet di paloud*
> *Se an lan mè*
> *An ké kontréw.*[a]
> [a] *La chaubette dit à la palourde/C'est dans la mer/ Que je te rencontrerai.* (190)[12]
>
> [When she was a schoolgirl, before they ended up expelling her from school, still a child, darling of Loulou Lameaulnes that she was, she arrived late after wandering who knows where, she would sit in her place and while the other children recited their multiplication tables, she would sing nonsensical songs that no one had ever heard anyone sing.
>
> The chaubette says to the clam
> It is in the sea
> That I will meet you.]

12. The footnote presented in the citation is the one Condé includes in her original work. I have left *chaubette* untranslated here to reflect the geographic and linguistic specificity of the animal. Similar to a clam, the *chaubette* is commonly found in the shallows in the region near Petit-Bourg, where there is a *chaubette* festival each year in July.

Unlike the other children, who collectively chant their multiplication tables, Mira composes meandering songs of her own invention. Sung in Creole, her rambling improvised song provides a sharply resonant contrast to the scripted repetitions of the multiplication tables, presumably recited in French. Under the guise of childhood caprice, Mira's expressed refusal to participate in the collective rhythmic classroom ritual accentuates her decidedly individualized position outside of community social norms. Articulated through a combination of lyrical innovation and musical improvisation, Mira performs her own brand of social discordance, and subsequently negotiates a non-normative social positioning in the Rivière au Sel community.

Through Mira, Condé also reveals the importance of percussive rhythms—manifest in the sounds of drumbeats, footsteps, dance steps, heartbeats, and handclaps—in view of questions of community and social identity in Caribbean sociocultural contexts. In one particularly striking passage, Condé elicits the collectivizing influence of rhythm as evidenced by the social omnipotence of the *gwo ka*. During a local festival, la fête de Petit Bourg, the ubiquitous reverberations of *gwo-ka* seemingly direct the bodies of dancers in motion, stirring the crowd of onlookers to participate with handclaps. Despite the audible enthusiasm of the dancers and the spectators, Mira pulls away from the noisy crowd, refusing to engage in the collective social ritual: "Mira se tenait en retrait de la foule qui se démenait et battait des mains en cadence, car le gwo-ka ne laisse pas certains tranquilles, il faut lui obéir!" (179). (Mira remained withdrawn from the crowd that thrashed about and clapped their hands in rhythm, for the *gwo-ka* does not leave people calm, they must obey it!) Unwilling to partake in the shared experience of rhythm and music and refusing to obey the commanding *gwo-ka*, Mira once again performs her vehement nonconformity, strongly communicating her disdain for and defiance of social norms in the local cultural context. Condé reinforces Mira's audibly apparent social positioning with visual imagery during the celebration, as she stands motionless, alone, and in silence on the outskirts of the exuberant crowd.

Like Mira, Sonny, a mentally challenged child, uses music as a means of escaping the harsh realities of his life in Rivière au Sel. Facing abuses at the hands of his father, who regularly beats him, and the local children, who persistently taunt him, Sonny opens a private imaginative realm through song, an intimate daydreamy space in which he finds moments of solace and refuge. Singing songs of his own invention throughout the day, Sonny psychologically shields himself from public derision, simultaneously affirming his status as social outsider.

Sonny avait un stock de chansons dans sa tête et ne savait pas lui-

> même d'où elles naissaient. Cela commençait depuis le petit matin quand il ouvrait ses yeux invariablement cireux et cela résistait aux coups de gueule du père . . .
>
> Cela continuait à travers la lumière du jour. Il y avait des chansons pour tous les moments du jour. (112–13)
>
> [Sonny had a stock of songs in his head and did not know himself from where they were born. It started at dawn when he opened his invariably waxen eyes and it resisted his father's blows to his face . . .
>
> It would continue throughout the light of day. There were songs for every moment of the day.]

Like Mira, Sonny vocally avows his exterior position outside of local social norms by singing songs throughout the day. Disregarding community cultural conventions, he fills each day with his own brand of vocal music, regardless of the physical location or social context. Although, for the most part, Sonny's musical expression is widely ignored or dismissed by members of the Rivière au Sel community, during his time in the village, Francis Sancher greeted his songs with enthusiasm and appreciation. By clapping along or verbally praising Sonny's creative efforts, Francis Sancher quickly became both an ally and an advocate for the young boy.

Having lost a trusted friend, Sonny is inconsolable at Francis Sancher's funeral gathering. Seated alongside his mother, the grief-stricken boy stares at Francis's coffin and vocalizes his sorrow through song: "Les yeux fixés sur le cercueil, Sonny exprima par une chanson la peine qui débordait de son coeur" (111). (His eyes staring at the coffin, Sonny expressed with a song the pain that overwhelmed his heart.) Communicating his anguish, anxiety, and unease through music, Sonny struggles to come to terms with Francis's death. Oblivious to the reproachful hand of his mother and the disdainful glances of other mourners, Sonny performs an original song for himself and for Francis as a means of expressing the intense pain he feels inside. Unwilling to recite a familiar canto or to resign himself to silence, Sonny pays tribute to Francis with a unique vocal performance. Although just a child himself, Sonny decidedly positions himself outside of the community that has chided and forsaken him since his birth. Unlike Mira, who makes a play for social acceptance at the funeral by joining voices with the other women in the prayer circle, Sonny maintains his status as a social misfit by refusing to participate in the collective rhythmic and musical activities of the funeral ritual.

Like Sonny, Xantippe continues his disavowal of community membership through his unwillingness to engage with the assembled group of mourners. Nevertheless, unlike Sonny, who voices his status of social outsider through song, Xantippe communicates his exterior social position

through silence. A self-proclaimed "nèg mawon" (*nègre marron* in French and *black maroon* in English), Xantippe rarely enters the space of the village since locals often threaten him with verbal insults or physical violence. Despised and misunderstood, Xantippe lives the life of a social outcast, dwelling outside the geographical confines and cultural conventions of the village. Unwelcome in the space of the village, he retreats to the natural spaces surrounding Rivière au Sel, finding protection, refuge, and comfort amidst the trees, which he refers to as "nos seuls amis" (241) (our only friends).

As a modern-day *nèg mawon*, Xantippe perpetuates a powerful strategy of social resistance. Initiated by runaway slaves who fled from plantations and found operative hiding places in the forests and in the hills, maroonage began as a means of empowering individuals in effectuating solitary or small-scale rebellions against systemic enslavement and oppression in European colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Later practiced as a means of defying continued colonial authority, maroonage became a radical revolutionary alternative to living in status quo communities in the Americas and the Caribbean. As Anse Chaudière explains in the preface to Richard Price's *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, maroons, whether acting as individuals or affiliated with larger maroon communities, continue to provide an anti-establishmentarian presence in the present-day in spite of the threats of "increasing modernization and globalization" (Chaudière 1996, xvi). In analyzing the unique lifestyles and social positions of past and present-day maroons, Chaudière champions maroons as models of ingenuity, integrity, and fortitude: "Maroons—in their individual courage and creativity, their remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstance, and their collective refusal to accept an oppressor's distorted view of themselves—have a great deal to teach us all" (xxvii). Like Chaudière, who upholds the maroons as living examples of peaceful nonconformity and social disobedience, Condé presents Xantippe as a peaceable and compassionate character who has found tranquility as a *nèg mawon*, in spite of his solitude and the precariousness of his marginal social position.

At Francis Sancher's funeral, Xantippe loses himself in his thoughts, thinking about how much things have changed since the day a tragic fire destroyed his home and the lives of his wife and children. Presenting a fragmented inventory of audio, visual, and sensorial impressions, Xantippe chronicles his experiences as a *nèg mawon* in view of the changing face of a society that has ultimately rejected him. As he reflects on the past, Xantippe elicits a disjointed series of encounters with nature and society, both of which are marked by explicit references to music. Disturbed by

what he observes as he inventories the sights and sounds of a changing Guadeloupe—a butterfly-shaped island in constant metamorphosis—Xantippe prefers the noises of nature rather than those produced by his fellow humans. As he describes in one passage, his favorite songs consist of the everyday sonorities composed by the river at the base of the ravine: "Caché sous les roches, je devenais cheval à diable pour écouter la chanson de l'eau" (244). (Hidden beneath the rocks, I became a devil's horse to hear the song of the water.)

In contrast to the natural music he finds in his environment, many of the human songs Xantippe overhears foster disappointment instead of elation. In one evocation, he describes his surprise upon hearing the voices of children singing at a local school: "J'ai vu s'ouvrir les écoles et, n'en croyant pas mes oreilles, j'ai entendu les enfants chantonner: 'Nos ancêtres les Gaulois'"(244). (I saw schools open and, not believing my ears, I heard the children singing: "Our ancestors the Gauls.") In relating his astonishment with the children's song, Xantippe exposes fundamental problems with collective identity constructs, particularly those based on linguistic criteria or hegemonic devices. Paying homage to Guadeloupe's Gallic ancestors from France as they sing in unison, the children of Rivière au Sel are denied the chance to lyrically praise legitimate progenitors hailing from multiple locations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Assigned and performed in the space of the classroom, the students' song reveals institutionalized attempts to foster Guadeloupean alignment with the French political authority as well as the French language and culture for most of the twentieth century.

Xantippe's mention of a problematic classroom song alludes to larger Antillean social concerns in view of questions of language, identity, and cultural expression, which Condé elicits throughout *Crossing the Mangrove*. Not exclusive to her fictional works, Condé overtly addresses such questions in her nonfiction texts as well, particularly in view of linguistic and political categories. Much like Ousmane Sembene, who disapproves of the "Francophone" moniker, Maryse Condé argues that the political and linguistic implications of the Francophone designation are dubious, specifically in their failure to account for shared histories and sociocultural criteria.

> [J]e ne crois pas à la francophonie. Communauté de locuteurs fondée sur les mots qu'ils utilisent quand on sait que les mots n'ont aucun sens . . . Seules comptent à mes yeux les fraternités. Fraternité d'histoire, d'exil, de combats, d'angoisses . . . [Q]ue vienne le temps des fraternités dessinées au-delà des langues et des couleurs. (Condé 1985, 36)

> [I do not believe in the Francophonie. A community of speakers based on the words that they use when we know that the words make no sense . . . The only things that count in my eyes are fraternities. Fraternity of history, of exile, of struggles, of anguish . . . (M)ay the time come for fraternities designed beyond languages and colors.]

Rejecting collective identity constructs based on language, race, and political affiliations, Condé offers her notion of fraternity or humanity as a significant common denominator in configuring group identity. Developed through shared histories and experiences, and solidified through collective hardships and struggles, fraternity, for Condé, is a tie that connects individuals beyond the limitations of prescribed racial and linguistic categories. Furthermore, in Condé's view, fraternity is not something confined to the geographic space of a single island. In this respect, Condé discounts the opinion that a writer should "keep to his or her island," opening the question of Antillean identity to multiple locations "regardless of colonial language and political status" (Condé 1993, 698). Cast through a different lens, Condé's expressed use of the term "fraternity" represents a meaningful reappropriation of the term that, combined with the words "liberty" and "equality," has come to represent the spirit of the French Revolution and the French Republic. In her characterization of "fraternity," Condé evokes the operative irony of the term in France and its overseas departments and territories (which include Guadeloupe and Martinique), where the values of fraternity and equality continue to be denigrated by racism, discrimination, injustice, and inequality.

In *Crossing the Mangrove*, Condé assembles disjointed fragments of the sounds and silences elicited through the work of mourning and remembering, simultaneously providing a catalyst for addressing questions of Antillean identity. Presenting disconnected flurries of past sights, sounds, and sensations as characters lose themselves in their thoughts and memories at Francis Sancher's funeral gathering, Condé connects their subjective present experiences with the perpetual negotiation of past memories and events. This motif resurfaces in much of Condé's work, as she continually insists on the importance of understanding past occurrences, problems, and mistakes as a means of dealing with questions of identity and moving toward a more promising future for individuals and collective groups. As Doris Y. Kadish suggests, "Despite her pessimistic assessment of the political situation in the French Caribbean, Condé has an optimistic view of the possibility and the significance of understanding the past" (Kadish 2000, 218–19). In narrating the fragmentary jumbles of emotion and memory experienced by individual members of the Rivière au Sel community, Condé provides hints of such optimism in spite of preponderant cynicism.

Similarly, in *Solibo Magnificent*, Patrick Chamoiseau conveys flashes of hopefulness despite prevailing pessimism in his baroque portrayal of a posthumous police investigation. Addressing a wide range of contemporary social issues including racism, social discrimination, corruption, and police brutality, Chamoiseau presents a carnivalesque rendering of a community's search to find answers in the aftermath of Solibo's mysterious death in central Fort de France during the Carnival festivities. Privileging what Bakhtin refers to as "the world turned upside down" (Bakhtin 1984b), in crafting his carnivalesque narrative, Chamoiseau allows his characters to escape the confines of socially prescribed roles and behaviors, effectively disrupting social conventions and defying cultural norms. By framing tragic events such as police-supported intimidation, torture, and murder in a comic frame, Chamoiseau prompts the reader to delve into the intricacies of the social problems he unveils through carnivalesque irony and satire.

Before the story of Solibo even begins, Chamoiseau sets the stage for carnival and satire, prefacing the narration of events with a decontextualized quotation:

> *L'ethnographe:*
> —Mais, Papa, que faire dans une telle situation?
> —D'abord en rire, dit *le conteur.* (13)
>
> *The ethnographer:*
> —But, Papa, what to do in such a situation?
> —First laugh about it, said *the storyteller.*

Presented in three lines of text, the brief passage features a transcribed fragment of conversation between a storyteller and an inquisitive child as recorded by a fictionalized ethnographer. With no background information, the signification of such a situation is vague, open to a multiplicity of scenarios and possibilities. Although the parameters of the question are equivocal, the response to the question is definitive. In this case, the appurtenant answer dictates the appropriate action. As Chamoiseau suggests, when faced with such a situation, the first thing to do is laugh. In just three lines of text, Chamoiseau effectively establishes a reader-response protocol, setting the tone for his carnivalesque portrayal of an unfortunate series of events.[13]

Chamoiseau further accentuates the carnivalesque character of *Solibo Magnificent* by situating the story in the time-space context of the Martinican Carnival in which dancing swirls of vibrant colors and robust

13. Wendy Knepper provides an interesting discussion of the dimensions of ruse and mosaic identity in view of *Solibo Magnificent* (see Knepper 2006).

waves of raucous cacophonies provide the audiovisual backdrop for events as the police investigation unfolds. By staging the corrupt investigation amidst the festive local ambiance, Chamoiseau underscores the irony of the situation, calling attention to the gravity of multiple police missteps—among them intimidation, torture, and murder:

> Comme toujours en période de carnaval, le renforcement des patrouilles avait vidé [l'hôtel de police]. Inspecteurs et commissaires, pour la plupart métropolitains, n'apparaissaient dans leur bureau que le matin, ensuite, en chemise à fleurs et bermuda, ils traquaient nos moeurs carnivalesques pour leur album de souvenirs. (165)
>
> [As always during carnival time, the reinforcement of patrols had emptied (the police headquarters). Inspectors and commissioners, for the most part hailing from France, only appeared in their office in the morning, later, in Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts, they tracked down our carnivalesque activities for their memento albums.]

As members of Solibo's audience face suspicion, disrespect, and mistreatment at the hands of the investigating officers, police inspectors, and superintendents, most of them have traded in their police uniforms for Bermuda shirts and floral print shirts. Acting more like tourists than law enforcement officials, members of the delinquent police force exemplify the Bakhtinian carnivalesque paradigm "the world turned upside down" while cataloguing the carnivalesque activities of everyday citizens. Unflinching in his exploration of the troubled social dynamic between the largely metropolitan police force and the local island inhabitants, Chamoiseau confronts important social issues through carnivalesque characterizations.[14]

Chamoiseau delves into the thorny intricacies of past and present Antillean social problems—beginning with the injustices of slavery and leading up to the inequities of French governance—in *Solibo Magnificent* as well as in a large body of fictional and critical texts. As Marie-José N'zengou-Tayo observes: "It is as if an invisible wound were still bleeding in the memories of the descendants of masters and slaves alike . . . Chamoiseau tries to explore it in depth, no matter how painful it may be" (N'zengou-Tayo 2000, 186). Designating a carnivalesque space in which laughter and tears intermingle, Chamoiseau plunges readers into the depths of a figurative wound, just as Condé immerses readers in the thick of a figurative mangrove, in considering questions of Antillean identity.

14. H. Adlai Murdoch provides an insightful analysis of the carnivalesque elements in *Solibo Magnificent* in view of larger questions of Caribbean identities in *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (2001).

Throughout his narration of the investigation of Solibo's enigmatic death, Chamoiseau privileges carnivalesque elements, exposing important social problems while exploring questions of Martinican and Antillean identity. Involving the work of memory as characters struggle to come to terms with Solibo's death, Chamoiseau fills the space of the text with sonorous representations of rhythmic and musical elements. Presented in the form of resonant past memories and audible present activities, the texted sounds and silences play a prominent role in the negotiation of social positionality and the configuration of social identities that take place after the death of Solibo. As in *Crossing the Mangrove*, in *Solibo Magnificent*, such rhythmically and musically mediated identity constructs are most visibly apparent when distinguishing between members and nonmembers of specific communities and/or social groups. Negotiated through the subjective experience of rhythmic and musical phenomena, the dual processes of performance and perception provide an operative alternative to the linguistically prescribed identification constructs with which Chamoiseau finds fault. As he explains:

> [L]a langue ne sert plus à définir une culture, une identité . . . On peut, sous une même langue, avoir des réalités culturelles et anthropologiques différentes. Je suis plus proche d'un Saint-Lucien anglophone ou d'un Cubain hispanophone que n'importe quel Africain francophone ou Québécois francophone. Vous voyez, les langues, aujourd'hui ont perdu leur pouvoir de pénétration, de structuration profonde d'une identité, d'une culture, d'une conception du monde. (Gauvin 1997, 37)
>
> [(L)anguage no longer serves to define a culture, an identity . . . One can, under the same language, have different cultural and anthropological realities. I am closer to an Anglophone Saint-Lucian or to a Hispanophone Cuban than any Francophone African or Francophone Quebecois. You see, languages, today have lost their power of penetration, of profound structuration of an identity, of a culture, of a conception of the world.]

Like Condé, Chamoiseau rejects the notion of Francophone identity, citing substantial cultural differences among the disparate locations that comprise the global Francophone community. Favoring cultural criteria to linguistic determinants, Chamoiseau argues that, in the present day, language no longer serves as the figurative determining window through which one perceives the world and oneself. Rather, Chamoiseau promotes the notion of identity as performance and process and, in doing so, opens identity configurations to the sonorities of multiple languages and the possibilities

of shared cultural conditions and experiences. Resonating with multiple voices and rhythms, both harmonious and cacophonous, identities are, in Chamoiseau's view, inherently noisy and complicated, particularly since, through the process of identification, individuals are compelled to compose and combine harmonious and dissonant sounds in innovative ways. Whether subtle or bold, these sounding spaces for identity (re)negotiation, (re)configuration, and (re)appropriation operate beyond the confines of Western critical paradigms as prescribed through linguistic, geographical, socioeconomic, and political criteria, among others. As Chamoiseau explains, identities are instead created through shared cultural expressions and experiences as shaped by a number of commonalities and coincidences. Among these cultural points of connection dwell the sounds and sensations generated through rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena and also through the experience of collective silences, both comfortable and uncomfortable.

In the case of *Solibo Magnificent*, the police investigators are the ones who distinguish themselves from the diverse members of Solibo's audience, communicating their separateness in response to sounding and silent cues throughout the course of the investigation. Revealing their differentiated status through their unwillingness to embrace the Creole language as well as their inability to understand the dynamic relationship between sounds and silences in local social contexts, the officers consequently demarcate social dividing lines as determined by the perception and understanding of sonorous and silent phenomena. In one particularly telling passage, Officer Pilon discloses his outsider status as he interrogates the witnesses, one after another, on the subject of silence. Adopting an accusatory tone, Pilon asks each of the witnesses the same question, *"Le conteur cesse brusquement de parler, et ce silence inattendu ne vous inquiète pas?"*(147) (*The storyteller abruptly ceases to speak, and this unexpected silence doesn't trouble you?*), to which each witness gives a similar response:

> C'est une question d'oreille, inspectère, la parole du conteur, c'est le son de sa gorge, mais c'est aussi sa sueur, les roulades de ses yeux, son ventre, les dessins de ses mains, son odeur, celle de la compagnie, le son du ka et tous les silences. Il faut y ajouter la nuit autour, la pluie s'il pleut, les vibrations silencieuses du monde. Qui a peur du silence par ici? Personne n'a peur du silence, surtout pas. (147–48)

> [It is a question of ear, inspector, the word of the storyteller, it is the sound of his voice, but it is also his sweat, the rolls of his eyes, his belly, the patterns of his hands, his smell, that of the company, the sound of the *ka* and all of the silences. I must add the surrounding

> night, the rain if it is raining, the silent vibrations of the world. Who is afraid of silence here? No one is afraid of silence, certainly not.]

Unable to fathom the interdependence of sounding and silent elements in Solibo's performance, Pilon immediately casts doubt on the validity of his witnesses' statements by accusing them of collaborating on their stories and explanations in advance. Averse to the experiential possibilities of silence and sound in Solibo's performance, Pilon maintains his outsider status by refusing to engage with the cultural perspectives and social practices of Solibo's audience.

Nevertheless, despite his attempts to distance himself from the witnesses and their stories, Pilon is unable to completely dissociate himself from the questions of identity that emerge from the investigation. As he endeavors to compile physical evidence and assemble disjointed memory fragments in considering questions of how Solibo died, Pilon consequently engages himself in the process of identity negotiation:

> Dans la tête d'Évariste Pilon, l'affaire saisonnait, sinueuse, vaine, dérisoire, fructifère que sur un nom, une silhouette: Solibo Magnifique. Ce que les suspects avaient dit de cet homme, et qu'il avait si peu écouté, s'organisait dans sa mémoire, ainsi que l'inondation d'une nouvelle source irrésistiblement se régente en rivière. Après s'être demandé avec peu d'éléments: Qui a tué Solibo? . . . , il se retrouvait disponible devant l'autre question: Qui, mais qui était ce Solibo, et pourquoi 'Magnifique'? . . . (219)

> [In the mind of Évariste Pilon, the affair seasoned, sinuous, vain, pathetic, flourishing just on a name, a silhouette: Solibo Magnificent. What the suspects had said about this man and what little he had listened to, organized itself in his memory, just like the flooding of a new spring irresistibly regiments itself as river. After having wondered with few elements: Who killed Solibo? . . . , he found himself open to the other question: Who, but who was this Solibo, and why 'Magnificent'? . . . ]

Presented with the mysterious death of an unknown other, Pilon ultimately involves himself in the work of memory, compiling the disconnected fragments from witness testimonials in configuring a posthumous identity for the deceased. Through the process of constructing a mosaic composite identity for Solibo Magnifique, Pilon's authority is disrupted as he is subsequently compelled to mediate the terms of his own identity and social relationships in view of larger questions of Antillean identity.

Although each of the characters in *Solibo Magnificent* must come to terms in one way or another with Solibo's mysterious life and death, they

must also contend with the brutality and incompetence of the botched police investigation. Not only do the police investigators interfere with and prevent the appropriate social rituals of mourning, but they also inflict great injury, imprisonment, and death among the community of witnesses and mourners. At the end of the day, Doudou Ménar has died after a violent police assault, Congo has died by jumping through a window to escape an unrestrained police beating, and Sucette is in prison after engaging in a scuffle with police during his brutal interrogation, during which he threw a piece of furniture at one of the offending officers. Interestingly enough, we the readers rarely hear Sucette speak except through his drum. And yet, he communicates to each and every one of us. Acting simultaneously as intermediary and outlaw, Sucette occupies a precarious social position that defies succinct attempts at categorization. Speaking through his drum, it is Sucette who summons the group of listeners to the Savannah on the night of Solibo's final performance. As the evening of storytelling begins, Sucette seems to become one with his instrument as he communicates through a series of Plakataks, blings, pitings, and bloukoutoums and engages in an extralinguistic musical dialogue with Solibo and his audience. Described as "un rien d'homme, dessiné par ses os" (29), (a nothing of a man, drawn by his bones) when he is not drumming, Sucette often passes undetected by the members of his community. Although his legal name is Éloi Apollon, his nickname Sucette (which translates as sucker or lollipop in English) suggests his habit of drinking rum and hints at his sticklike physical stature—so thin that it makes his head look exaggeratedly large and round. Characterized in the police report as homeless and without profession (30), Sucette, like Solibo, exists in a domain governed more by the rules of the streets and the struggle for survival than by the French and Martinican administrative authorities. Subsisting as a nonconformist, transient, and outlaw, Sucette embraces an endangered way of being-in-the world based on his passion for Martinican music and drumming traditions coupled with his unwillingness to accept prescribed linguistic, socioeconomic, political, cultural, and aesthetic protocols. Both dangerous and endangered, like Solibo, Sucette comes to represent something greater than himself—a way of being in the world that is all too often praised in theory and scorned in practice. Through Sucette's prison confinement and Solibo's death, Chamoiseau demonstrates how easily the word of the storyteller and the word of the drummer can get lost in the chaotic shuffle of everyday living. In doing so, he encourages his readers/listeners to open their ears, hearts, and minds to the musics of Antillean traditions and innovations in mediating noisy identities for his characters and themselves.

In both Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent* and Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*, questions of individual and collective identities are

considered in view of the mysterious deaths of enigmatic characters—Solibo Magnificent and Francis Sancher—at the beginning of each novel. As characters collectively mourn the deceased community members and investigate the circumstances surrounding their deaths, they perform the work of remembering, revealing a disconnected series of memory fragments, and unleashing a barrage of disjointed sights, sensations, and sonorities. Staged in a social context, the tasks of grieving and remembering engage characters in the process of performing identity, which allows them to sound off, as it were, in (re)configuring individual and collective identity constructs and negotiating alternative social positionalities. Consequently, as readers work their way through the resonant transpoetic texts, piecing together fragmented bits of songs, stories, sounds, and sensations, they are implicated in the process of identification affirmation, negotiating rhythmically and musically mediated identity configurations in view of multiple identificatory paradigms. By sounding off, each in his or her own way, Chamoiseau and Condé present questions of linguistic, sociocultural, political, and geographic identities in ways that challenge readers to push the parameters of cultural norms and aesthetic conventions regardless of their spatial and temporal orientations.

# Concluding Remarks

Rhythms and rhythmic processes underlie everything we do. Physiological, biological, and planetary rhythms regulate the functions of our bodies, other living organisms, and our surrounding environments, while linguistic and cultural rhythms shape our interactions with others as we move through space and time. And then there are the rhythms of music, the rhythms of working, the rhythms of our lives, and the rhythms of the stories of our lives. There are noisy random rhythms, comfortable and uncomfortable rhythms, the familiar rhythms of tradition playing alongside inventive rhythms that no one has ever heard before. It is through rhythm—through our quotidian interactions with distinct but overlapping rhythms and rhythmic systems—that we come to understand who we are and how we relate to others and the world. Perpetually shifting from one moment and context to the next, through the rhythms, musics, and random noises we experience and encounter, we come to (re)configure identities for ourselves and (re)negotiate social positionalities in relation to others and the world.

While rhythmic phenomena operate in every area of our lives and experiences, the aim of this study was to focus on how rhythm, music, and sound operate in texted forms/forums, specifically in novels, and to explore how texted sounding phenomena create spaces for identity appropriation that operate both inside and outside the frame of literary texts, and specifically in novels. In discussing Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*, Ahmadou Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence*, Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes*, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*, and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent,* this study has

uncovered layers of multiple sonorities as manifest in texted representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena. Vibrantly presented in narrative descriptions of the sounds of singing, dancing, and music making, as well as evocations of the rhythms of biology, technology, and miscellaneous everyday noises, such texted rhythmic and musical components create resonant imaginative soundscapes that promote a transpoetic aesthetic from within the frame of the novel in which written, oral, and instrumental styles intermingle. As a means of addressing the specificity of texted representations of nonvocal rhythmic and musical components as transposed in the frame of the novel, this study presented the new term "instrumentaliture," and defined it as phenomena through which the sonorities of instrumental music and the sounds of everyday instruments and objects—including performance pieces, sound compositions, and musical arrangements and improvisations—are presented in the frame of written literature, creating sounding spaces for innovation, communication, negotiation, and exchange. Evoking the emotions and expressiveness of ordinary and extraordinary resonant phenomena in texted forms, instrumentaliture inspires readers to (re)consider and (re)configure their understandings of aesthetic, linguistic, political, and sociocultural criteria, among others, in a resounding relational forum. Although similar to oraliture, a process through which oral genres are transcribed and described in written literature, instrumentaliture is nonetheless distinct from oraliture in that it infuses textual spaces with resonant elements that are neither oral nor written. As demonstrated in this study, this move away from the binary modes of categorization that are used to bifurcate categories including but not limited to oral versus written, traditional versus modern, and Occidental versus Oriental has important implications, particularly when approaching questions of identity in the postcolonial Francophone world. By breaking free of binary tendencies, writers succeed in opening questions of identity to realms of boundless possibility in which the array of identificatory configurations is infinite rather than limited.

In view of questions of identity, this study has also analyzed the importance of the concept of "transculture," a term used in describing phenomena that are shared, communicated, appropriated, and exchanged among and across multiple cultures and/or cultural systems. In discussing the novels selected for this study, it has been useful to present the word "transculture" in tandem with "transpoetics" in characterizing the transpoetic transcultural space of the text. A noisy texted space in which the silences and sonorities of multiple aesthetic categories intermingle and/or coalesce, and the products and perspectives of diverse cultural systems overlap and/or interconnect, the transpoetic transcultural space is filled with resonant potential in both function and in form. Through the course of the analysis,

this study has established the transpoetic transcultural space as a forum for communication, invention, negotiation, and exchange, in which autonomous identity constructs are (re)considered, (re)configured, and/or (re)appropriated.

In discussing Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence*, this study has considered texted rhythmic and musical elements in view of strategies of social and political activism in the colonial and postcolonial eras. In exploring transpoetic transcultural phenomena in the two novels, this study discussed the ways in which Sembene and Kourouma address questions of language, identity, and authority in their respective texts through integral representations of the quotidian rhythms of singing, dancing, working, and moving. Moreover, connections were established among the scripted sonorities of songs, dances, and other everyday cadences, as well as the lexical localization strategies and stylistic musicalization and instrumentalization techniques that both writers employ in conveying local sociocultural and aesthetic conventions in their respective novels. Throughout this process, the ways in which Sembene and Kourouma incorporate rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena as a means of creating spaces for identity (re)appropriation and social activism in the frame of the Francophone novel were revealed.

In analyzing Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon* and Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes*, the discussion of texted rhythmic and musical elements focused on the motifs of travel and wandering, specifically as they relate to questions of language, culture, history, and identity in postcolonial Francophone contexts. In analyzing the respective journeys of Sow Fall's Nalla and Schwarz-Bart's Ti Jean, the importance of rhythmic and musical cues was revealed, particularly in their capacity as operative points of reference. In this respect, in both novels, rhythmic and musical signals serve to orient the disoriented protagonists as they navigate real and imaginary spaces and simultaneously confront questions of individual and collective identification as they travel through space and time in Sow Fall's and Schwarz Bart's respective narratives.

In considering Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove* and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnificent*, the analysis of texted rhythmic and musical elements focused on the theme of identity negotiation through music and mourning. In the discussion of both works, the dimensions of identity as mediated by collective and individual recollections and remembrances were approached through the interrelated processes of music, memory, and mourning. In analyzing texted representations of the work of remembering and the music of mourning, this study revealed the ways in which Chamoiseau and Condé confront questions of identity not only in view of

the dead—Solibo Magnificent and the innocent victims of police brutality in *Solibo Magnificent* and Francis Sancher in *Crossing the Mangrove*—but also in view of the living, the community of survivors, witnesses, and mourners. In this respect, as characters in *Solibo Magnificent* and *Crossing the Mangrove* assemble fragments of collective and individual memories in mourning and investigating the mysterious deaths of Solibo and Francis, they are simultaneously compelled to confront complicated questions of individual and collective identities.

Through an exploration of texted rhythmic and musical elements in *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Crossing the Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnificent*, this study has established a framework for considering transpoetic and transcultural phenomena in the space of the novel. As demonstrated in the analysis, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau masterfully employ a variety of lexical and stylistic strategies as a means of prominently incorporating the vibrant sonorities of melodies, polyphonies, cacophonies, and dissonances into the written frames of their novels. Through their salient representations of resonant rhythmic, musical, and otherwise noisy phenomena, these writers succeed not only in promoting local aesthetic values and cultural sensibilities, but also in opening spaces for autonomous identity configuration and appropriation that operate in between and beyond the limits of Western critical paradigms, perpetuating a necessary critical shift. Designated as zones for communication, innovation, negotiation, and exchange, the transpoetic transcultural spaces created by Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau are filled with resonant possibilities. Transcending the limits of linguistic conventions, geographical borders, sociocultural norms, and aesthetic formats through integral incorporations of texted sounding phenomena, these writers prompt their readers-listeners to negotiate individual and collective dimensions of identity through the reading-listening experience of rhythms, musics, noises, and texts within multiple interacting biological, mechanical, musical, cultural, and literary systems.

This brings us back to the notion of "sounding off." By texting the sounds of human voices and human bodies in accord and disaccord with the ordinary and extraordinary noises of nature, language, music, and machines, Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau sound off as a means of evoking, invoking, and provoking reaction, reflection, negotiation, innovation, and response. Socially committed as artists, advocates, and activists, these writers incorporate resonant instrumental and vocal cues throughout their works, effectively creating vibrant texted soundscapes in which they explore complicated dimensions of social problems and identity politics. By translating, transcribing, and transposing

the sonorities of local languages, songs, dances, and noisy quotidian phenomena in the frames of their respective texts, Sembene, Kouourma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau sound off as a means of challenging aesthetic, linguistic, political, socioeconomic, and cultural conventions and policies, among others, and of inspiring reaction, dialogue, education, and transformation among their readers/listeners in local and global communities. More importantly, however, they invite their readers/listeners to participate in the critical dialogue, to sound off in kind with their own noisy questions, acknowledgments, commentaries, texts, rhythms, and songs. I have done my part to respond to the call set forth by *God's Bits of Wood*, *The Suns of Independence*, *L'appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Crossing the Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnificent* by sounding off in my own way. Now, it's your turn to sound off in kind.

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