

TRANSCULTURAL RHYTHMS: AN EXPLORATION OF RHYTHM, MUSIC AND
THE DRUM IN A SELECTION OF FRANCOPHONE NOVELS FROM WEST
AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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To my parents, Ann and Kim,
Thank you for all of your love, guidance, encouragement,
and support throughout the years.
Stars forever...

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INTRODUCTION

As readers entering into the space of this text, let us read with open eyes and open minds, but let us also endeavor to open our ears, our hearts and our bodies to the rhythms and musics resonating therein.

Although the role of music and orality within the structure of the novel has been a subject of critical inquiry, (i.e. Fox, 1995; Kazi-Tani, 1995; Melnick, 1994) the links among rhythm, music, and strategies for linguistic localization have yet to be established. As such, the aim of this study is to elaborate upon current theories on the importance of rhythm and music in the novel and to explore both the function of rhythm and the ubiquitous presence of the drum in relation to narrative strategies in a selection of Francophone novels from West Africa and the Caribbean. The novels selected for this study are Ousmane Sembene's *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Aminata Sow Fall's *L'Appel des arènes*, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti-Jean L'horizon*, Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*, and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*.¹

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. In view of the questions, *What is rhythm?* and *What is music?*

¹ In citing the works selected for this study, we 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*.

artists and critics from multiple academic disciplines and sociocultural contexts provide different definitions for the two terms, and subsequently envision divergent relational configurations between rhythm and music.

This problem is further complicated by linguistic and sociocultural factors, which influence peoples' understanding of what is referred to in English as rhythm and music or 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. In his text *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, 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 his text *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 examined from the lexical frame of local West African languages such as Wolof, Bambara, or Malinké, it becomes readily apparent that languages such as English and French also tend to 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” (Bebey, 1975, 12). In another example from Senegal, the Wolof term *mbalax*, a term 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (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 English or French terms.

The untranslatability of culturally specific songs and dancebeats is equally apparent in Creolophone-Francophone texts and contexts. In *Solibo Magnifique*, for example, Chamoiseau repeatedly incorporates the names of Caribbean songs and dances, including *lafouka*-- a Creole term used to describe a partner dance in which dancers rub their bodies against 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 pop, African guitar styles, and American funk (*Solibo*, 55), throughout his narrative. With rhythms and lyrics born out of the Caribbean islands, genres like *lafouka* and *zouc* are significant in that they convey a local cultural aesthetic both 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” (Guilbault, 1993, 12). 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 (Guilbault, 1993, 202). As such, Guilbault sets forth what she 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*” (Guilbault, 1993, 202). By interweaving the vibrant sonorities of Caribbean dancebeats 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.

Beyond questions of language and translation, sociocultural factors also shape peoples’ understanding of conceptions of rhythm and music. Returning to Senegal, home of Sembene and Sow Fall, professional musicians traditionally belong to a specific social caste, *gewel*, and are regarded as “socially and ethnically distinct” from nonhereditary musicians (Cogdell Djedje, 2000, 142). This *gewel* or *griot* 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and the Bambara peoples Sembene portrays in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* 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 Stone points out, in certain regions

of Mali, home of the Bambara characters of *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, nonhereditary musicians or non-*jalolu* (plural for *jali*) “play a particularly important role in the traditional making of music” (Stone, 2000, 118).

Such inconsistencies-- lexical, cultural, or otherwise-- render it difficult to make sweeping generalizations about African musical practices, further emphasizing the need to consider sociocultural and linguistic factors in exploring “texted” rhythmic and musical phenomena as presented by Sembene, Kourouma, and Sow Fall. In his essay “Defining and Interpreting African Music,” Agawu addresses such linguistic and sociocultural factors in view of the conceptualization and ensuing problematization of the term “music:”

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 them. For this reason, whenever possible we privilege terms presented by the authors in local 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, 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 questions: 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 everyday noises that can be experienced as music. What Cage describes as music, "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 convention prescribed in Blacking's model, insisting instead on the importance of individual subjectivity 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 beholder(s).

In addressing the multiplicity of possible conceptualizations of the term "music," it is important 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” rhythmic and musical phenomena through an alternative categorical lens.

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, means different things to different people. Perhaps this is why when 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 audio work of listening. In his text *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, 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 [sic]. 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 [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,” (Lefebvre, 1992, 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 not only musical material 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 rhythmic criteria as an entity in itself-- both as a component of and a as a complement to music. As such, in the interest of tolerating categorical and aesthetic ambiguities and in respecting multiple theoretical and sociocultural perspectives on rhythmic and musical phenomena, the terms “rhythm” and “music” are regarded as distinct yet overlapping designations throughout this study.

In discussing the roles of music and rhythm in the aforementioned novels, this study examines the role of the drum as allegory, manifest in a series of prominent and multifaceted metaphors, and also explores the ways in which music is represented in contemporary Francophone narratives. Whether characterized by the sounds of traditional 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), contemporary instruments such as the guitar and the clarinet, or the human voice or human body movements, music and its underlying rhythms recognizably factor into the structure of the novels selected for this study. A musicality resonates from the spaces of these texts, imbuing the novels with a multiplicity of cadences, voices, and sonorities that evoke the rhythms of songs and dances, 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.

Although typically evoked to describe simultaneously resounding melodic components, 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 his text, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm*, Simha Arom explains instances of “polyphony by way of polyrhythms, 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 polyrhythmics” deals primarily with aerophone horns and whistles, it is also conceivable for pieces performed on idiophones such as the *mbira* (a type of hand piano) and the *balafon* (a type of wooden xylophone), 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 instances of polyrhythmic polyphony, Nketia cites Malinké xylophone music, a genre associated with the Malinké characters Kourouma presents in *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, as one such prominent example of polyphony in polyrhythm (Nketia, 123).

In her text, *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 bèle* (a large tam-tam that provides the base rhythms in Creole drumming ensembles) and the *ti bwa* (a smaller drum played with bamboo drumsticks

that provides the dance rhythms in Creole drumming ensembles), she notes “the first is for the rhythm, and the second for the melody.” (Berrian, 2000, 212). Recognizing the multiple layers of interwoven percussion-driven rhythms and tonalities in certain genres of Antillean music, Berrian approaches percussion music as a complex spectrum of sonorities complete with melodic potential, rather than 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.

For the purposes of this study, the term polyphony is appropriate in characterizing the interplay among the multiple overlapping tones, sonorities, and cadences produced by percussion instruments, human body movements and everyday objects presented in the texts. In this respect, in addition to examining the polyrhythmic dimensions of “texted” sonorous phenomena in discussing *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, *L’Appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L’horizon*, *Solibo Magnifique*, and *Traversée de la Mangrove*, this study also explores the polyphonic aspects of intermingling rhythmic and musical elements, specifically in view of their inter-textual and extra-textual implications.

Before assessing the multiple roles of music and rhythm in the selected novels, it is necessary to define and explain the theoretical concepts that are used throughout this text. Chapter I, “Rhythm and Transcultural Poetics: A Theoretical Overview,” 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. This study further explores the motifs of “texted” rhythmic and musical elements, particularly in view of how texts resonate to readers on sonorous (auditory) and/or meaningful (interpretive) levels. Focusing attentions on the sounds of footsteps, heartbeats, and drumbeats, as well as those of the quotidian sonorities produced through working, dancing, and other forms of music-making, this study examines multiple aesthetic, linguistic, political, and sociocultural aspects of transpoetic transcultural phenomena in critical and literary texts. Further attention is directed toward examining the significance of the drum-- the allegorical embodiment of rhythm and instrumental music-- and how it functions as a *transpoetic* mechanism. In this capacity, the allegory of the drum not only transforms the structure of the novel, filling it with a sense of rhythmic sensibility and poetic musicality, but also shatters hegemonic hierarchies existing outside of the texts, changing the ways in which writers and then readers negotiate autonomous identity constructs.

After considering rhythmic transpoetics in light of reader reception theories that address questions of individual subjectivity and cultural specificity, the notions of *transculture* and *transcultural* space are addressed in the second part of Chapter I. In examining what constitutes transculture or what occupies transcultural space, it is important to do so in a manner that respects the equivocal nature of the terms, one that appreciates the pure and possible in-between-ness, above-ness and across-ness the prefix *trans* designates. Nonetheless, in discussing these concepts, this study insists on devising precise definitions that deny the tempting traps of obscurity, 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), Edouard Glissant (the Relation) and Paul Gilroy (the Black Atlantic). In discussing these theories, the primary focus involves questions of identity in connection with the concept of transcultural transpoetics, namely: How do writers and readers reconcile autonomous identification on an individual level with pre-existing 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 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 despite spatial and temporal contextual differences. The organization of chapters in this thesis seeks to maximize such points of congruity, specifically in light of prominent themes presented in each novel. Although the rhythmic and musical motifs provide the principle focus of this study, particularly in the discussion of “texted” transpoetic transcultural spaces, since they provide a *fil conducteur*, a guiding thread, in all of the novels, it becomes important to provide 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-- activism, travel, and death-- which respectively serve as the themes for Chapters II, III, and IV.

In Chapter II, “Rhythm and Reappropriation in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*,” this study explores transpoetic transcultural phenomena in view of “texted” rhythmic and musical elements in Ousmane Sembene’s and Ahmadou Kourouma’s respective texts. Published in 1960 and 1968 respectively, *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances* both confront questions of language, identity, and authority in the eras immediately preceding Senegalese and Malian independence (as portrayed by Sembene), and proceeding Ivoirian (as portrayed by Kourouma) independence in the aftermath of French colonialism. In examining the two works, focus is directed toward analyzing multiple written representations of rhythm and music in Sembene’s and Kourouma’s texts. Moreover, the possible connections among the scripted sonorities of songs, dances, and other everyday cadences are explored, specifically in regard to the lexical linguistic localization strategies and stylistic oralization techniques that both writers employ in 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 and reappropriation in the post-colonial era.

In Chapter II, this study also defines and discusses the notion of “*instrumentaliture*,” a new term presented in this thesis 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 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 outside the confines of oral and written languages. Breaking free from the binary tendencies that 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 transcultural negotiation, communication, and exchange. 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, in assessing the implications of the designation of the text as a transpoetic transcultural space.

In Chapter III, “The Inter-Exterior Voyage: Rhythm, Music and Identity in *L’Appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L’horizon*,” “texted” rhythmic and musical motifs and the theme of voyage are explored in view of questions of identity as presented by Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart in their respective texts. 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 post-colonial Francophone contexts. In both novels, the protagonists embark on important identificatory journeys, traversing real and imaginary spaces, and subsequently confronting questions of collective and individual identification.

In examining *L’Appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L’horizon*, this study considers Sow Fall and Schwarz-Bart’s ideas about identificatory models based on single-source notions of rootedness as presented in their respective novels. Both models are discussed in view

of organic and abstract relational configurations as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (the Rhizome), Glissant (the Relation) and Gilroy (the Black Atlantic). Moreover, these models are also examined in relation to the notion of what is referred to in this study as the transpoetic transcultural space 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 IV, “Singing the Dead, Singing the Self: Music and Mourning in *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la mangrove*,” this study continues its 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 respective texts, published in 1988 and 1989 respectively, readers are immediately confronted with the death of a mysterious figure whose identity is configured posthumously through interrelated processes of music, memory, and mourning throughout the frame of the novel. Nevertheless, for Chamoiseau and for Condé, their identificatory investigations are not limited to negotiating posthumous identities for the deceased characters. 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 the Magnificent in *Solibo Magnifique* and Francis Sancher in *Traversée de la mangrove*-- but also in view of the living. As characters in *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la 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 Antillean cultural contexts.

In analyzing Chamoiseau's and 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 assessing the roles of the drum in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, *L'Appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Traversée de la mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnifique*, it is important to note that, although the drum displays similar tendencies from one text to another, its 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. Through the exploration of representations of the rhythm, music, and the drum in the novels selected for this study, this study establishes transpoetic, transcultural, and transmusical links that connect the texts in ways that transcend the limits of historical, social, 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” rhythm and music can reinforce or provide alternatives to lexical localization strategies, aiding writers in subverting the hegemonic authority of the French language and culture in the Francophone world. Opening a zone in which autonomous identities are affirmed, and transcultural exchange and communication take place, these writers create vividly sonorous “texted” worlds filled with vibrant rhythms, music, song, and dance. In the following chapters-- “Rhythm and Reappropriation in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*,” “The Inter-Exterior Voyage: Rhythm and Identity in *L’Appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L’horizon*,” and “Singing the Dead, Singing the Self: Music and Mourning in *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la Mangrove*”-- this study examines the rhythmic and musical soundscapes of each novel, analyzing how each writer accords the text with audibly resonant potential. More importantly, however, this study explores 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 spaces in a selection of Francophone novels from West African 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, and cacophonies, through the course of this analysis, it becomes

apparent how such sounding components significantly contribute not only in promoting local aesthetic values and cultural sensibilities in the six novels selected for this study, but also how they open spaces for autonomous identity appropriation and configuration in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text.

CHAPTER I

RHYTHM AND TRANSCULTURAL POETICS: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

“Or ce rythme, force vitale ou exutoire, ne se limite pas à la danse ni à la musique. Il structure tous les modes d’expression et en premier lieu l’univers des formes.”
(Louvel, 1999, 64)

(This rhythm, a vital or exutory force, is not limited to dance and music. It structures all modes of expression, first and foremost, the universe of forms.)

“Rhythm ... means coordinated movement at many levels- physical, spiritual, symbolic, literal and intellectual.” (Banfield, 1999, 33)

Not limited to poetry, “texted” rhythmic and musical manifestations effectively resonate from the pages of certain novels. Devoid of the melodic and tonal notations that tend to accompany written songs, the rhythmic base is often the only audible musical element a written text conveys. Along with the rhythms of music, the rhythms of linguistic, poetic, biological, and other quotidian phenomena resound within textual narrative spaces.

In the novels selected for this study-- Ousmane Sembene’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, Ahmadou Kourouma’s *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Aminata Sow Fall’s *L’Appel des arènes*, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Ti Jean L’horizon*, Maryse Condé’s *Traversée de la mangrove*, and Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnifique*-- writers prominently incorporate sonorous rhythmic and musical phenomena into the frames of their narratives, creating transpoetic transcultural spaces designed for communication, negotiation, and exchange. 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 promote a transpoetic aesthetic as a means of approaching questions of identity through multiple lenses and subjectivities. Commonly overlooked in contemporary literary analysis, particularly with respect to the novel (noteworthy exceptions include Brown, 1957; Delas & Terray, 1988-91; McCarthy, 1998; & 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 a transpoetic space in which sociocultural, linguistic, and aesthetic conventions are shattered.

As suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*, the novel is the ideal medium for the kinds of interactions that take place in the space of the text among different languages, literary genres and aesthetic elements.

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 a novel is the system of its ‘languages.’ (Bakhtin, 1988, 262)

For Bakhtin, the novel provides a fluid yet composed space that favors interplay among seemingly irreconcilable languages and aesthetic categories. As such, in the space of the novel, it becomes possible for polyphonic swirls of music, rhythm and noise to intermingle with black and white blocks of dialogue and narration, producing transpoetic works that escape stylistic confines and aesthetic conventions.

In exploring the possibilities of transpoetics in the space of the novel, many technical and theoretical questions arise, particularly in regard to the representation of rhythm and music in the text. The principle question: *can one write rhythm* ? Or, if so,

how does one write rhythm ? is interesting in that it is a question that concerns literary and musical scholars alike. Musicologist Jacques Chailley prominently poses the question “Peut-on écrire le rythme?” (Can one write rhythm?) by making it the title of one of his chapters in his text *La Musique et le Signe* (Chailley, 1985, 98).

In response to Chailley’s question, literary scholars including R. A. York and B. Eugene McCarthy would certainly reply “Yes, one can write rhythm,” however, they may not be able to agree as to 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” (York, 1999, 17). Admitting the limitations of his inquiry, York challenges future researchers to develop more “systematic” 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 future researchers will find a more systematic frame of study, or it may be that the reader’s subjectivity is inescapable and that no fully rigorous analysis is possible,” (York, 1999, 17).

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 passages, McCarthy describes the drums of Achebe's novel as "the rhythmic pulse of the heart of the clan, sounding insistently behind the action" (McCarthy, 1998, 48). Insistent 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" (McCarthy, 1998, 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 understanding of rhythm to a multiplicity of resonant possibilities as expressed in language, music, and symbolism.

As Henri Lefebvre affirms in his book *Éléments de Rythmanalyse*, the question of rhythm is rather *transdisciplinary* in nature, requiring examination from a multiplicity of perspectives and academic disciplines (Lefebvre, 1992, 35). As Lefebvre suggests:

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. (Lefebvre, 1992, 17-8)

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 an adjusted 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 superposed not without modifying them *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" (Lefebvre, 1992, 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" (Lefebvre, 1992, 35) (will manage 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, Henri Meschonnic views rhythmic analysis as a vast domain with seemingly unlimited possibilities. In his text, *Critique du rythme*, Meschonnic problematizes the term rhythm, in following with 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).

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, aesthetic 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 space of the text, whether it be a musical score or a written work such as a novel. 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 presents new possibilities to the reader and writer alike.

L’oreille entend autre chose et autrement que ce que l’œil 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? (Plumery, 1987, 21-2)

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 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 in developing more sophisticated or even intuitive interpretations of a text. Without using the term expressly, Plumery promotes the notion of transpoetics proposed in this study, and in doing so, favors the consideration of written texts in a manner that respects their resonant transpoetic nature. Furthermore, Plumery’s assertion about the reading ear is significant in that it not only recognizes the possibility of *listening* to a text, but it insists on this process as a means of escaping the limits of semiotics and structuralist thought.¹ For Plumery, there is not one single meaning, purpose, or intention for any given text; rather, there are infinite possibilities accessible through the opening of the imaginative hearing ear.

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* (Meschonnic, 1970, 176). Designed in part as an alternative to Martin Heidegger’s notions of reading

¹ 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

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 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. Much like a musical or theatrical performance, inevitably unique with each repetition, 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 continue to dominate academic thought. Blurring the boundaries that distinguish writing from reading, as well as those that separate oral from written, traditional from modern, and Occidental from Oriental, the process of *lecture-écriture* enhances the potential of a written text in that it directs attention toward the spaces in between any two categorical poles. Rather than insisting on the sharply-defined binary poles themselves, the *lecture-écriture* approach favors the nebulous territory that occupies the in-between spaces of polarized constructs, encouraging the reader to recognize the text as a series of endless possibilities with multiple meanings.

structuralist thought and often figure into structuralist literary analysis. Cf. Saussure, 2002 & Barthes, 1970.

For the purposes of this study, these ambiguous in-between spaces play an important role not only in shaping the reader's reception or perception of a written text. Perhaps more importantly, these *trans*, across, or in-between spaces provide the writer with a subversive expanse in which hegemonic hierarchies are rejected in favor of alternative schemas that promote autonomy in creation, communication, and identification. In addressing questions of identity presented in the primary texts of this dissertation-- each of which is arguably transpoetic in nature-- 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. Manifest in the persistent cadence of drumbeats, the underlying rhythm of the drum infuses the novel with the vibrancy of its music. A ubiquitous presence, the drum is not limited to the implicit rhythmic structure of the novel. The polyrhythmic pulsations 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 rhythm of the drum is perceptible throughout the selected 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 in diverse historical and cultural contexts. Although the sonority of drummed polyrhythms traverses these novels, the rhythmic presence of the drum adapts itself to the specificity of each text and of each context. Whether patently evoked through graphemes such as *tam-tam* and *ka* or latently connoted through the representation of songs or other oral aspects, the allegory of the drum

transcends the fixed status of universal signifier. In considering the resonant musical qualities of *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, *L'Appel des Arènes*, *Ti Jean L'horizon*, *Traversée de la Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnifique*, 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, manifest in the beating of the drum, each text reflects an individualized aesthetic that draws from of a unique configuration of sociocultural, historical, linguistic and independent influences. Each presenting a heterogeneous multiplicity of “texted” soundscapes in their respective works, 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 this study later explores, transculture). Through the salient incorporation of rhythmic and musical elements in their texts, these writers shatter the binary opposition that divides oral from written, thus creating an alternative relativizing universe in which identities can be autonomously (re)negotiated and (re)constructed. In between the domains of oral and written, music occupies a fluid conceptual space that denies concrete definitions and sharply-delineated boundaries. As such, when contemplating contextualized musical phenomena-- in texts, as recordings, or in performance-- it impossible to derive a precise series of fixed relationships in connection with the musical work.

In his text *Penser la Musique Aujourd'hui*, 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: 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 between polarized concepts and those determined by other hegemonic or hierarchical modes of classification. By toppling the power structures that impose clearly defined relationships and fixed identity constructs, music becomes a powerful tool, due in part to Boulez's assertion that music relativizes everything, rendering dominant modes of thinking irrelevant.

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 designates 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 the writer and reader 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. Since performance conditions are inevitably variable, a musical interpretation is never the same, even when reading from an established musical score.

Charles Seeger points out the limits of musical transcription, both prescriptive (rendered before a performance) and descriptive (produced after a performance), in his essay “Prescriptive and Descriptive Music Writing.” In the essay, he identifies three “hazards,” “inherent” to the practices of musical notation. The first such hazard, which deals with the nature of the writing itself, is 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 notation, 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. Refusing to align itself with one or the other, music occupies a space in-between or even outside of the two poles. As Titinga Frédéric Pacere argues in his text *Le Langage des tam-tams et des Masques en Afrique*, 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*, 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” (Pacere, 1991, 12) (the science, methodical studies, methods of thinking, of speaking, rhetorical figures relative to the *Béndré tam-tam*, or even the culture of drummed messages notably from Africa), Pacere considers the connections among oral, written and instrumental genres, but nonetheless insists on the distinct characteristics of instrumental 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 tam-tams, et de l’Afrique non entrée dans l’écriture, de la tradition orale. (Pacere, 1991, 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 in 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 only be used in characterizing vocal genres, whether they be musical, narrative, or otherwise. As such, 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 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 and communicative capacities.

In discussing the role of the drum in West African society, 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. (Pacere, 1991, 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 role of the drum in specific geographic and cultural contexts, namely those of different 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 II and III of this study. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is important to keep in mind Pacere's contribution in creating an alternate system of

categorization that refuses the polarization of oral and written, and that functions on aesthetic and operative levels.

Breaking free of the limiting binary construct that succinctly separates oral from written, Pacere encourages modes of thinking 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 separate Occidental from Oriental and traditional from modern. Designating an alternate space that transcends hegemonic hierarchies and binary categories, one that favors the limitless possibilities enabled by the intermingling of written, oral, and instrumental literature, 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 the drum as a transpoetic mechanism.

Whether standing alone, resonant as a sounding drum (or any of its metaphorical equivalents including the sounds of heartbeats, footsteps and the sounds 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. As an instrument of musico-social performance, the sonority of the drum bursts the silent structure of the text, transfiguring it, and in the process, appropriating alternative aesthetic and sociocultural conventions. In keeping with Bakhtin's assertion that the novel is an ideal space for multiple languages and genres to intermingle, the drum serves to augment and accentuate the novel's transpoetic capacity, moving beyond the confines

imposed by the choice of a single language, a single culture or a single genre. Even when its rhythms are not explicitly evoked or described, the drum's ubiquity underlies every mention of music, song, and dance in the novel, which in turn, contributes additional aesthetic elements and communicative possibilities to the written text.

In his book *Introduction à la drummologie*, Georges Niangoran-Bouah affirms this assertion, focusing, like Pacere, on the expressive and communicative dimensions of the drum in West Africa:

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 the drum as it functions in West African cultural contexts, primarily in his native Côte d'Ivoire. 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 practices. In her text *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 *drummologie* to Pacere's *bendrologie*, this categorical distinction is 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, 1988, 157) (In fact *bendrologie* and *drummologie* contribute to the same vein, notwithstanding that Pacere reproaches the word *drummologie* for its inauthentic and extroverted nature.) For Ouédraogo, the points of commonality that connect Pacere’s *bendrologie* and Niangoran-Bouah’s *drummologie* are more significant than the subtle differences that distinguish them. In this respect, the fact that both concepts identify drums, drummers, and drumming as objects of study in West African cultural contexts, particularly in view of aesthetic, linguistic, historical, and sociocultural criteria, connects the two disciplines in a manner that renders their differences insignificant. Urbain Amoa conveys a similar perspective in his text *Poétique de la poésie des tambours*:

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 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 *bendrologie* and *drummologie*, both Pacere and Niangoran-Bouah insist on the importance of the drum as a communicative device through which aesthetic, historical and sociocultural information and individualized messages can be transmitted and shared. Constituting “substrate linguistics” drum languages offer operative alternatives to oral and written forms of expression, breaking free of binary categorical tendencies, increasing subjective autonomy as well as aesthetic and functional possibilities.

In regarding the drum as a messaging mechanism, Niangoran-Bouah goes so far as to accord the drum with 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, the drum serves as a powerful allegory, one that is charged with a variety of social functions and emblematic implications.

In his collection *La Nuit des Griots*, Kama Kamanda goes so far as to present the tam-tam as an omnipotent instrument in the whole of Africa-- 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” (Kamanda, 1996, 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 he cares about. 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 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 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 West 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, the drum allows for limitless possibilities in function and in form. For Niangoran-Bouah, who is primarily concerned with the sociological and historical aspects of the drum and drumming, the drum acts in a multitude of capacities and serves as a social-leveling device. Ubiquitous, its 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).

Bayo Martins, another critic who concerns himself with examining the seemingly limitless roles of the drum in African cultural contexts, takes his interpretation of the drum a step further in his text *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, 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 an individual's quest for identity. Whereas many critics focus on the collective nature 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 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 society, Martin acknowledges the significance of the drum not only for collective social groups and cultures at-large, but also in connection with individuals and the quest for autonomous identity configurations. Described as a "medium for man's quest of discovering the innermost self, the I," in Martins's view, the drum 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 domain of the collective, a means of reinforcing shared sociocultural, communicative, and aesthetic values, Martins opens the drum to the realm of individual subjectivities, and in doing so, recognizes the drum's potential to influence different people in different 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 examining the role of rhythm and music in the novel. Although Martins is primarily concerned with the prominence of the drum in an African cultural context, his ideas connecting the drum and the individual are applicable in a variety of geographical and cultural settings. As such, the notion of the drum as a medium through which identities are questioned, constructed, and reevaluated plays a central role in dealing with the texts examined in this study, regardless of whether the writer is of West African or Antillean origin.

Even so, in considering the role of the drum in the Antillean cultural context, 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*, Edouard 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 social values 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 tambourées 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, 1997, 386-7)

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'.

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 the drum, 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 “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 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 his essay *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 produce distinct linguistic, aesthetic, and sociocultural products. Although specific cultural influences can be detected, both seen and heard, in examining phenomena post-creolization, such *nouveautés* are not derived from a single source or set of sources. Rather, they result from an intricate process of communication, exchange, 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 function, Caribbean music is

innovative, interactive, and inventive, refracting rather than reflecting 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” (Bilby, 1985, 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, and with the music they hear. Drawing from Caribbean cultures and culture at large, but also respecting individual originality and expressiveness, Caribbean music can also play an important role in autonomous identity negotiation and construction.

Rhythm and Transculture

The transposition of localized rhythmic and musical structures on the Francophone novel produces literary works that refuse hegemonic sociocultural and aesthetic conventions. These works, including Sembene’s *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, Kourouma’s *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Sow Fall’s *L’Appel des Arènes*, Schwarz-Bart’s *Ti Jean L’horizon*, Condé’s *Traversée de la Mangrove*, and Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnifique*, occupy transpoetic transcultural spaces in which clearly-delineated political

borders dissipate and cross-cultural particularities intermingle. Produced through a shattering of political, linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic boundaries, the transpoetic transcultural space exists as a place for communication, exchange, and negotiation, in which the blurred *trans* spaces that lie *across* and *in between* binary categories take precedence. In the frame of the novel, an ideal forum for transpoetic expression and transcultural interaction, writers create and negotiate conceptual elements, designating the text as a space of limitless possibilities for its readers. This phenomenon is particularly apparent in the West African and Caribbean Francophone texts selected for this study in which the writers maximize the novel's capacity for transcultural transpoetics, subtly interspersing prosaic, poetic, oral, and musical elements representative of a variety of geographic locations and cultural traditions. In doing so, they subvert dominant aesthetic and literary conventions, asserting the freedom and possibility of transcultural transpoetics.

Before discussing the importance of music and rhythm in connection with transcultural transpoetics in the novel, it is first necessary to define the concept of transculture. Similar to 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, and cultural studies scholars alike (cf. 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 his essay "The World in Creolization," Hannerz explains his conception 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 culture 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, exchange, and negotiation takes precedence over rigid characterizations and static descriptions.

In his essay “Une Interculturalité vécue,” 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 the existence of cultural totality. 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. 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 accords individuals with the power to negotiate cultural identities, rather than receiving them as prescribed definitions from a hegemonic authority.

In view of Hannerz’s description of culture and Memmi’s characterization of intercultural, the difficulties of defining culture and cultural phenomena further reveal themselves. Nevertheless, despite these problems, in their respective models, Hannerz and Memmi create conceptual spaces for boundless possibility, specifically with respect to cultural change and transformation as well as 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. According writers and readers with the authority to connect with and interpret the text as they see fit-- wherever, whenever and however they wish-- as well as the autonomy to construct independent identities and relationships, the novel exudes the multiple freedoms of what is referred to in this study as transculture.

In considering the novels selected for this study, this premise is of particular importance in determining how Francophone writers negotiate the balance of power in relation to French language and culture in the post-colonial 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 the 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 different reasons, most of them insist on shifting the distribution of power in dealing with French language, culture, and authority through the use of linguistic devices and stylistic techniques. Often referred to as localization or indigenization strategies (cf. Zabus, 1991), this study considers specific examples as presented by Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau in Chapters II, III and IV of this study.

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 indigenous African languages with those of the French language. 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 his essay, “Écrire en français, penser dans sa langue maternelle,” 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 Nègro-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)

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 Negro-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 and cultural autonomy and expression, 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. (Kourouma, 1997, 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 judges-- who reason in Negro-African [languages].

Indicating problems in political, legal, religious and cultural domains, Kourouma favors the designation of localized varieties of French, which correspond to the sociocultural and aesthetic specificities of diverse Francophone localities. While recognizing the dubious nature of the French language in post-colonial West Africa, he all the while

acknowledges multiple possibilities for growth and creativity in Negro-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” (Kourouma, 1997, 118) (One could say that Negro-African languages are in [a state of] perpetual creation; they adapt themselves, espouse the realities and sentiments that they are responsible for expressing).

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 her essay “Au delà des langues et des couleurs,” 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 *barangouin* de l’exil devenu langue, par les mythes et légendes, que sa merveilleuse créativité à 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. (Condé, 1985, 36).

One believes often that we, children of sugar canes, we were brought up with the sonorities of Creole, this *barangouin* 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. On this note, she challenges individuals to develop relational communities that transcend the categorical limits of language and ethnicity, “fraternités dessinées au-delà des langues et des couleurs” (Condé, 1985, 36) (fraternities designed beyond languages and colors).

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 his text, *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 established by hegemony and hierarchy. An apparent and important inspiration to this study’s 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.

Acknowledging the similarities between the transpoetic 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, this study aims to utilize a more neutral model that recognizes the multiple shades present in a “mosaic” model of identity, like the mosaic configuration set forth by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant in their *Éloge de la Créolité* (1993). 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, specifically Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Rhizome* (presented in *Mille Plateaux*) and Edouard Glissant’s *Relation* (discussed in *Poétique de la Relation* and *Traité du Tout Monde*), they too seemed inappropriate in attempting to accurately represent transcultural phenomena in the selected novels. Although both the rhizome and the Relation are considered more extensively in Chapter III, “The Inter-Exterior Voyage: Rhythm and Identity in *L’Appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L’horizon*,” it is important to take a moment to elucidate why this study insists on creating the designation “transpoetic transcultural space” rather than opting to use pre-existing terminology.

Written as an alternative to roots-derived single-source models for identity configuration, Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome allows for a multiplicity identificatory

influences from a 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, non-hierarchical and non-signifying, 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, 338-9), Glissant saw the need to create an alternative non-essentialist model, one that could more readily be adapted in describing the diverse peoples of the Antilles. Abstract in nature, the Relation has no physical manifestation, botanical or otherwise, which, according to Glissant, makes it superior to other relativizing systems. A perpetual process that favors mobility and movement, the Relation leaves behind only traces of motion and 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 generalizations and characterizations. Open to pure possibility, the Relation provides a vast and limitless space in which a multiplicity of elements intermingle, most notably languages and

genres, both oral and written. In his book *Poétique de la 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 supposed 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 hegemonic confines of fixed categories of culture, language, and genre, the 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 construction 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, undeniably a major inspiration for this thesis, seems to correspond completely with what is characterized as transpoetic and transcultural, for the purpose of this thesis it became important to designate terminology one could specifically apply in examining transpoetic and transcultural phenomena within the frame of the novel. Hence, the designation transpoetic transcultural space.

Method

In the novels selected for this study, writers employ a variety of narrative and lexical strategies to challenge hegemonic authority and explore questions of identity in post-colonial Francophone communities on both individual and collective levels. More importantly, however, such strategies impose the sonority music and orality onto a written text, causing it to resonate with the power of sound and possibility. A powerful medium, music “provides an enhanced mode of communication beyond the petty power of words -- spoken or written,” as Gilroy suggests in *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy, 1993, 76). Gilroy further affirms: “[M]usic can be used to challenge the privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness” (Gilroy, 1993, 74). Abstract and ephemeral, music has the capacity to transcend not only the limits of language, but also geographical borders, sociocultural conventions, and aesthetic formats. By injecting the rhythms of music in the novel, writers enhance the transpoetic qualities of the genre, simultaneously designating a transcultural forum in which the authority of linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural conventions is subverted in favor of the unpredictable and the possible.

Resonating at the heart of the transpoetic transcultural space is the audible beating of the drum. Underlying “texted” representations of music and dance, work and chores, the drum’s presence is ubiquitous in the novels selected for this study. Shattering linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic conventions, the drum serves to affirm the specificity of distinct cultures and peoples, while simultaneously designating a transcultural space in which disparate cultural particularities intermingle, yielding an infinite possibility of

potential outcomes. Lending itself to cacophony, euphony, and all of the in-between aesthetic variants, the drum has 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.

Although this study intends to examine the importance of the drum as a performance of social values, cultural traditions and localized aesthetic tendencies, it also insists on the communicative and transcultural aspects of drummed music, particularly in exploring how writers and readers interact with music in the space of the novel. At this point in the discussion, it is important 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 text, can derive meaning from these novels and arrive at some point of understanding, activated by an engagement with the text in the transpoetic transcultural space.

In his text, *Ku sà: Introduction à la Percussion Africaine*, François Fampou illustrates this point on an auditory level in describing how listeners receive and interpret the complex polyrhythms 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 the local drumming tradition in *Ku sà*, Fampou insists on its communicative qualities, its complexity and, of course, the possibilities it presents 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 polyrhythmic 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 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 André-Patient Bokiba suggests in his text *Écriture et identité dans la littérature africaine*, 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 space of the novel.

Although Bokiba's examination of the role of music in the novel focuses on one particular text, Sylvain Bemba's *Le Soleil est parti à M'pamba*, 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." (Bokiba, 1998, 257) (a musicalization of the noises of daily life" and "a personification of instrumental sounds"). He further identifies the importance of "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" (Bokiba, 1998, 257-8) (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 the drum in the novels selected for the purposes of this study.

In exploring the roles of rhythm and music in Sembene's *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Sow Fall's *L'Appel des Arènes*,

Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*, and Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*, the drum reveals itself in a multiplicity of different ways and fulfills a variety of diverse functions. Most importantly, the drum serves as a transpoetic mechanism, imbuing the text with its rhythms and transforming the structure of the novel. A communicative instrument, operating on both intracultural and transcultural levels, the "texted" drum designates the novel as a space for interaction and exchange in which readers and writers are involved in a constant process of negotiation to find meaning in the text. Often serving as the pulse of the text, in many instances the drum serves as a metaphorical heart, audibly quickening in moments of intense joy, fear, excitement and anticipation. As the pulse of the text, the drum can also have a soothing effect on its listeners, an effect that could be compared to listening to a loved one's heartbeat as one lies in embrace with an ear pressed to his or her chest. At times, 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.

In her novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Schwarz-Bart alludes to the soothing nature of familiar music and rhythms, characterizing it 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 poulx. Saisissant les deux pans de ma robe, je me mis à tourner comme une toupie détraquée, le dos courbé, les coudes relevés au-dessus des épaules, essayant vainement de parler 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'aspergiaient tandis que je tournoyais au milieu du cercle... (*Pluie et Vent*, 216-7)

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 speak to 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 Téliumée's hardened heart. While at first, she is reticent, unwilling to engage with the drum's soft cadences, Téliumée ultimately opens her heart to its healing rhythms, letting the soundwaves wash over her heart like water. Both reassuring and invigorating, the soothing sonorities of familiar drumbeats coax Téliumée 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, Téliumée'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 rhythms of drumbeats and heartbeats often provide meaningful audible cues that foreshadow imminent change and transformation. 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 apparent in Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé*, 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 the drum, 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 1990's as experienced through the eyes of a 12-year-old "small soldier," Kourouma intercalates the noises of tam-tams and machine gunfire, resonantly framing a climate of intense emotions amid extreme chaos. Transcribed on the black and white of the written page, the tam-tam rhythmically heightens the intensity of the soldiers' emotional responses, fueled by excessive amounts 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 describing the ambiance at the rebel camp after the death of one of their own, a ruthless child soldier named Capitaine Kid.

On est arrivés dans le camp retranché. Comme tous ceux de Liberia 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 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 the soldier's thoughts shift from honoring the life of Capitaine 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 has also been 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, 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 Capitaine Kid.

As demonstrated in the aforementioned passages from *Pluie et vent sur Téliumée Miracle* and *Allah n'est pas obligé*, the drum tends to serve as a signal of change or transformation, designating important turning points in the texts. Often evoked in descriptions of social rites that mark ritualized transitions from life to death and youth to

adulthood, among others, the drum is often utilized to emphasize important moments in the development of a novel's principal characters. Not exclusive to character development, "texted" representations of the drum are also implemented to signal substantial shifts in the plotline. Received by the reader, the rhythmic variations create a climate of anticipation, suggesting inevitable yet often unforeseeable turns of events. In his text *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, 45-6)

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 the drum and drumbeats, when transcribed in the frame of the novel, often serve to foreshadow important changes in the plotline or character development.

On a practical level, the drum functions as an important mode of communication, one that operates on a multiplicity of different levels. As earlier suggested by Fampou,

the drum's communicative capacity is almost limitless. In some instances, particularly in reference to many West African drumming traditions, the drum can be used as a signal to communicate specific messages across vast distances. In other instances, the drum can serve as a speech surrogate, imitating the rhythms, inflections and tonalities of verbal languages (cf. Nketia, 1971). Acknowledged as languages (and literatures) in themselves by Pacere and Niangoran-Bouah (Pacere, 1991 and Niangoran-Bouah, 1981), such drummed languages are perpetuated by highly skilled drummers who not only transmit complex messages across distant spaces, but also preserve important historical and cultural information across disparate epochs in the form of rhythmic arrangements.

In other cases, the communicative capacity of the drummer takes on more fluid and interpretive dimensions, as Martins suggests in his characterization of a traditional drummer 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 preserves ties to important sociocultural traditions but also contributes his own perspectives and aesthetic sensibilities to his art.

Not unique to African drumming and musical traditions, the drum can also serve as an expressive communicative mechanism 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 can nonetheless function in ways that convey thoughts, feelings and impressions to its listeners. Underlying a vibrant blend of musical tradition and innovation, drums communicate a wealth of information and emotions in Antillean society. Perhaps Daniel Maximin says it best when he characterizes Antillean music as its own language, one that rivals the expressive powers of spoken languages like French or Creole. Directly addressing each and every inhabitant of the Antilles using the 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).

In both West Africa and the Caribbean, drummed and instrumental music play an important role in that they 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 words. Once perceived, once heard or felt, the drum’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 even 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 rhythmic and drummed music, it is important to acknowledge the mutable quality of the rhythmic information and messages that are transmitted through music. Dependent on multiple factors including location and

time as well as the moods and mindsets 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 rather than trying to determine the intentions of the writer. 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 that which it communicates. In his text *Sounds and Society*, sociologist Peter Martin supports these claims, 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 to characterize a single piece of music. He further suggests that “accepted” musical “meanings change over time,” allowing for revision and reinterpretation.

Martin’s suggestions are particularly useful in regard to the specific texts examined in this study written by Francophone writers from West Africa and the Caribbean who tend to be labeled according to criteria including but not limited to nationality, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. At times, readers fall prey to these same classificatory tendencies that suggest that there are inherent ways to read, write and

interpret based on different sociocultural criteria. Similar claims are equally asserted in describing how people perform and receive music. While the process of enculturation, one by which people passively acquire localized 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. As such, it is important to go beyond the mode of thinking that there is a specific *African way*, *Antillean way* or *French way* of receiving and interpreting “texted” and/or musical information. 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 les murs” (Effa, 2003) (I am afraid of labels... Literature is a land without walls).

Roland Louvel expresses similar sentiments in his text *Une Afrique sans objets: du vide naît le rythme*, in which he explores the possibility of “A Post-Modern Africa” in moving from the 20th to the 21st 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 convenience. 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” in a contemporary social context, Louvel recognizes the importance of constructing autonomous notions of 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 collection of images, sensations, tastes, smells, and sounds, in forming their own idea of what Africa is and/or represents.

Existing in imagined spaces, individual conceptions of Africa (and other cultures or locations) are often idealized in some way or another, but nevertheless are derived from and bear traces of some sort of reality. Similarly, the drum has come to be an idealized and symbolic instrument, one that is often evoked by writers to suggest ties to historical and cultural traditions or to reflect contemporary cultural and aesthetic values. With respect to the specific novels analyzed in this study, set in locations in West Africa and the Antilles, the allegory of the drum is commonly presented as a means of establishing a connection through space and through time with an idealized traditional Africa. This assertion is explored in more detail in later chapters, particularly in considering the works of Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, and Schwarz-Bart in Chapters II and III. In other instances, the allegory of the drum as well as evocations of drumming,

music and dance are elicited to convey cultural and aesthetic phenomena. The imposition of localized aesthetic sensibilities and cultural traditions and trends, particularly through representations of rhythm and music, plays an important role, not only in shaping settings, moods, and contexts in the novel, but also in asserting the importance of non-French histories and cultures in the Francophone world. Transcendent of linguistic norms, music and rhythm serve as strategies for linguistic and aesthetic localization, resisting the hegemonic authority of the French language, and simultaneously affirming the values of the diverse cultures and expressive traditions in the post-colonial Francophone world.

CHAPTER II

RHYTHM AND REAPPROPRIATION IN *LES BOUTS DE BOIS DE DIEU* AND *LES SOLEILS DES INDÉPENDANCES*

“The arts remain one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, realms of cultural resistance, a space for awakening folks to critical consciousness and new vision.” (hooks, 1990, 39)

“The thing that saved us was music... It was part of liberating ourselves.”
(Abuddlah Ibrahim in *Amandla!* Dir. Hirsch, 2002)

Throughout time, music and rhythm have served as important strategies for subverting and reappropriating authority, particularly in the twentieth century, during which 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. (cf. Berger & Carrol, 2003; Mattern, 1998; Pratt, 1990). 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 authority. Described by Theodor Adorno as a “formative force” that creates “binding experiences,” even in its most abstract and fragmentary forms, music encourages collectivity in that it “says We directly regardless of its intentions” (Adorno, 1997, 167), while simultaneously reinforcing individualism. A creative, expressive form of resistance, the power of music manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways, fostering a driving rhythmic force that connects and empowers individuals, affirms their autonomously-constructed identities and inspires them to

question and to 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).

Not limited to the audible domain of the hearing ear, rhythmic and musical phenomena equally appeal to other senses and sensibilities, and can be communicated through a variety of sensorial and imaginative conduits. As discussed in Chapter I, an operative reading ear allows individual readers to transform texted words and expressions into audibly resonant sounds, percussive rhythms, and vivid musical selections (Plumery, 1987). Although a sonorous text is received and perceived differently than an audio recording or a live musical performance, the *We* communicated by music and the collectivity generated by rhythm, are nonetheless present in the printed realm. Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas about polyphony in the novel, presented in his work *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, seem to reinforce this notion. Favoring the intermingling of different voices, perspectives, and cultures in the space of the novel, Bakhtin’s notions of polyphony can also be applied to diverse rhythms and melodies in a text. In her work *Entre-dialogues avec Bakhtin*, M.-Pierrette Malcuzyński explores this possibility, comparing polyphony in literature with musical forms. In her analysis, Malcuzyński insists on the collective nature of music and polyphony inside and outside the frame of the text:

[C]ette relative autonomie du ‘je’ -- ‘je’ sujet à part entière -- ne peut se réaliser dans le discours qu’en s’appuyant sur le ‘nous’; tant dans la composition musicale que dans la littéraire, différentes voix ne peuvent se réaliser *polyphoniquement*

qu'en s'appuyant sur le tout, sur la totalité du texte en question. (Malcuzyński, 1992, 181)

[T]his relative autonomy of 'I' -- 'I' subject separately whole -- can only be fulfilled in the discourse by relying on the 'we'; both in musical composition and in literature, different voices can only be fulfilled *polyphonically* by relying on the whole, on the totality of the text in question.

Like Adorno and Meschonnic, Malcuzyński argues that the *nous*, the *we*, of music is fundamental, particularly in view of questions of autonomous subjectivity in negotiating individual and collective identities. She further maintains that this sense of collectivity operates not only in the audible realm, accessible by Plumery's hearing ear, but in the space of the text, the domain of the reading ear, as well. In this respect, individual rhythms, voices and perspectives emerge only after engaging polyphonically with the collective whole, the "totality of the text in question."

Through the incorporation of prominent rhythmic and musical elements in their respective novels, *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Ousmane Sembene and Ahmadou Kourouma create vibrantly sounding imaginative worlds that resonate from the space of the written page. Most visibly manifest in the ubiquitous rhythms of tam-tams, but also evoked through multiple representations of song and dance in both ritual and quotidian settings, the pronounced presence of rhythmic and musical 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 post-colonial eras, Sembene and Kourouma both effectively include rhythmic and musical components in their 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 outside of the frame of the novel.

Published in 1960, Sembene’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* presents a fictionalized account of a 1947 railroad workers’ strike that immobilized railway traffic 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 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. In 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 in view of questions of authority, autonomy, and identity.

Kourouma examines similar themes in *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, a novel that reveals social problems in the early post-colonial era. After repeated rejections from French publishing houses, due in part to their reluctance to endorse Kourouma’s malinkisized brand of French, *Les Soleils des Indépendances* was first published in Canada by *Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal* in 1968. Later distributed by French publishers *Les Éditions du Seuil*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, like *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, has 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 the story of his wife Salimata-- a woman who struggles with infertility

and memories of a botched excision-- Kourouma examines dimensions of identity and independence in post-colonial West Africa. Like Sembene, Kourouma masterfully weaves rhythmic and musical elements into the space of the novel, celebrating the sonorities of everyday rhythmic and musical happenings as a means of exposing political inequalities, sociocultural problems, and linguistic conflicts.

In considering the multiple manifestations of rhythm and music in *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, we will 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 means in subverting the hegemonic authority of the French language and culture in colonial and post-colonial West Africa.

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 official language despite the presence of other thriving nationally recognized languages, for Sembene and Kourouma, 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, for Sembene and Kourouma, French serves a practical communicative purpose as well, allowing them to reach global audiences with their writing. An emblematic presence, recalling the injustice of colonialism and the power of the French authority during the colonial era as well as the persistence of French cultural encroachment and economic exploitation in the post-colonial era, the French language continues to impose a far-reaching authority in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. As the official language of law and political authority in the two countries, French, an imported and acquired language, creates a hierarchical system, 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 competency.

In Kourouma's native Côte d'Ivoire, French is the official language despite and also because of the presence of 78 other living languages, around 70 of which (including Baolé, Sénoufo, Yacouba and Dioula) are recognized as national languages. For purposes of interlinguistic communication, Dioula, not French, is the preferred vehicular language in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly for business transactions. The linguistic situation is comparable in Mali, where Kourouma completed his studies, where there are around 30 local languages, 13 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 35 local languages coexist. Six (Wolof, Peul, Sérère, Diola, Malinké and Soninké) are recognized as national languages. In Senegal, Wolof functions as the majority language as well as the

primary vehicular language. 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 members of the global Francophone community.¹

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 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 post-colonial independence in 1960. Sembene's novels and novellas-- *Le Docker noir* (1956), *Ô pays, mon beau peuple* (1957), *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960), *L'Harmattan* (1964), *Le Mandat* (1966), *Xala* (1973), *Le Dernier de l'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 post-colonial West Africa. In addition to a prolific 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...* (1966), *Mandabi* (1986), *Emitai* (1971), *Xala* (1974), *Ceddo* (1976), *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), *Guelwaar* (1993), *Faat Kine* (2000), and *Moolaade* (2004).

¹ Although this information is published in book form (cf. Leclerc, Jacques. *Langue et Société*. Second Ed. Laval (Québec): Mondia Éditeurs, 1992), the most up-to-date information is available on the Leclerc's

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 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 1964-1969. During his time in exile, Kourouma wrote his first novel, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, in which he grapples with questions of identity, autonomy, and authority in post-colonial West Africa. He later wrote, *Monnè, outrages et défis* (1990), *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998) and *Allah n'est pas obligé* (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* (1998), a theatrical piece *Le Diseur de vérité* (1999), and a book of popular African proverbs *Le Grand livre des proverbes africains* (2003) before his untimely death in December 2003.

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 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

website "Aménagement linguistique dans le monde" at <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl>.

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. (Aas-Rouxparis, 2002, 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 to his public, both as a writer and as a filmmaker.

While, in a cinematic setting, Sembene presents 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 *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, Sembene often emphasizes a character’s choice of language by directly inserting words from the Wolof and Bambara languages or by designating the speaker’s choice of language (i.e. 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 an explicatory footnote. In later representations, words and

expressions defined earlier in the text often appear in the same typeface as the French text, simultaneously imposing the term's orthography and signification on the French language. 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. 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, crafting a text that resonates with the overlapping rhythms of multiple voices speaking multiple languages.

In one passage, on the eve of the imminent workers' strike that drives the plot of the novel, Sembene evokes the persistent beating of drums, manifest in the driving 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, in determining the meaning of the Bambara term one hundred pages and, later, three hundred pages after its initial evocation. 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 phenomena.

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 socio-economic inequalities fostered by language,

such clarifications reveal the extent to which language and identity are inextricably interwoven. Not limited to the realms of oral and written communication, Sembene equally insists on including non-verbal forms of expression in connection with the choice of language, the choice of culture.

Effectively utilized, Sembene's masterful incorporation of linguistic localization strategies has implications on aesthetic, sociocultural, and political levels. By challenging the authority of the 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 negotiated. Avoiding the trappings of what Hédi Bouraoui calls "la binarité infernale" (Bouraoui, 1995, 42) (the infernal binarity) of post-colonial discourse, Sembene creates a transcultural zone in the space of the text, one in which cultural particularities overlap and intermingle, allowing for communication and 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 to freeze 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 construction 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 resistance, 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, that of transposing the former onto the latter, allows Francophone writers to appropriate their own distinct versions of the French language. Imbibed 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, but it also opens up a shared space for communication and exchange. Multicultural in nature, the Francophone community Kourouma envisions brings together a multiplicity of peoples representing a diversity of perspectives. As Kourouma sees it, French is no longer 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 ideally serves as a social-leveling mechanism, one that breaks down social hierarchies and unites people from around the world with diverse histories, cultures, experiences, and perspectives.

Nevertheless, 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, 116-7)

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 for which 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 sonority 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 audibly pulsing echoes, resulting from 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. 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 localized audible domain of *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, revealing the transpoetic nature of the text. In doing so, Kourouma effectively creates a sense of complicity with the readers not only by inviting them into the text through his use of the first person plural form of the interpretive mood, but also by informing them about Malinké linguistic and cultural particularities.

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. Although he uses such devices to welcome the reader into the transpoetic transcultural space of text, an ideal forum for communication and exchange, Kourouma equally incorporates these elements 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 presenting Malinké orality in the French text; 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[s] find [themselves] a bit embarrassed inside and say to [themselves] down deep what does he want to say, what does he want to bring out? I tell [them]: 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 *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 socio-historical 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, 22-3)

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 breed 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 *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*, serving as an essential component of Sembene's arsenal in subverting the hegemonic 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. 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 sonority 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 *les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, Sembene utilizes a variety of narrative strategies to convey the spirit of the oral tradition in the novel. Integrating proverbs and popular expressions derived from local lexicons and traditions, Sembene intertwines the roles of griot and narrator in recounting the story of the West African railroad workers' strike. Incorporated throughout the entirety of the text, 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'" (*BBD*, 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.'), oral proverbs and expressions prominently figure in Sembene's text. Similarly, Sembene repeatedly weaves *devinettes* (A French term for riddle that translates 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 (*BBD*, 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 Ad'jibid'ji. It isn't until page 368, 200 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" (*BBD*, 368) (It is the spirit, because water is clear, but the spirit is even more limpid).

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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, 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 mid-story, 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 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, 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 *conteur*-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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*. 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. In doing so, Sembene incorporates storytelling strategies, simultaneously demanding readers to be engaged with the narrator as events unfold and reflecting a musico-oral sensibility in the frame of the novel.

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 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, 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 next paragraph on the next page, Sembene infuses 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” (*BBD*, 65) (The days were sad and the nights were sad). Modified 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 evokes a single emotion, sadness, and is presented in an altered 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. Used to frame portrayals of difficulties faced by striking workers in Bamako, in its two later appearances, the original phrase “Des jours passèrent et des nuits passèrent” is presented in an abbreviated form, “Des jours passèrent,” (*BBD*, 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 second and third 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 his article “Africans, Europeans and the Making of Music,” generally, these formulaic choral responses are “invariant” and operate “under strict rhythmic rules” (Small, 1987, 118). Nevertheless, although the respondent’s role is typically predetermined, as Small explains, the caller’s solos are “often improvised” (Small, 1987, 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. Subtly incorporating the rhythmic structures of antiphony into his text, Sembene enhances the resonant quality of *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*. Furthermore, Sembene helps break down the divisions that traditionally separate reader from writer by promoting the sense of collectivity fostered by antiphony. In inviting his readers to respond with the appropriate rhythmic formula, Sembene implicates them in helping to shape a vibrant, sonorous universe filled with rhythm and music, 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 formats. Even though 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 despite the omnipresence of French linguistic and cultural forms. For Sembene, this process of imposing musico-oral traditions and African linguistic elements on the Francophone novel is significant primarily since it serves as a means of preserving local cultural values in spite of the socio-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 21st century:

Le problème, c'est que notre société, et là je parle de l'Afrique francophone, ne secrète 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 & 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 verb 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, we come mainly from Europe or from the West.

Unlike Kourouma, who sees French as a point of commonality through which diverse peoples from different locations can exchange information, ideas and attitudes, Sembene views French as a threat to African sociocultural landscapes. Encroaching on local values, belief systems, and perspectives, for Sembene, the dominance of French is shifting local points of reference away from Africa, towards Europe, the North and the West.

Rhythm and Reappropriation in the Novel

Creating new modes of reappropriation that favor alternative models to binary opposition-based constructs, Kourouma and Sembene have helped in shaping what Bouraoui refers to as a “new (Francophone) humanism” (Bouraoui, 1995, 45). 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.” (Bouraoui, 1995, 45) (allows for interactive communication, establishing a game of differentiations capable of transforming competition into cooperation).

Like Edouard Glissant's Relation, Bouraoui's crossroads model emphasizes the mobility of cultures and cultural phenomenon. Constantly moving, shifting, and transforming, for Glissant and Bouraoui, cultures are neither fixed nor clearly defined. 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. As such, regardless of one's mode of transportation, whether on foot, on a bicycle, on a horse, or in a car, people meeting at the crossroads must recognize and respect each other, whatever their social status or cultural background may be. As pedestrians and vehicles take turns traversing the intersection, communication and cooperation play an important role in assuring fluid traffic patterns. Similarly, when these patterns are disrupted by accidents or roadblocks, travelers encounter and resolve such problems together, further promoting a sense of collectivity through common conflict resolution. 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 insistent on opposition, Bouraoui's crossroads model prefers subtler methods of resistance that disrupt the "le cercle vicieux" (Bouraoui, 1995, 45) (vicious circle) of violent power struggles that have troubled post-colonial Francophone communities.

Although Bouraoui's star-shaped crossroads model deals primarily with transcultural phenomenon in the Francophone world, it can equally be applied to notions of transpoetics in the Francophone novel. In addition to resisting the political, economic, linguistic, and cultural legacy of colonialism, as socially-committed novelists, Sembene and Kourouma also struggle with the authority of print colonialism. A term coined by Christopher Miller, print colonialism, derived from Benedict Anderson's notion of print capitalism (Anderson, 1991), problematizes the propagation of French literacy during the colonial era, suggesting that it served as a means of strengthening the hegemonic 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 irrefutably established French as the language of authority, relegating local languages to an inferior second-class status. Inscribed into laws and public education, even in the post-colonial 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 subvert the (print) colonial authority, Kourouma and Sembene employ a variety of sounding techniques, creating texts that resonate with the vivid sonorities of local languages, music, and orality. While linguistic and oral localization strategies play an important role in both *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, such techniques have been adequately addressed by literary scholars (cf. Case, 1987; Nzabatsinda, 1996, 1997; Aboubakar, 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 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 divides writing from orality in contemporary criticism. Breaking free of the binary critical models problematized by Bouraoui and other scholars such as Homi Bhabha (cf. 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.

Infusing their texts with intricate layers of rhythm and music, swirls of sound and vision, Kourouma and Sembene attempt to accurately portray settings and contexts in their novels, promoting local sociocultural and aesthetic values. Aside from contributing to the overall sensorial effect of the novel and serving to situate the text in an African location, rhythmic and musical elements fulfill a number of other functions. Promoting transpoetic and transcultural phenomena, textual representations of rhythm and music

establish the space of the novel as a zone for negotiation, exchange, and communication. This capacity is particularly important in exploring the socially-committed works of Kourouma and Sembene, since music and rhythm operate as agents both inside and outside the frame of the text. Linking real and imaginary domains as Kourouma and Sembene examine questions of African identity, music and rhythm provide a point of connection, one that allows for transfer and transformation as the two writers attempt to reconcile African pasts and presents with African futures.

In considering the multiple roles of rhythm and music in *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, 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 song and dance 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 tam-tams, Kourouma and Sembene insist on the importance of the drum not only as an emblem of tradition, but also as an important communicative device. Used as way of preserving historical and cultural information within tribes or social groups, or as a mode of sending specific messages across vast distances, the drum has traditionally fulfilled a variety of communicative 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 & 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 drum represents a language in itself, as theorists including Titinga Pacere and Georges Niangoran-Bouah maintain (Niangoran-Bouah, 1981 and Pacere, 1991). 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, comprising an important component of many oral literatures, Pacere's designation instrumental literature is significant in that it considers the expressive and communicative capacities of non-vocal 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 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*," (Petrilli and Ponzio, 100), I have designated the term "*instrumentaliture*," which may also be referred to as performance literature, to represent the rich variety of rhythmic and instrumental 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 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, the drum plays a central role, not merely as a transmitter of information, but also as a powerful expressive device. In this light, the boundless potential of the drum becomes all the more

apparent. As François Fampou explains in his text *Ku sà: Introduction à la percussion africaine*, 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 percussionniste 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 intermédiaires 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 come close to 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.

In considering the role of the drum and "instrumentaliture" 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 his text *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre*, 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 contaminations, appropriations and mutations, Derrida recognizes the power of other 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 monolgue, 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, 123-4)

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* (Derrida, 1996, 124).

Critic Denise Egéa-Kuehne has already established a connection between *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre* and the work of Kourouma. In her article “La langue de l'Autre au croisement des cultures: Derrida et *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre*”, she discusses the relationships Kourouma and two other Francophone writers (Suzanne Dracius and Barry Ancelet) maintain with the French language. Due to differences concerning sociocultural and individual criteria, Egéa-Kuehne suggests that 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 Creole, “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” (are not seeking to become assimilated in the dominant culture) (Egéa-Kuehne, 2001, 198) 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 deals with inequalities concerning language and language education practices and policies in Francophone areas, 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 *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre* 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 Aminata Sow-Fall, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Maryse Condé, and Patrick Chamoiseau. Already 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 non-vocal musical and rhythmic methods, play a role in subverting hegemonic linguistic authority in the Francophone world, creating spaces for reappropriation inside and outside the space of the text.

"Instrumentaliture" at Work

Inside the space of the text, "instrumentaliture," a new term set forth in this thesis, 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 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 non-vocal rhythmic and musical elements are transposed on a written text.

By incorporating both oraliture and “instrumentaliture” in *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, 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 resisting the hegemonic authority of the French language in the Francophone world. Through an exploration of specific examples from the two novels, “instrumentaliture” reveals itself as an important component of transcultural transpoetics. Designating the text as a space for exchange, communication and negotiation, texted rhythmic and musical phenomena establish in-between conceptual places that break free of hierarchical and binary classificatory modes of thinking, freeing subjects to question and reconfigure hegemonic identity constructs in favor of autonomous, independent models.

As previously explained, the drum and its multiple manifestations serve as the nucleus for representations of rhythm and music in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. 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 the drum and drum languages in their novels, filling the space of the text with the resonance of “instrumentaliture.” As such, the drum 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 diverse representations of drums and other rhythmic devices in the two novels, the importance of “instrumentaliture” becomes apparent both inside and outside the space of the text.

In certain passages, Sembene and Kourouma present the drum as an effective communicative mechanism through which complex messages can be transmitted from one location to another. More powerful and precise than the human voice across the span of vast distances, the drum conveys complex strains of information to faraway neighbors. 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 Francophone text, drum languages introduce yet another level of resistance in subverting the authority of the French language. Complementing lexical localization strategies, drum languages call for a re-negotiation of identificatory terms by refusing existing dominance hierarchies that place French above all other forms language and expression.

Sembene portrays the communicative capacity of drum languages in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, although he conveys this motif in a subtle manner. Rather than using drum languages to communicate information across vast distances, in recounting the events of

a railway workers' strike, Sembene evokes the drum language in its 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. (*BBD*, 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, immanent changes are on the horizon, as people gather to respond to its call to action.

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." (*BBD*, 292) (Preceded, followed, accompanied by the beating of tam-tams, the procession disappeared into the night). Guided by the rhythms of drumbeats, the women begin their

march. Although they are uncertain what they will encounter on the road ahead, informed by the drum, they know that the situation will bring about important changes for the workers and their families.

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

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 solemn rhythms and tones.

Similarly, in *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, 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 faith healer in animist religions) Balla's death, the sounds of drums travel from one location to another, filling the air with sad 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 the drummed message, 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, 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: "Tout le Horodougou poussa un grand 'Ah!' de surprise" (*Soleils*, 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 Horoudougou locals. Relatively untainted by the North/West and Northern/Western influences, Kourouma's Horodougou embodies the ideals and traditions of pre-colonial West African societies, providing a sharp 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and in *Guelwaar*, Sembene portrays rhythmic echo effects similar to those he presents in *Ô pays, mon beau peuple* and those Kourouma describes in *Les Soleils des Indépendances* 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! Kaks! of the broken shell [that] gave rhythm to the work), in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* 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 folâtent 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. (*BBD*, 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 linguistic qualities of the interwoven rhythms, explaining that, as they work, the *pileuses* greet one another and communicate to each other in a rhythmic language that 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 signals 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. (*BBD*, 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.

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, proclaiming 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, often acting as signals of change or transformation. These rhythms, repeatedly conveyed through the beating of tam-tams, often serve as signposts,

designating significant shifts in a novel's plot or in a character's development. In *Les Bouts des bois de Dieu*, 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 *Les Bouts des bois de Dieu*, 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 its omnipresent rhythms. Serving as the pulse of the strike, the ubiquitous drumbeats of the *bara* are audibly present during moments of turmoil, conflict and confusion. At other times, like the beating of a heart inside one's own body, the persistent rhythms go unrecognized. Much like a collective heartbeat, 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.

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*." (*BBD*, 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. Like a heart, beating louder and faster in a heightened emotional state, the incessant rhythms of the *bara* serve as the pulse of the text during the intense moments before the strike. Ubiquitous, the *bara* and its rhythms are inescapable. As the drumbeats persist, announcing inevitable conflict and change, villagers grow filled with worry. Imbued with the omnipresent music, the workers and their families anxiously wonder what 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. (*BBD*, 30-1)

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*, finding 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" (*BBD*, 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. Gracefully moving in time with the agitated rhythms of the *bara*, the women surrender to the surrounding drumbeats. As powerful as it is ubiquitous, 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 surrender to the power of the *bara*, allowing their bodies to be transported by its rhythmic vibrations, 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and prominently resurfaces near the end of the text. Once again serving as an important signal of change, its familiar drumbeats announce the end of the railway workers' strike. 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 resonant with the sounds of music and dancing (*BBD*, 368).

In *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, 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

cacophonous sounds of countless marching footsteps of women on the path from Thiès to Dakar as a means of signaling plot shifts occurring on Senegalese soil. Much like the familiar cadence of the *bara*, these audible clues act as signals of transformation, foreshadowing significant conflicts and changes in the novel.

Beginning in Thiès and ending in Dakar, the women's march designates an important sonorous turning point in the storyline. Filled with the multiple resonances of footsteps, drumbeats and singing, 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...'" (*BBD*, 292) (Off we go, off we go! shouted Penda. Like so many echoes, hundreds of voices responded: "Off we go, off we go, we go, we go, we go..."). In narrating the start of the women's march, Sembene effectively employs repetition to reflect the echo-effect produced by their 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 marcher's 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. 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. 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, Maimouna 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" (*BBD*, 47) (In the middle of this suddenly silent crowd, only the voice of Maïmouna seemed alive. She covered the noises of 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"

(*BBD*, 48) (to glorify life), is silenced: “Maïmouna ne chantait plus” (*BBD*, 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, operating like the pulse of the strike, Maïmouna’s song is silenced after the violent episode in the marketplace, 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 tragic events, she rarely speaks and never sings until the strike draws to a close. As the citizens of Thiès initiate the return to normalcy in the aftermath of the strike, 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” (*BBD*, 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. 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 all 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, 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 (i.e. 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. Displaying the drum in its ritual capacity,

Kourouma evokes the rhythms of drumbeats in describing the rite of excision, explicitly representing the instrument through the use of the word tam-tam. 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, like an audibly pulsing heartbeat. Intermittently beating like nervous and excited hearts, drumbeats are instrumental in heightening the anticipatory ambiance preceding official recognition of the rite's completion. Ubiquitous, the intricate rhythms intensify the social transformation process, solidifying the ties that connect the new initiates to each other as well as the local community at large.

An equally important component of the ensuing celebration, the drums' rhythms heighten the festive exuberance of the occasion. Insuring 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. Socially significant in traditional ritual practices, the sounding of the tam-tam in celebration of the *fait accompli* is boldly optimistic, foreseeing good fortune in the face of obstacles and adversity.

Nevertheless, when absent, the silent tam-tams communicate as powerfully as their audible counterparts with respect to traditional rites of passage. Without the

promise suggested by the drummed rhythms, failure and misfortune loom on the horizon. Whether attributable to the power of the drum or the power of superstition, the rhythmic influence of the tam-tam is undeniable in *Les Soleils des Indépendances*.

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*, 37-8).

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 gourds. 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 the tam-tam, 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. (*Soleils*, 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 ritual. Although the swirling sounds of tam-tams and vocal music accompany the procession, Salimata hears nothing and sees nothing, denying the 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.

Affecting Salimata through silence rather than sound, the tam-tams serve as important rhythmic signals in *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, predicting significant downward shifts in her character development. Through her refusal to acknowledge and experience the rhythms of ritual and celebration, Salimata unwittingly isolates herself

from the local community. Defying the values of tradition and collectivity, Salimata ultimately divorces herself from her African past, leaving her to face an uncertain and conflicted future in the post-independence era.

In his text *Kourouma et le mythe: Une Lecture de Les Soleils des Indépendances*, 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, 192-3) (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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. 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" (*Les 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” (*Les Soleils*, 184) (a tam-tam air). Although she is unable to reconcile herself with the music of her past, 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 incarnate 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 *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. In several prominent examples, the rhythms of drumbeats are audibly present during funerals (*Soleils*, 196), festivals in praise of hunters (*Soleils*, 123), and as Fama is released from prison (*Soleils*, 172). In one such example, Kourouma combines the rhythmic components of funerary rituals and pre-hunting 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 in simultaneously commemorating the noble life of a fallen hero and in honoring 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. (*Soleils*, 123-4)

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. Using 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 dancesteps and ceremonial gunshots follow suit, adding layers of rhythmic sonority to the collaborative percussive performance piece. The overlapping rhythms increases 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.

Much like his portrayal of the dance of the hunters, Kourouma's rendering of Fama's liberation combines multiple layers of sonorous elements. 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 prisoners, the entire region is abuzz with the sounds of celebrative 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.' (*Les Soleils*, 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 city-wide celebration. In doing so, Kourouma insists on the resonant percussive dimensions of the festivities, connecting the sonorities of celebratory heartbeats, drumbeats, and dancesteps.

Ordinary and Extraordinary Rhythms

In both *Les Soleils des Indépendances* and *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, the rhythms of instrumental music play an important role in shaping the lives and destinies of each novel's characters. Acting like heartbeats and serving as the pulses of the texts, these rhythms also indicate significant shifts in the plotline, forecasting fortune and misfortune, celebration and suffering. Ubiquitously interwoven into the frame of the text, the swirling 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 *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, the power of rhythm is manifest not merely in its traditional, communicative 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 (*BBD*, 180, 251). Tam-tams are also taken up as arms against the oppressive regime, although, as weapons, they are employed in a non-violent capacity. Near the close of the novel, Lahbib commands his striking cohorts to "allez chercher les tam-tams et chantez" (*BBD*, 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” (*BBD*, 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 cadences of countless marching footsteps, Sembene describes the effect produced by the sounds of the unlikely parade as they 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 charettes, cris, appels, chants, plaintes des éclopés, bégaiements des mendiants, coups de sifflets des policiers, un dôme bruyant semblait couvrir la cité tout entière. (*BBD*, 325-6).

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 marching footsteps serve to intensify the situation and signal imminent change.

Throughout *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Kourouma evokes the multi-faceted allegory of the tam-tam, likening everyday sounds and experiences to those generated by the captivating rhythms of drumming. Connecting its sounds and silences with sights, smells, and sensations, Kourouma presents the tam-tam in a way that goes beyond its

capacities as a musical instrument, a communicative device, and an emblem of West African tradition. For Kourouma, the experience of the tam-tam and its rhythms penetrates into all areas of life. Even in describing the cacophony of a bustling marketplace, Kourouma represents rhythm in a multi-sensorial 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 punateur. Puis une rangée de bougainvillées et le marché dans tous ses grouillements, vacarmes et mille éclats. Comme dans un tam-tam de fête, tout frétilait 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 calabasse qu’on battrait. (*Les 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. A powerful expressive device, Kourouma repeatedly connects the tam-tam 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” (*Les Soleils*, 69) (a tam-tam of joy), and, in another, he likens the names of forgotten villages to “des tam-tams de regrets” (*Les Soleils*, 100) (tam-tams of regrets).

In *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, 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 dancesteps, as well as the everyday sounds of singing, working, and music-making, Sembene and Kourouma succeed in promoting local cultural conventions and aesthetic sensibilities. By transposing resonant rhythmic and musical elements within the frame of the Francophone novel, Sembene and Kourouma create spaces for identity appropriation and social activism as mediated in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text that resonate with the freedom of music and possibility.

CHAPTER III

THE INTER-EXTERIOR VOYAGE: RHYTHM, MUSIC, AND IDENTITY IN *L'APPEL DES ARÈNES* AND *TI JEAN L'HORIZON*

“Drum speaks; yes, the drum speaks in many tongues. The tongues of many nations, all touching the same rim of mouth, all uttering the deep boomalay-boom of the heart.”
(Hausman & Rodriques, 1996, 45)

*“[W]hat makes music special-- what makes it special for identity-- is that it defines a space without boundaries (a game without frontiers). Music is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders-- **sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races and nations**-- and to define places... we are only where music takes us.”*
(Frith, 1996, 127, emphasis added)

As discussed in Chapter II, rhythm and music serve as potent modes of subversion and reappropriation both inside and outside the frame of the novel. Effectively implemented as means of challenging social norms and aesthetic conventions, rhythmic and musical phenomena play important roles in political, economic, linguistic, sociocultural, and aesthetic domains in the post-colonial Francophone world. Contesting the hegemonic authority of the French language and culture as well as France's sustained economic dominance in contemporary Francophone zones, citizens of defiant cultures incorporate percussive, instrumental and vocal strategies as potent modes of expression. Shifting the balance of power through drumbeats, handclaps, footsteps, and a variety of vocal and instrumental stylings, musicians and music-makers appropriate autonomous expressive voices charged with defiance and discontent, but also with pride and hopefulness.

Capitalizing on the potential of music, many Francophone writers infuse the pages of their novels with vibrant audible elements, designating the text as a transpoetic space resplendent with the sonorities of oraliture and “instrumentaliture.” As discussed in Chapter II, the act of transposing musical elements on the written page serves as more than a mere stylistic device or aesthetic embellishment. Much like Ousmane Sembene and Ahmadou Kourouma, many Francophone writers invoke the power of musical traditions and innovations as a means of fortifying their arsenal in defying the hegemonic authority of the French language in the Francophone world. Dwelling at the heart of this post-colonial power struggle lies the question of identity, or, more precisely the *questioning* of identity. In considering this questioning of identity and its relationship to language, rhythm and music play a central role in our analysis of Aminata Sow Fall’s *L’Appel des arènes* and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Ti-Jean L’horizon*.

Seemingly boundless, the expressive capacities of music are filled with resonant possibilities, which, in turn, leaves room for confusion and ambiguity. As Françoise Escal explains, music transcends the limits of language and representation: “[N]on soumise à la contrainte du sens, la musique est plus libre que le langage verbal et la littérature d’inventer des formes, de les renouveler” (Escal, 1997, 20) (Not subject to the constraints of meaning, music is freer than verbal language and literature to invent forms, to renew them). Fluid rather than fixed, music operates in a space of communication and exchange, engaging performers and listeners in a dialogue of sorts through which identity constructs are questioned, negotiated, and/or reaffirmed. Transposed in the frame of the novel, such dialogues take on real and imaginary implications, as readers react and

respond not only to the musicality of the text, but also to the plights of the novel's central characters.

In *L'Appel des arènes* and *Ti-Jean L'horizon*, rhythmic and musical phenomena serve as important elements in shaping the struggle to negotiate autonomous identity constructs in the respective Francophone zones of Senegal and Guadeloupe. Filled with the rhythms of instrumental and vocal music, the rhythms of drumbeats, and the vibrant quotidian rhythms produced through work and chores, 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 serving as audible points of reference, divergent rhythmic and musical signals contribute to the fluctuating sense of malaise and uncertainty as both protagonists 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 various linguistic, oral, and musical elements 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 socio-cultural elements intermingle, opening a zone for communication and exchange in which dominance hierarchies are deconstructed, and

autonomous identities are negotiated, constructed, and reaffirmed. A space of pure possibility, the transpoetic transcultural space draws inspiration from a variety of theoretical models, namely Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Rhizome*, Edouard 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*. Moreover, in exploring the implications of the simultaneous quest for and questioning of identity experienced by both Nalla and Ti-Jean, we examine linguistic, rhythmic, and musical elements, and determine how they operate as agents of identification both inside and outside the space of the text.

For Ti Jean, the young hero of Schwarz-Bart's text, rhythm and music mark significant points along his divagating path as he embarks on his epic journey. After a beast with seven heads swallows the sun and the island of Guadeloupe, keeping 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 blurred boundaries that distinguish the self from the other, the past from the present, and fact from fiction, Ti

Jean must re-negotiate a sense of self, rethinking his identity on individual and collective levels.

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 and a soldier, Schwarz-Bart returned with her family to Guadeloupe's Pointe-à-Pitre 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, who encouraged her to write. After co-authoring *Un Plat de porc aux bananes vertes* (1967) with André, Schwarz-Bart published two novels independently, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) and *Ti Jean L'horizon* (1979). 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), a one-act play that deals with the problem of racism, and *Hommage à la femme noire* (1989), a multi-volume encyclopedic work she co-authored with her husband.

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. In Chamoiseau’s adaptation of “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”¹ into accepting a death by way of drowning in a sack in the ocean after escaping a similar fate.

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 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)

¹ 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.

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 ended and the story of a child who went 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 to gain personal autonomy and reconcile 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 characterizes 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 the question of identity in Antillean society, Ti Jean's hallucinatory quest, equally nightmarish and dreamlike, seeks to negotiate the protagonist's pursuit of an autonomous identity construct 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 in developing 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 forced to confront the conflicting perspectives and problems of the adult world. An only child born to parents who repatriated to Senegal after spending 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 post-colonial 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 identity. Strongly driven by representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena, in particular, by repeated references to the intricate rhythms of resonant tam-tams, Nalla's identificatory quest causes his father Ndiougou and his mother Diattou to reassess their attitudes and experiences, submerging them in 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 hides herself away from the vibrant rhythms who meets with despair.

Like Schwarz-Bart, in crafting the story of Nalla and his simultaneous quest for and questioning of identity in post-colonial Senegal, Sow Fall draws upon local popular culture and oral traditions. Prominently incorporating representations of vocal and musical performances in her descriptions of Senegalese wrestling, as well as 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 *Le Revenant* (1976), *La Grève des battus* (1979), *L'Ex-père de la nation* (1987), *Le Jujubier du Patriarce* (1993), and *Douceurs du bercail* (1998). In these novels, Sow Fall explores dimensions of identity and authority while examining cultural traditions, linguistic practices, and social problems in a changing Senegalese society. In her most recent text, *Un Grain de vie et d'espérance* (2002), 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 *la Commission Nationale de Réforme de l'Enseignement du Français*, *le Centre Africain d'Animation et d'Échanges Culturels* (CAEC), *le Bureau Africain pour la Défense des Libertés de l'Écrivain* (BADLE), and *le Centre International d'Études, de Recherches et de Réactivation sur la Littérature, les Arts et la*

Culture (CIRLAC). 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 post-colonial 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 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 inter-relationships between writing, language, and identity take on new dimensions. Reminding readers, "Notre question, c'est toujours l'identité," (Derrida, 1996, 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 autre 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. (Derrida, 1996, 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 a zone in which existing dominance hierarchies are neutralized and deconstructed, a space in which autonomous identity constructs are conceived and negotiated.

Accessible by both the *écrivain* and his or her reader, viewer, or listener, 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 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 realm of boundless possibility it creates.

Since the text, and more specifically, the novel, is the primary area of interest in this study, we focus our discussion on the processes of writing, reading, and interpretation in discussing Sow Fall's *L'Appel des arènes* and Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*. Nevertheless, since rhythmic and musical phenomena play central roles in each of the two texts, we direct particular attention toward exploring the aforementioned processes in view of representations of rhythm and music in the space of the novel.

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 quality of rhythmic and musical elements clearly resonates to the reader, promoting a polyphonic aesthetic, the

exemplification of what Bakhtin refers to as “orchestration.” 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, 430-1)

As Holquist demonstrates, the method 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 in the processes of *seeing* and *hearing*-- the possible readings of texted rhythm and music 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 rhythmic-based theory of intersubjectivity. 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 interpretation and rhythmic analysis. Asserting that, upon reading a text, the reader encounters two inter-related 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 & Meschonnic, 188-9)

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. “Driven in the text, but by it,” for Meschonnic and Dessons, 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 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 signposts signaling group affiliations and aspirations. Charged with multiple nuances and messages, a single melody or dance beat is laden with the potential to speak volumes to initiated ears, those belonging to select social groups or those familiar with the social implications of the music in question. Since this capacity is common to both vocal and instrumental musical styles, it is not necessarily the voice that communicates the message, as Derrida suggests through his vast designation of *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 communicate messages in their own right.

At times, rhythmic and musical elements are evoked to indicate group affiliations, audibly fortifying the ties that connect individuals to the collective whole of a group as well as those that exclude outsiders. Affirming group associations in a variety of domains including but not limited to politics, nationality, religion, ethnicity, culture, and subculture, rhythmic and musical cues often play an important role in shaping the politics of identity. In both *L'Appel des arènes* and *Ti Jean L'horizon*, audible elements are prominently integrated into the text, serving as 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 thrill of the arena. In this respect, the mere sound of drumbeats in the distance creates a heightened state of distraction, as all of Nalla's thoughts are directed toward the total sensorial experience of the rhythms of the arena.

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 tam-tam). At others, he feels as if he “vi[t] au rythme des arènes, et se grisant de l’air des arènes” (*Appel*, 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.

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 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) (*Appel*, 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 in exchange for his appreciation of the sport (*Appel*, 112-3). Unlike Nalla, who idealizes the wrestling subculture suggested by the echoing rhythms of tam-tams, Ndiougou and Diattou frown upon the music as well as the athletes and the fans.

While for those outside of the arena, the persistent rhythms of tam-tams act as audible signals, announcing the inevitable rise and fall of wrestlers on a sandy 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 undeniable rhythmic rumblings of tam-tams signal 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” (*Appel*, 139) (call of the earth), the vibrantly sonorous tam-tams 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, 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 tam-tams including *tamas* (*Appel*, 28) and tam-tams carried on shoulder straps (*Appel*, 37) are implemented throughout the day. 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]” (*Appel*, 150) (melancholy piece[s]), and at others, beating out harsh, “rauque” (raucous) rhythms (*Appel*, 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 ubiquitous tam-tams of the arena also 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 multiple vocal and instrumental genres, Sow Fall fills the space of the arena with intricate layers

of sonorous polyphony, imbuing 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 frame of the text.

Resistant to wrestling and the subculture that surrounds it, Ndiougou, a prominent physician, reluctantly enters the space of the arena in the hopes of salvaging his relationship with his only child. Completely unprepared for all of the sights, sounds, sentiments, and sensations the day has in store for him, Ndiougou enters the arena with the sole intention of observing Nalla, if only to assure himself that the boy is still capable of enjoying himself (*Appel*, 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 étourdissement passe. (*Appel*, 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 orient himself 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 a familiar nurse 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 hurras. Comme une forêt qui se lève et qui danse. Le spectacle est fascinant. Ndiougou en a senti son souffle s'accélérer. (*Appel*, 150).

Suddenly, Ndiougou wondered if he wasn't the victim of a hallucination. The raucous drums of the South rolled like a tornado and he simultaneously saw thousands and thousands of tree branches standing up, wearing their leafy foliage, amidst cheers. Like a forest that rises and dances. 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. Exchanging the restlessness of anticipation for the excitement of celebration, the jubilant crowd dances and cheers, adding resonant layers of 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 movement 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. At the end of the final match, Ndiougou maintains his participant status, 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 irreparably changed by the sights, sensations, and sounds that contributed to his experience.

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 lineage. Such performances, also referred to as *bàkk*, are defined by Sada Niang in “Modes de Contextualization dans *Une Si Longue Lettre et L’Appel des arènes*” as follows:

Le *bakk* est un *tagg*² dont l’interprétant est en même temps le 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)

² 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 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 and the implicit sum of honoring his rank while proving himself generous toward the speaker.)

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 a localized aesthetic perspective, one that contributes 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 presented in italicized print with each line indented. They are also recognizably 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 the Senegalese social context, wrestling concerns more than the physical struggle between two athletes. Just as significant are the intricate social performance rituals surrounding the sport, including the rhythm, the music, and the movement 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 arena. *Bàkk* are also

pronounced by wrestlers in other public and private venues, inspiring the students and fans of the sport who try 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. A significant part of his understanding and appreciation of the sport, Nalla often includes animated performance pieces in his discussions about wrestling. In one passage, Nalla pays tribute to his favorite wrestler Malaw, interpreting one of Malaw's signature *bàkk* in his account of the athlete's performance 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... (Appel, 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..³*

As Nalla relates Malaw's pre-match 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 filled with spiritually charged *gris-gris*, his attentive ears concentrate on the wrestler's song, seizing upon the

³ In translating the *bàkk*, we have left the Wolof words untranslated as a means of imitating the bilingual effect created by Sow Fall.

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 himself 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'aire, se regardant dans la glace. Sa respiration est haletante. Métamorphosé. Il est Malaw Lô, le lutteur hors classe, le lion du Kajoor. (*Appel*, 28)

Nalla dances, jumps around, clumsily, his two arms in the air, watching himself in the mirror. His 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, 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 performance piece takes on transpoetic and transcultural dimensions, opening a zone for communication, negotiation, and reappropriation. 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 process Sow Fall describes as a "wink" directed toward her Senegalese readers (Gadjigo, 1987, 224) to create a sense of complicity, the inclusion of Wolof lexical elements serves to orient the text in a localized cultural context, promoting Senegalese linguistic and aesthetic

conventions. Of particular interest in the aforementioned *bàkk* is the verse “Moi Malaw Lô ‘Kor’ Madjiguène Lô.” (Appel, 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 word can be broken into two separate lexical elements: *ma*, an emphatic term translatable as “it is I who,” and *djiguène*, a noun meaning sister, woman or wife, depending on the context. In this light, rather than being loved by a particular woman named Madjiguène, Malaw could also be boasting about being loved by many women, wives and sisters: “I Malaw Lô, it is I who is loved by women Lô.”

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 of or power over the city. In this

light, Malaw's *bàkk* takes on a bolder, brasher dimension, one that is not readily apparent from the French. Far from ornamental, Sow Fall's Wolof "wink" adds multiple layers of meaning to the bombastic oration, simultaneously infusing the French text with the rhythmic musicality of Wolof language and orality.

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 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'acueillaiant 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..." (*Appel*, 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 audio-visual 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 dancesteps-- 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*-- used to describe 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 lettre*: "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 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 (cf. 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 "doing his Dioung Dioung" or "making his Dioung Dioung" (*Appel*, 46-7). Fueled by multiple

layers of rhythmic polyphony in the space of the arena, Mahanta is an undeniable force to be reckoned with, 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 post-colonial 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 confusion, 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 as well as 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, and “texting” them in the frame of the novel, *Sow Fall* sets the stage for an exploration of questions of collectivity and nationalism in late 20th-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, presenting a multi-sensorial swirl of sights and sounds, and connecting them with larger questions of identity. As such, 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. 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). Blending together to comprise a mosaic unity, for the spectators in the crowd gathered in the arena, individual status is relegated to spaces outside of the arena.

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" (*Appel*, 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 imbued with the excitement of the arena. Among them, he sees Saer-- a prominent psychiatrist who spent 25 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 who is reputed for his charisma and eloquence-- along with Nalla and his benevolent tutor Monsieur Niang.

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 it 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, and his heart to the sonorous realm of the arena, Ndiougou reintroduces meaningful cultural elements into his life. Long gone are the days of deprivation during which he would deny himself the opportunity to enjoy the “melodious voices” singing *xalams* (lullabies), or to admire the dancing girls “flirting with the *tama*,” little drums held in the crux of the armpit (*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 Louga and the nation of Senegal. As such, 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 are able to successfully negotiate collective and individual identity constructs. Although the paths of their respective physical and psychological journeys greatly differ, through a mutual enjoyment of wrestling and the 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 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. 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. (*Appel*, 108)

She could never know what happens to [Nalla] when the tam-tam resounds and that the lucid voice of the *griotes* 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, unaffected by the “call of the arena,” is left suffering in silence and solitude, her future uncertain, at the end of the 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 reference points, which serve to orient the young hero in unfamiliar places and times. Unlike Nalla, who travels 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, among other things, Ti Jean is compelled

to act. Driven by his desire to rescue his beloved Égée and his mother Éloïse from their uncertain fates inside the belly of the 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. Deep inside the belly of the beast, the scene that awaits him is completely unexpected. Not only is there no Égée, no mother Éloïse, 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 avait 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, senti 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*, 140-1)

Everything had a familiar yet unusual appearance. Palm trees and coconut palms, 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, in the space that surrounded him, in 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 simultaneous 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 from the imminent aggression. Soon after, 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 Wadamba. 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 language he had never heard before.

Although the first sounds she presents in the land of the ancestors are those of vocal dialogue, in the passage proceeding Ti Jean and Maïri's conversation, Schwarz-Bart fills the space of the text with the resonant rhythms of drumbeats. As the pair travels, en route for 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 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 linguistic capacities and his 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 cadence escapes him. This prompts him to ask Maïri for a translated version of the rhythmic message, as he posits the question, "Que dit le tam-tam?" (*Ti Jean*, 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" (*Ti Jean*, 149) (a

friend is on the way). Nevertheless, as the communiqué is transmitted across the distances separating 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 percussive communication, increasingly volatile, warns, “un étranger qui a la face de Wadamba est sur le chemin” (*Ti Jean*, 149) (a stranger with the face of Wadamba 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 interpretation, but only to those who know the story of Wadamba’s tragic fate. Since he is unaware of the series of unfortunate events that fell upon Wadamba 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 Wadamba’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*, drummed messages transmit “proverbes, sentences, circonlocutions, [et] devises” (proverbs, maxims, circumlocutions, [and] mottos), rather than speaking in direct terms (Amoa, 2002, 121). 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 the West African griot tradition. 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 *bendrologie*, which Pacere defines as "la science, les études méthodiques, les figures de rhétorique 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 Pacéré, 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 in 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 for the Ba Sonaqué village. As he listens to the young boy's rendition of "Histoire de la flèche qui atteignit Wadamba" (Story of the arrow that hit Wadamba) 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. During their conversation, Ti Jean once again discloses his foreign status, when he utters a word unfamiliar to Maïri's ears-- *nègre* (*Ti Jean*, 155). 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?" (*Ti Jean*, 155) (brother?).

Disoriented and perplexed, Ti Jean longs to be reunited with Égée and mother Éloïse, 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 olfactory, auditory, and physio-emotional responses. With his eyes, Ti Jean remarks that the huts, which from afar, resemble that of Wadamba are much different, much more magnificent,

when viewed from up close. As he wanders about, admiring the colorful huts, Ti Jean unconsciously compares them to the rundown lodgings of his grandfather's village.

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. (*Ti Jean*, 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 on-sight 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" (*Ti Jean*, 162) (a dish of *gombos aux boyaux salés* with a plug of herbs swimming on top... exactly like what the 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. 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. Still in a state of disbelief, in the middle of the meal, he is overcome by his emotions, causing him to cry out "Je ne suis pas un étranger, pas un étranger..." (I am not a stranger, not a stranger) in a crazed fit of rage (*Ti Jean*, 162).

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 and clacks of pestles against mortars, 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 illuminés de sueur. Un coup elles chantaient au rythme du pilon, et un coup elle 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. (*Ti Jean*, 177-8)

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 patterns of drummed discourse. In this respect, soon after finding a rhythmic point of commonality, Ti Jean is welcomed into the Ba'Sonaqué village, where he will spend the equivalent of a lifetime. On that fateful day, Ti Jean's acceptance is solidified when he is given 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 (*Ti Jean*, 179).

As the villagers jubilantly 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, ou, la danse des mouchoirs, à la fin de la saison des cannes...” (*Ti Jean*, 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. An additional point of rhythmic commonality, the hauntingly familiar dance strengthens Ti Jean’s relationship with the villagers, promoting a spirit of collectivity. As Judith Lynne Hanna suggests, engaging in common dancesteps, 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)

Operating much like a language, the sight and sensation of familiar dancesteps engages Ti Jean in dialogue with the citizens of his newfound community. Nevertheless, for Ti Jean, the recognizable rhythms of dancesteps forge a stronger bond than the one 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. Unlike the local language, which fails to access Ti Jean’s domain of past experience, the dance evokes the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of specific moments and locations in timespace-- in this instance, the annual celebrations that mark the end of the sugar cane harvest in the village of Fond-Zombi.

In considering rhythmic and musical phenomena, Schwarz-Bart acknowledges 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, for performers and spectators alike, is one possible constant in a highly variable equation:

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 absolument extraordinaires avec le même talent, le même désespoir. (Constant, 2002, 110)

It's like the *gros 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, all 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 dancesteps, 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 purported transatlantic connection. 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 the two spaces, Schwarz-Bart opens a realm of pure possibility in which transcultural communication takes place across vast distances and disparate epochs, allowing for negotiation, innovation and exchange.

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, 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, le tremblements et les éboulis, les chutes... (*Ti Jean*, 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 there it was that 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” (Mudimbe-Boyi, 1993, 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’Sonaqués. Tried as a sorcerer after having transformed himself into a raven, Ti Jean is convicted and stoned to death. Notably, it is Maïri, the man whose life he saved, who throws the first stone.

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” (*Ti Jean*, 218) (dance without music) day after day in the Kingdom of the Dead, Ti Jean and the other lost souls 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, Ti Jean is liberated by its monstrous queen. Left, once again, to wander the earth “au risque de [s]e perdre” (*Ti Jean*, 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?...” (*Ti Jean*, 248) (in what time are we? in what century?... century?... century?...) as the terrified locals flee the scene. In narrating Ti Jean’s moment of panic and uncertainty as he stands lost in a familiar location but 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 accentuate each frantic interrogation, and the periods in succession that indicate the silence Ti Jean encounters when no one responds to his repeated question.

Uncertain and scared after a disheartening homecoming, Ti Jean decides to transform himself into a bird so that he may fly back to the shores of Africa. Half-man half-bird, the young hero completes his journey across the 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” (*Ti Jean*, 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 accentuated by the lack of familiar rhythmic points of reference, both in Guadeloupe and in France. Instead of being greeted by the everyday rhythms of women working or the metered patterns of lively dancesteps, Ti Jean is confronted with the harsh sonorities of gunfire and arrows piercing flesh. Unable to identify with the 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 identity construct 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's friends. During the course of their dialogue, Schwarz-Bart evokes rhythmic and musical sonorities, effectively designating the text as a transpoetic transcultural space, a boundless zone in which communication and exchange take place across cultures, generations and geographical borders. 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. (*Ti Jean*, 264-5)

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 invokes the spirit of the earth, it subtly announces its presence through “une musique sereine” and “des sonorités voilées de tam-tam” (*Ti Jean*, 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” (*Ti Jean*, 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.

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” (*Ti Jean*, 268) (That which you are, only you can understand it, only you), Ti Jean 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 of identity on individual and collective levels. 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 to the deceased Wadamba, Schwarz-Bart’s model negotiates multiple interactive influences from geographical, historical, linguistic, and sociocultural sources.

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. (*Ti Jean*, 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 peoples of the Antilles, connecting Ti Jean's timeless quest for identity to that of contemporary questions concerning the problem 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 transcultural ties to Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas in the past as well as the present.

Furthermore, by reappropriating the image of the ancestral tree, a symbol that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "dominates occidental reality" and "occidental thought" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, 27), Schwarz-Bart subverts occidental authority, shifting the balance of power to autonomous Antillean sources. Unlike single-source roots models that limit subjects to identify with a single point of geographical 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 & Guattari, 1980, 32), Schwarz-Bart's roots-revision model

affirms an infinite 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, a concept central to his notion of *creolisation*. 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 & Casamayor, 1998) (culture contacts in a given place in the world and that do not produce a simple *métissage* but an unpredictable result), creolisation is inextricably connected to the Relation, the dynamic network of historical, linguistic, and socio-cultural influences that interact in shaping identity. Although based in the Antilles and designed to address the specificity of Antillean identity, the principles of creolisation and the relation are applicable in other geographical settings and social contexts, much like Schwarz Bart's roots-revision model that she presents in the narrative frame of *Ti Jean L'horizon*.

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 the complex system 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 as well as 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 autonomous identification. Such autonomy, according to Michel Giraud, is essential to resolving problems of identification in the Antillean sociocultural context:

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 developing identity constructs in the transcultural transpoetic space of the text. In this respect, she aligns herself with Giraud in asserting the importance of autonomously appropriated notions of identity, particularly in working toward finding operative and co-operative solutions for often problematized questions of Antillean identity.

Through her revision of the ancestral tree metaphor, Schwarz-Bart opens the question of Antillean identity to infinite influences and possibilities, successfully negotiating the divide Christine Chivallon refers to as “*Territoire-racine* versus *réseau-errance*” (Chivallon, 1997, 769) (Territory-root versus network-wandering). No longer limited to identify with single point of origin, Antillean subjects are free 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 world. Open to unlimited communication and exchange, the transcultural transpoetic space of the text offers a point of interaction where aesthetic, linguistic, and sociocultural conventions are blurred, liberating subjects to revise and reconfigure limiting identity constructs.

Similarly, in *L'Appel des arènes*, Aminata Sow Fall incorporates organic imagery as a means of representing the complexities of Nalla's search for identity in a changing post-colonial Senegal. Nevertheless, unlike Schwarz-Bart, who prefers a modified version of the ancestral tree metaphor to more accurately reflect the diasporic peoples of the Antilles, Sow Fall presents a somewhat conventional roots-model in configuring 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.

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 confusion and conflicts. 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 autonomous identity construct, Sow Fall's model is written in a journal by Nalla's teacher Mr. Niang, giving off 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... Déséquilibre spirituel... Déséquilibre mental... (*Appel*, 72-3)

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 to want 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 embracing local cultures and histories in negotiating autonomous identity configurations. 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. By presenting her model in 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 post-colonial Senegal.

In describing her model, Sow Fall insists, once again, on the importance of rhythmic and musical phenomena as key components in negotiating identity. Through the explicit evocation of the polyphonic 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 rhythm, 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 enter the transcultural space in order 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 influences in his life and 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 arena, evidently affected by the rhythms of tam-tams, with a new sense of self after reconnecting with Senegalese traditions and cultural practices. 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 origin, a localized base upon which exterior elements and influences can later be added as branches, fruits and flora. Without this grounded foundation in the local cultural context, 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 a multiplicity of 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 models develop a strong sense of autonomy in considering collective and individual identity constructs.

Balancing inward and outward gazes, the authors' respective tree models present practical yet intuitive approaches to questions of identity in the Francophone world. Strongly connected with the sensorial experience of rhythmic and musical phenomena, both writers undeniably associate the sonorous realms of their transpoetic texts with questions of identity both inside and outside the frame of the text. By filling their novels with seemingly limitless resonant possibility, both Schwarz-Bart and Sow Fall designate the space of the text as a transpoetic and transcultural zone, a dynamic interface in which questions of identity are explored, communicated, untangled and (re)negotiated.

CHAPTER IV

SINGING THE DEAD, SINGING THE SELF: MUSIC AND MOURNING IN *SOLIBO MAGNIFIQUE* AND *TRAVERSÉE DE LA MANGROVE*

“It is not my death. I close my eyes, I remain motionless, but I am remembering things about myself, and her death enters into my life, but I do not enter into her death.”
(Beauvoir, 1973, 34)

“Identity is not a thing but a process-- an experimental process which is most vividly grasped as music.” (Frith, 1996, 110)

In Chapter III, “texted” representations of rhythm and music were established as instrumental components in developing notions of identity in connection with characters’ journeys across space and time in Aminata Sow Fall’s *L’Appel des arènes* and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Ti Jean L’horizon*. More than mere sound effects, the sonorities produced by people working, dancing, drumming, clapping, living, breathing, and singing serve as important points of reference and recollection for characters and readers alike, sparking a series of inward and outward gazes during each protagonist’s respective quest to negotiate autonomous identity constructs in post-colonial Francophone communities. As the protagonists of both novels wander through their respective narrative paths, indiscernibly sliding through real and imaginary realms, rhythmic and musical cues shape their relationships with surrounding physical environments and local community members, eventually contributing to each character’s process of self-realization and discovery.

During Ti Jean's mythic journey, the young protagonist successfully completes a round-trip voyage from the lands of the living to the kingdom of the dead. As explained in Chapter IV, rhythmic and musical elements add meaningful audible dimensions to his unlikely experience of liminality and transformation. Nevertheless, unlike conventional accounts of death, typically presented through outsider perspectives-- those of surviving friends, relatives, and witnesses-- in crafting her narrative of Ti Jean's death, Schwarz-Bart privileges the dead man's subjectivity, opting to omit testimonials from those left behind by the deceased. In this respect, Schwarz-Bart treats Ti Jean's death like just another part of the young hero's voyage. As such, in his experience of death, Ti Jean is like any other traveler. Death is not a terminal voyage, a one-way journey from life into death, but rather a round-trip voyage from life into death into life again. Guided by rhythm, music, and movement, Ti Jean embarks on a quest for identity as he wanders through realms of life and death, of reality and imagination. In this scenario, the experience of death becomes a voyage of self-discovery for the deceased. During this self-reflexive process, the eyes (or the subjective *Is*) of the Others-- the witnesses, survivors and mourners-- are excluded from his death narrative.

Whereas in *Ti Jean L'horizon*, the identity of the deceased subject is constructed by the deceased himself, in other Antillean novels, the identity of the deceased is configured through the memories and experiences of surviving community members. In both Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique* and Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*, 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 an identity for the deceased. In both novels, the death of the subject is narrated through the thoughts and experiences of the Others-- the colorful 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 text 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 Magnifique*, 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" (*Solibo*, 18) (the corpse of a man of about 50 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” (*Solibo*, 20) (A strong odor of urine was perceptible). The representation of the offensive odor of human body waste further dehumanizes the deceased who lies dead on the ground encircled by scattered trash and debris. Objectified and anonymous much like “une ordure de vie” (*Solibo*, 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 Magnifique* begins, Chamoiseau immediately shifts narrative perspectives, changing from the fact-based visual observations of a policeman to the dynamic multi-sensorial 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 Creole 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!	My friends!
Le Maître de la parole	The Master of the word
Prend ici le virage du destin	Takes here the curve of destiny
Et nous plonge	And plunges us
Dans la déveine...	In bad luck
(Pour qui pleurer?	(Crying for whom?
Pour Solibo) (<i>Solibo</i> , 23)	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 storytellers from novelists, Chamoiseau

immediately draws the reader/listener into the narrative, implicating their engagement in the unfolding of events through the incorporation of apostrophe “mes amis!” and the use of the first person plural pronoun *nous*. Like the novel’s characters-- the survivors and witnesses who are left to unravel the mystery of Solibo’s death-- Chamoiseau instantly plunges the reader/listener into the ensuing confusion and misfortune.

As Chapter One of *Solibo Magnifique* begins, Chamoiseau further establishes the complicity between writer and reader, storyteller and listener, 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” (*Solibo*, 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 the reader, explicitly involving them in the narration and negotiation of Solibo’s 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 *marqueur de paroles* (word scratcher). Much like an investigator or an audience member, the reader/listener is 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 driven to discover *who* Solibo was and, more importantly, how he shall be remembered.

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 *creolity*. Central to much of Chamoiseau's theoretical and fictional works, creolity 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 creolity results in a "mosaic" Antillean identity with manifestations in linguistic, aesthetic, political, sociocultural, and ontological domains. Chamoiseau elaborates upon this notion of creolity in two theoretical works, *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), which he co-authored with Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, and *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997), in which he prominently incorporates oral, rhythmic, and musical elements. Chamoiseau's fictional works include the novels *Chronique des sept misères* (1986), *Texaco* (1992), and *Biblique des derniers gestes* (2002). He has also published a collection of Creole folktales-- *Au temps de l'antan* (1988)-- a theatrical piece-- *Manman dio contre la fée Carabosse* (1981)-- and two volumes of memoirs-- *Antan d'enfance* (1993) and *Chemin d'école* (1994). Although Chamoiseau spent time in Paris as a law student, he has spent most of his life residing in Martinique, where he lives today.

Unlike Chamoiseau, Maryse Condé has spent much of her life away from her native 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 to Paris, where she went on to study at the Sorbonne. Later, with her husband, a Guinean, 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 la Sorbonne Nouvelle and later served as a professor at l'Université en France. Although many of her novels address themes of travel and wandering in view of questions of identity, *Traversée de la mangrove* (1989) represents a homecoming of sorts in that it deals with questions of Antillean identity in the geographical specificity of the Guadeloupean cultural context. 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), *La Vie Scélérate* (1987), *Les Derniers rois mages* (1992), *La Colonie du nouveau-monde* (1993), *La Migration des coeurs* (1995), *Desirada* (1997), and *Célanire cou coupé* (2000). 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) and a memoir-- *Le Coeur à rire et à pleurer* (1999). Condé currently resides primarily in New York City, where she once taught at Columbia University.

Like *Solibo Magnifique*, Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* opens with an eyewitness account of a mysterious death scene, setting the stage for an exploration of questions of identity 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. Nevertheless, 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, second-guessing 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 introducing the novel's colorful 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), 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. (*Mangrove*, 14)

Like all of the inhabitants of Rivière au sel, [Mademoiselle Léocadie Timothée] had hated the one who lie 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. (*Mangrove*, 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" (*Mangrove*, 24) (bread, wine and misery) in reference to the deceased. Consequently, at the end of the first chapter of *Traversée de la 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 Edouard Glissant explains in *Traité du tout monde*, the intricate organic structure of the mangrove does not lend itself to facile navigation. Upon entering the complex network of intextricably 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 détritrus 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, 1997, 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 criss-cross 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 multi-sensorial 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.

In dealing with death in both *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la 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. 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 an identity for the deceased by assembling jumbled fragments of memory. 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 complexities of an ever-changing present. Through the activity of reading, this process is transferred to readers, who become complicit witnesses to 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 as they work their way through the text.

In *Solibo Magnifique*, Chamoiseau explicitly addresses the problem of memory, particularly in view 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 mosaic 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 things like drunkenness and forgetfulness, for Chamoiseau, fragments of memory are problematic in that they typically result in more questions than in 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 fragments, assembling a composite mosaic identity for the deceased.

In *Traversée de la 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 naissent en leur esprit. Qui était-il en réalité cet homme qui avait choisi de mourir parmi eux? N'était-il pas un envoyé, le messenger 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 arise 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. 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 II and III-- *Les Bouts des Bois de Dieu*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, *L'Appel des arènes*, and *Ti Jean L'horizon*-- rhythmic and musical elements operate as important identificatory agents in *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la 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 and musical phenomena promote a transpoetic transcultural aesthetic, opening a space for communication and exchange 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, rhythmic and musical 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, one that operates inside and outside the space 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 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 and cacophony. Transposed in the frame of the novel, the noises, rhythms, and musics of the Antilles take on important dimensions, promoting local aesthetic innovations and sociocultural conventions 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, “by virtue of its capacity for closely regulating pitch, timbre, tempo, volume, and other features, and its frequent use in regulating movement (through dance)... can provide a powerful resource” in “creating intertextuality” (Briggs & Bauman, 1995, 594).

Read in view of Bakhtin’s conception 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, creating 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, 64-5). Like the concepts of 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 *Traversée de la mangrove*, Condé makes intertextual references to French magazines such as *Maisons et jardins* (*Mangrove*, 46), French catalogs like *La Redoute* (*Mangrove*, 30), Antillean newspapers including *France-Antilles* (*Mangrove*, 43), and American periodicals such as *Playboy* (*Mangrove*, 177). She also makes mention of the French surrealist poet Saint-John Perse, who had familial affiliations in the Antilles (*Mangrove*, 45). In another passage, Condé even makes 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?" (*Mangrove*, 228) (Have you, like the talented Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau, deconstructed French-French?).

As for Chamoiseau, he, like Condé provides intertextual references to the Antillean newspaper *France Antilles* (*Solibo*, 101). 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 1930's to the 1950's, Chamoiseau hints at some of Césaire's important contributions to post-colonial Francophone literature:

[À] cette heure il devrait être en réunion avec les camarades du *baliser* pour discuter de la distinction fondamentale qu'établissait Césaire entre un *in-dépendance* et une *a-dépendance*. (*Solibo*, 188-9).

[A]t that hour, he should be meeting with his comrades of the *baliser* [a Martinican progressive party political group] in order 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*. 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* (*Solibo*, 43) and collection of folktales *Manman Dlo contre la fée Carabosse* (*Solibo*, 52).

In addition to referencing Caribbean literature and periodicals, Condé and Chamoiseau represent a multiplicity of intertextual rhythms, musics, and movements in their narratives. In *Traversée de la 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)(*Mangrove*, 143), and Afro-Antillean folklore (*Mangrove*, 154). She also presents a classroom recitation of a written poem by Dominique Guesde (*Mangrove*, 148), imposing a Creole oral aesthetic on a work written using a formal French poetic style. Similarly, in *Solibo Magnifique*, Chamoiseau consistently incorporates sonorous intertextual phenomena. In some passages, he references specific Caribbean songs including “Ti-Manman chérie,” “le Ginette,” and “Dimanche matin” (*Solibo* 60-1).

Furthermore, at multiple points throughout the text, Chamoiseau incorporates the oral stylings of Solibo Magnifique, intercalated blocks of narration and transcriptions of conversations with the storyteller.

Presented as an ensemble, the interwoven intertextual strata enhance the resonant potential of the text, opening a space for transpoetic expression. Moreover, since intertextual elements introduce other texts and contexts from multiple locations, situations, and perspectives into the frame of the novel, they also encourage transcultural communication and exchange both inside and outside the space of the text. Filling written pages with multiple layers of vibrant polyphony, sonorous intertextual elements promote transpoetic aesthetic values and transcultural phenomena in the novel, creating an interactive forum in which relational identities are autonomously negotiated and 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 transcend 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 profundity by connecting past writings and resonances with present thoughts and experiences, intertextual processes effectively increase the amplitude of Caribbean expression. Mediated by readers as they interact with the text, written, vocal, rhythmic, and musical intertextual components help in shaping a transpoetic, transcultural space that favors communication, negotiation, and exchange.

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 with implications both inside and outside the frame of the novel.

In considering issues of specificity regarding questions of collective identity, 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. In his discussion, he presents 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 contextes 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 which individuals play in often contradictory ways, and in a 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*, 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, 1997, 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” (Glissant, 1997, 99) (intelligible perfection).

By prominently incorporating vibrant rhythmic and musical elements in the frame of their respective novels, Chamoiseau and Condé designate resonant transpoetic transcultural 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 text as part of a dynamic network of contextual influences both inside and outside the frame of the novel, questions of Antillean identity comprise the primary focus of *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la mangrove*. Insisting on identity as a fluid and ongoing process rather than a fixed typography or product, in exploring questions of Antillean identity, Condé and Chamoiseau reject absolute and idealized constructions in favor of mutable and idiosyncratic configurations. Pascale De Souza affirms this notion in her discussion of *Traversée de la 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 Magnifique*, 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, 826-7) (reminds us that there are connections of resemblance... 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 vary. Whereas Chamoiseau promotes *créolité*, 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.

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 Magnifique* and *Traversée de la mangrove*, we focus on this common 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-- that 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 Magnifique* and *Traversée de la 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 local and global communities.

The Sounds of Death and Mourning

In *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la mangrove*, textual representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena resonantly contribute to the narration of mourning and the configuration of identity. Manifest in transposed fragments of sound and memory, resonant rhythms and songs fill the space of the text. Although devoid of musical and rhythmic notation, the sounds of songs, rhythms, instruments, and voices clearly resonate in the frame of the novel, filling imaginative ears with layers of vibrant polyphony. In both works, such vivid representations of rhythmic and musical phenomena convey a sense of the localized cultural contexts in a profound manner, one that draws perceptive ears and bodies into the multi-sensorial experience of the text. The swirls of sounds and sensations relate contextualized aesthetic conventions and innovations, serving as important frames of reference as characters inside the space of the text and readers outside the space of the text struggle to find meaning. Moreover, since both works treat the topic of death with a sense of mystery and immediacy, at times, Condé and Chamoiseau assign ritual functions to rhythm and music. At others, as characters partake in the posthumous work of mourning and remembering, rhythmic and musical cues guide their endeavors to reconcile the past with 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' understanding of themselves and the deceased. Whether poignant, nostalgic, peaceable, or incendiary, as subjects receive and respond to multifaceted rhythmic and musical phenomena, they partake in a performative mode of identification, negotiating identities for themselves in a disconnected form of connection (or a connected form of disconnection) 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 narrative. This aspect is particularly apparent in *Solibo Magnifique*, which opens with a “procès verbal” 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” (*Solibo*, 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 *Traversée de la 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?" (*Mangrove*, 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" (*Mangrove*, 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 (*Mangrove*, 14), the collective ritualized work of mourning effectively begins at his funeral on the fourth day after his death. As Marie-Celine LaFontaine explains, typical Antillean funerary ceremonies are lively events, "musical manifestations" marked by a multiplicity of sounds (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 *vénééré* (funeral wakes) are also audibly characterized by handclaps (referred to in 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. (LaFontaine, 1997, 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 experience and identity in a collective forum through which interpersonal relationships are reconfigured and social positionality is negotiated.

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 procedure 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. (*Mangrove*, 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 social belonging in spite of her 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. 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. (*Mangrove*, 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 rush into.

Unlike Mira, who is met with more curiosity than malice, Xantippe immediately generates sentiments of hostility and even compulsions toward physical violence as he enters the funeral. Despite a decidedly coldhearted and antagonistic reception, Xantippe refuses to engage with community members, remaining silent with his thoughts and making such little noise that even the sounds of his footsteps, which allow him to "se

glisser sans bruit parmi les gens” (*Mangrove*, 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 non-membership 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 cacophonous 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 a flurry 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 disjointed 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 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 *Traversée de la 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 negotiate autonomous identity constructs and arbitrate alternative social positionality.

Although the sonorities of official funerary proceedings are not presented in *Solibo Magnifique*, rhythmic and musical phenomena prominently figure into the posthumous soundscape, producing a cacophonous 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”, his crowd enthusiastically responds to his call by shouting “*Patat’ si!*” in response (*Solibo*, 34). Then, mistakenly thinking he is pretending to be dead, perhaps for dramatic effect, the crowd proceeds to serenade him with a “*léwoz caverneux*” (hollow *lewoz*), led by Solibo’s drummer Sucette (*Solibo*, 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* 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 *gwoka*... as well as small percussion instruments). In Chamoiseau’s rendering of the *lewoz*, Sucette and his *gwoka* take center stage, providing the resonant nucleus for the performance. This time, unlike the muted 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...* (*Solibo*, 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 lamb skin. 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 lines of Lent, communicating to those who knew how to hear/to understand (who had placed themselves in a state of liberty before this phenomenon) the expression of a voice at a rumber's pitch, superhuman but familiar: *Oh! Sucette spoke there, yes...*

As he provides the rhythmic base of the *lewoz*, Sucette plays like a man in joined 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 correspondingly expressive, communicating a "superhuman" message to those who listen and understand, those who have opened themselves up to the experience of the rhythm.

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 "hollow *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 audio-visual 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!.

(*Solibo*, 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 Sucette’s drum solo emphasizes the rhythmic “voice” of the drum, what Solibo refers to as the “parole du ka.” (*Solibo*, 240) (the word of the *ka*). Although Chamoiseau repeatedly incorporates percussive onomatopoeia throughout the novel, punctuating his portrayal of events with resonant *vlap-vlaps*, *zip zips*, *flaps* and *sissaps*, his transcription of Sucette’s drum solo is distinctive in that it exclusively privileges the subjectivity of the drummer in union with his drum. 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 eye of the reader, the “texted” series of *taks*, *plakataks*, *blings*, *klings* and *bloukoutoum boutoums* 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 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.

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 to reconstitute the corresponding air.

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 resonance. 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, expressly contributing to the sonority of *Solibo Magnifique*, encouraging 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:

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. Opening the space of the text 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 Magnifique*] 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 Magnifique* 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 Magnifique*. In addition to incorporating elements from the Creole lexicon, which he leaves untranslated, Chamoiseau also transposes Creole phrases and expressions into written 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. Manifest in both narrative descriptions and onomatopoeic transcriptions of sounds, Chamoiseau creates a transpoetic textual soundtrack that operates throughout the space of the novel, simultaneously situating readers in the Martinican cultural context and promoting local aesthetic conventions.

In his most striking portrayal of Martinican orality, in the final section of *Solibo Magnifique*, 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 energetic 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 oral performance. 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 abrupt 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!... (*Solibo*, 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 *békés' pani* room habitation-model-quality big store factories 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 *gwoka* and the moon a reedflute where blacks 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... houg... PATAT'SA!

PATAT'SI!

In the barrage of words directly preceding his untimely death, Solibo describes his own version of an afterlife paradise “where the sun is a *gwoka* and the moon is a reedflute where blacks are in joy in music in dance in syrup on life’s back.” The vibrantly hopeful final performance provides a sharp contrast to the cold, calculated police report that opens the novel. 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.

Like Chamoiseau, Condé combines both French and Creole lexical elements in crafting the resonant soundscapes of *Rivière au Sel*, subtly refashioning French linguistic conventions in promoting a localized Antillean cultural aesthetic. Infusing the novel with a multiplicity of audible elements including textual representations of prayers, stories, and songs, Condé fills her text with vibrant layers of sonorous polyphony. On this note, Condé herself characterizes *Traversée de la 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, localizing the text in a Guadeloupean cultural setting, they also provide a sense of local social norms and communal 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 linguistic distinctions and political boundaries. 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 *Traversée de la 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 space of the text, both characters and readers, struggle to piece together a posthumous identity for the deceased, they simultaneously engage in the process of negotiating working identities for themselves and for others. Implicating the reader in the process of identification, Condé opens questions of Antillean identity to a seemingly limitless range of possibilities. Refusing rigidity, facility, and encapsulation, questions and configurations of Antillean identity are perpetually shifting with changes in time and location, as different readers bring diverse perspectives, contexts, histories, and experiences to the textual interface of *Traversée de la mangrove*.

Configuring Rhythmic and Musically-Mediated Identities

In both *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la mangrove*, rhythm and music play an important role in the processes of mediating and performing social identities. Prominently incorporated in representations of mourning and memory, rhythmic and musical cues provide a meaningful way 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. Through their striking portrayals of rhythmic and musical phenomena, Condé and Chamoiseau expose the tenuous tricks and territories of identification, divesting impalpable complexities encountered as individuals attempt to affirm, reconcile and reject intermittently inviting, ambivalent, and hostile collective affiliations.

In *Traversée de la 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 his essay "Whoever We are Today, We Can Sing a Song about it," Anthony Seeger affirms 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, 12-3)

Through the sounds and silences of musical expression, subjects actively mediate autonomous identities within a complex system 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 in view of social positionality. Whether conveying conformity or dissidence, ardor, or apprehension, by participating (or not participating) in rhythmic or musical manifestations, social performers effectively affirm autonomous identities and negotiate interpersonal relationships in varying social contexts.

In *Traversée de la 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 illegitimate daughter of a wealthy landowner and his servant who later bears the misbegotten child of Francis Sancher, 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 the activities of swimming and singing. Capricious in nature, Mira sings spontaneously improvised pieces, addressed to no one in particular. This continued practice, which began when she was a young schoolgirl, effectively conveys her position of social nonconformity in the past as well as the present:

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 chantonait des chansons sans queue ni tête qu'on n'avait jamais entendu chanter à personne.

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.

« <i>Chobet di paloud</i>	The chaubette says to the clam
<i>Se an lan mè</i>	It is in the sea
<i>An ké kontréw. »^a</i>	That I will meet you.
a. « La chaubette dit à la palourde/ C'est dans la mer/ Que je te rencontrerai. »	
(<i>Mangrove</i> , 190)	

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 emboldens 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.

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 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!” (*Mangrove*, 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. Audibly apparent, Condé reinforces Mira’s exterior social positioning with visual imagery, as she stands motionless, alone and in silence on the outskirts of the exuberant crowd.

Like Mira, Sonny, a mentally challenged boy, 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 beats him regularly, and 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. (*Mangrove*, 112-3)

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 continues throughout the light of day. There were songs for every moment of the day.

Like Mira, Sonny vocally avows his position outside of 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, Francis Sancher greets his songs with enthusiasm and appreciation. Often clapping along or verbally praising Sonny's creative efforts, Francis Sancher quickly becomes 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, vocalizing his sorrow through song. "Les yeux fixés sur le cercueil, Sonny exprima par une chanson la peine qui débordait de son coeur" (*Mangrove*, 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. 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” (*Mangrove*, 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, finding 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 Latin America and the Caribbean. 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. (Chaudière, 1996, 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 tranquillity 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-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” (*Mangrove*, 244) (Hidden beneath the rocks, I became a devil’s horse to hear the song of the water).

In contrast, 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 chanter: ‘Nos ancêtres les Gaulois...’” (*Mangrove*, 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” 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.

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 *Traversée de la 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 as a significant common denominator in configuring group identity. Developed through shared histories and experiences, and solidified through collective hardships and struggles, for Condé, fraternity 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).

In *Traversée de la 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, 218-9). 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 Magnifique*, Patrick Chamoiseau conveys flashes of optimism 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. Privileging what Bakhtin refers to as "the world turned upside down" (Bakhtin, 1984), in crafting a 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*. (*Solibo*, 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 Other. With no background information, the signification of “une telle 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.

Chamoiseau further accentuates the carnivalesque character of *Solibo Magnifique* by situating the story in the time-space context of Martinican Carnival. Its dancing swirls of vibrant colors and robust waves of raucous cacophonies provide the audio-visual 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'apparassaient dans leur bureau que le matin, ensuite, en chemise à fleurs et bermuda, ils traquaient nos moeurs carnavalesques pour leur album de souvenirs. (*Solibo*, 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 morals 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 hailing from metropolitan France, 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 morals" 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.

The intrepid 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 Magnifique* 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.

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 after the death of Solibo. As in *Traversée de la mangrove*, in *Solibo Magnifique*, such rhythmically- and musically-mediated identity constructs are most visibly apparent when distinguishing 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 African 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 comprising the global Francophone

community. Favoring cultural criteria to linguistic determinants, Chamoiseau argues that, in the present day, language no longer serves as the figurative window through which one perceives the world and oneself. Opening identity configurations to the sonorities of multiple languages and the possibilities of shared cultural conditions and experiences, Chamoiseau promotes the notion of identity as performance and process, resonating with multiple voices and rhythms, both harmonious and cacophonous.

In the case of *Solibo Magnifique*, the police investigators are the ones who distinguish themselves from the diverse members of Solibo's audience, communicating their separateness 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 the local social context, 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?*" (Solibo, 147, author's emphasis) (*The storyteller abruptly ceases to speak, and this unexpected silence doesn't trouble you?*), to which each witness replies with a similar response:

C'est une question d'oreille, inspectère [sic], 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. (Solibo, 147-8)

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 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'?... (*Solibo*, 219)

In the mind of Évariste Pilon, the affair seasoned, sinuous, vain, pathetic, flourishing just on a name, a silhouette: Solibo Magnifique. 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 is subsequently compelled to mediate the terms of his own identity and social relationships in view of larger questions of Antillean identity.

In both Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique* and Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*, questions of individual and collective identity are considered in view of the mysterious deaths of enigmatic characters-- Solibo Magnifique and Francis Sancher-- at the beginning of each novel. As characters collectively mourn the deceased and investigate the circumstances surrounding their deaths, they perform the work of memory, 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 (re)configure individual and collective identity constructs and negotiate alternative social positionality. 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. Operating both inside and outside the frame of the text, Chamoiseau and Condé present questions of linguistic, sociocultural, political, and geographical identity in a manner that challenges readers to perpetually push the

parameters of cultural norms and aesthetic conventions, regardless of their spatial and temporal orientation.

CONCLUSION

In discussing Ousmane Sembene's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, Aminata Sow Fall's *L'Appel des arènes*, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*, Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*, and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*, 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 musical styles intermingle. Resonating at the heart of this transpoetic space is the symbol of the drum. A powerful, allegorical embodiment of rhythmic and musical possibility, in the frame of the text, the drum functions as a transpoetic mechanism, imbuing the written page with a sense of rhythmic sensibility and poetic musicality.

As a means of addressing the specificity of "texted" representations of non-vocal 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 are presented in the frame of written literature. 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 post-colonial Francophone world. By breaking free of binary tendencies, writers open questions of identity to a realm of pure and 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 space for communication, negotiation, and exchange, in which autonomous identity constructs are (re)considered, (re)configured, and/or (re)appropriated.

In discussing Ousmane Sembene’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and Ahmadou Kourouma’s *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, this study has considered “texted” rhythmic and musical elements in view of strategies of social and political activism in the colonial and post-colonial 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 linguistic localization strategies and stylistic oralization 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 create spaces for identity appropriation and social activism in the frame of the Francophone novel through the incorporation of resonant rhythmic and musical phenomena in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text were revealed.

In discussing 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 post-colonial 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 in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text.

In considering Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*, 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 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 the Magnificent in *Solibo Magnifique* and Francis Sancher in *Traversée de la mangrove*-- but also in view of the living. In this respect, as characters in *Solibo Magnifique* and *Traversée de la 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 questions of individual and collective identity.

Through an exploration of “texted” rhythmic and musical elements in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, *L’Appel des arènes*, *Ti Jean L’horizon*, *Traversée de la Mangrove*, and *Solibo Magnifique*, 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 each masterfully employs a variety of lexical and stylistic strategies as a means of prominently incorporating the vibrant sonorities of melodies, polyphonies, polyrhythms, and cacophonies into the written frame of the novel. Through their salient representations of resonant rhythmic and musical 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 in the transpoetic transcultural space of the text.

Designated as zones for communication and exchange, the transpoetic transcultural spaces created by Sembene, Kourouma, Sow Fall, Schwarz-Bart, Condé, and Chamoiseau are filled with resonant possibility. Transcending the limits of linguistic conventions, geographical borders, sociocultural norms, and aesthetic formats, the space we have specifically identified as a transpoetic transcultural one frees subjects to negotiate individual and collective dimensions of identity as they work to autonomously configure a sense of self within multiple interacting and overlapping cultural systems.

GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS

Aerophone General term for musical instruments that produce sound by using air as the primary vibrating agent.

Bàkk A Wolof term used to describe boastful, self-praising poems declaimed by wrestlers in a public setting, which Sada Niang characterizes as “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.”

Balafon A Malian xylophone typically made of 18 to 21 wooden keys suspended over gourd resonators of graduated sizes.

Bara Synonym for *bendré*, Malian term for a drum made from a gourd with the top cut off and covered with sheep or goat skin. Also characterized by Ousmane Sembene as a “Bambara dance.”

Béké In Creole, the term historically has been used in reference to wealthy white landowners. In a contemporary context, the term is also used in designating people of European heritage born in the Antilles.

Bendré Synonym for *bara*, Guinean term for a drum made from a gourd with the top cut off and covered with sheep or goat skin.

Bendrologie Field of study designed by Frédéric Titinga Pacere (Pacere, 1991) which he describes as “the science, methodical studies, methods of thinking, of speaking, rhetorical figures relative to the *Bendré tam-tam*, or even the culture of drummed messages notably from Africa.”

Biguine Antillean musical genre often described as folk-jazz. Typical *biguine* ensembles feature violins, guitars, and/or banjos, *tambou* and *ti bwa* percussion, and clarinets.

Creolity A movement set forth by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant that insists on the importance of the Creole language, local oral traditions, and popular culture in configuring mosaic conceptions of Caribbean identity and identities.

Creolization Concept defined by Edouard Glissant as “culture contacts in a given place in the world and that do not produce a simple *métissage* but an unpredictable result.”

Devinette The French term for riddle, literally translates into English as “little guess.”

Dioung dioung (Djou-djoung, or Dyoung dyoung) Wolof term for a large, double-headed drum played with a heavy stick, traditionally used to announce the arrival of royalty.

Drummologie Field of study designed by Georges Niangoran-Bouah (Niangoran-Bouah, 1981) which he describes as “the study and use of texts from talking African drums as a source of documentation to deepen knowledge of African societies with oral traditions from the pre-colonial period.”

Féticheur A faith healer in animist religions.

Gewel The Wolof word for griot.

Griot French term for an African traditional praise singer, typically a member of a poet-musician social caste, who continues centuries-old oral traditions. His storytelling is often accompanied by instrumental music played on traditional instruments such as the *balafon* or the *kora*.

Griote French term used to designate a woman who is a griot or a member of the griot caste.

Gris-Gris French term for an amulet often worn for good luck or protection.

Gros ka (or Gwo ka) In the Antilles, a large drum typically used in traditional local musical genres.

Hocket From the French word for hiccup, a technique by which two or more voices or instruments sing or play in alternation.

Idiophone General term for the musical instruments that produce their sound from the substance of the instrument itself when it is struck, rubbed, or shaken, being solid or elastic enough not to require stretched membranes or strings.

Instrumentaliture A term that we have proposed to describe the phenomenon through which the sonorities of instrumental music and the sounds of everyday instruments and objects are presented in the frame of a written text. Much like orature, a process through which oral genres are 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 orature, “instrumentaliture” is significant in that it creates a space for communication and exchange which lies outside the confines of oral and written languages.

Jali (or Jèli) Terms used to designate a griot among the Mandé, Malinké and Bambara peoples of Mali, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire.

Ka In the Antilles, a general Creole term for “drum.”

Kora A string instrument with 21 to 25 strings, often characterized as a cross between a harp and a lute.

Lafouka A Creole term used to describe a close partner dance in which dancers rub their bodies against one another.

Lait caillé French term for milk curds.

Lewoz In the Antilles, one of seven traditional *gros ka* rhythms typically performed by an ensemble of drummers.

Marabout A wise and respected Muslim, often reputed to have magical powers.

Mazurka A partner dance of Polish origin that became popular in the Antilles.

Mbalax In Senegal, a percussion-based music, mixing Cuban rhythms with *kora*-based traditional melodies, sung in a high-pitched style.

Mbira A musical instrument with 22 to 28 small keys that are played with the two thumbs stroking down and the right forefinger stroking up. The mbira is often placed in a large calabash to amplify the sound.

Membranophone General term for musical instruments that produce their sound from tightly stretched membranes that are struck with the hands or a striking device such as a stick.

Maroon (or Marron or Mawon) A term used to designate a fugitive slave.

Musiki In Cameroon, a Duala word used to designate the French word *musique* or the English word music.

Oraliture Genre classification described by Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio as “the various genres of oral literature such as short stories, legends, proverbs, rhymes, [and] 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.”

Percussion General term used to describe an instrument that is sounded by striking, rubbing, or shaking. (See also Idiophones and Membranophones.)

Tagg Wolof term defined by Sada Niang as “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 geneology, the exploits of his ancestors and and the implicit sum of honoring his rank while proving himself generous toward the speaker.”

Tama In Senegal, a high-pitched “talking drum.”

Tambour In French, a general term for drum, a percussion instrument consisting of a hollow cylinder with a membrane stretched tightly over one or both ends, played by beating with the hands or with a stick or sticks.

Tambou bèle In the Antilles, a large drum used to lay down the base rhythms in Creole drumming ensembles. *Bèle* is also used to different styles of quadrille dancebeats.

Tam-tam In French, a general term for African traditional drums, typically consisting of a hollow wooden cylinder with an animal skin membrane stretched tightly over one or both ends, played by beating with the hands or sticks.

Ti bois (or Ti bwa) In the Antilles, drums hit with bamboo sticks typically used to provide the dance rhythm in Creole drumming ensembles. Literally translates as “*petit bois*” or “little wood.”

Transpoetics A term used to designate the commingling of multiple aesthetic categories as expressed orally, musically, or in writing.

Transculture A term used to designate phenomena shared, communicated, appropriated, and exchanged among and across multiple cultures and/or cultural systems.

Transposition A double process described by Ahmadou Kourouma through which one simultaneously transcribes an oral text in a written form and translates the text from the first (oral) language to the second (written) language.

Vénééré or Vyéyé Creole terms for funeral wakes characterized by *gros-ka* music and call and response singing.

Xalam A Wolof term for lullaby, which is also signifies a characteristic Wolof lute.

Zouc (or Zouk) A Creole term for “party” used to define an Antillean musical genre characterized by a blend of Caribbean pop, African guitar styles, and American funk.

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