JAZZ AESTHETICS

IN THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN NOVEL

JAZZ AESTHETICS IN THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN NOVEL

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (2000) MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
(French) Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Jazz Aesthetics in the French Caribbean Novel

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Suzanne Crosta

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 128

Abstract

This thesis examines the use of jazz as theme, structure and metaphor in French Caribbean texts. Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé Soleil,* Stanley Péan's *Zombi Blues*, and Ernest Pépin's *Tambour-Babel* integrate jazz aesthetics such as improvisation, call-and-response, quoting, and rhythm to structure their novels and highlight the aural/oral quality of their texts. On a thematic level, these authors show the effects of the Plantation system on artistic modes of production and the treatment of the artist in society. Metaphorically, jazz in the novels suggests resistance and cultural *marronnage*, as well as spiritual and artistic freedom. The syncretic origins of jazz that blend African and European musical elements make this musical genre an ideal vehicle to express the hybrid quality of French Caribbean literature whose open-endedness and continuous evolution resist simplification and standardization. Jazz musicians with distinctive voices such as Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and Coleman Hawkins have done for jazz what Daniel Maximin, Stanley Péan and Ernest Pépin are attempting to accomplish for the cultural inheritance of the French Caribbean -- affirm their existence through artistic expression.

Acknowledgements

This project began the first time I heard Ella Fitzgerald . . . love at first sound. That was the start of weekly trips to the Hamilton Public Library to borrow the maximum limit of CDs and tapes. Later, I began singing and performing. My apprenticeship has included workshops with singers Ranee Lee, Norma Winstone, Jay Clayton and Sheila Jordan. I would like to thank these musicians for helping shape my outlook on jazz.

In addition to my French studies at McMaster University, I minored in Music. For my Canadian Music course, I interviewed local blues and folk legend, Jackie Washington. In my World Music course, I conducted a study on another Hamilton singer, Harrison Kennedy (Chairman of the Board) and his involvement in the local Rhythm and Blues scene. These projects, as well as drumming workshops at the Banff Centre for the Arts with Abraham K. Adzenyah, were important aids to understanding black musical forms and performance techniques.

As an undergraduate student in Dr. Suzanne Crosta's French Caribbean literature courses, I noticed allusions to jazz in many of the novels we studied. I decided to further explore this relationship in my thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Suzanne Crosta for having introduced me to French Caribbean literature and for suggesting texts that lent themselves to my proposed topic. Her encouragement and inspiration have made my endeavour a joy.

I also wish to thank Dr. William Hanley and Dr. Gary Warner for their support and careful reading of my text. Their recommendations helped focus this project. Special thanks as well to guitarist Dan Cross for his help in compiling data for my discography.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family and friends for the continual support which made this thesis possible.

This thesis is dedicated to the musicians whose recordings made me fall in love with jazz. Thank you Ella, Billie, Sarah, Chet, Nat, Hawk, Bird, Miles, Louis, . . .

Table of Contents

Introduction

Jazz. How does one define it?

Over the years, scholars, critics, biographers, theoreticians and ethnomusicologists have tried to pin down this elusive word. Nevertheless, jazz has resisted simplification and standardization. Rather, jazz has come to signify a multiplicity of ideas: revolution, evolution, dynamism, tradition, creativity, freedom-- the list is infinite because jazz knows no boundaries. Jazz has, in fact, transcended the standard definition as a musical form, for it has been readily assimilated into the world of literary discourse, visual arts, and so on. For many musicians and aficionados, jazz is a state of mind, a philosophy. As jazz singer, Nina Simone insightfully stated:

> Jazz is not just music, it's a way of life, it's a way of being, a way of thinking. I think that the Negro in America is jazz. Everything he does -- the slang he uses, the way he walks, his jargon, the new inventive phrases we make up to describe things--all that to me is jazz as much as the music we play. Jazz is not just music. It's the definition of the Afro-American black.[1]

Long heralded as Black-African-American in origin, jazz has outgrown national and geographic boundaries to lay the foundation for an aesthetic shared by the black diaspora as a whole. Indeed, jazz has crossed racial barriers to serve as inspiration for artists outside the black community, for example: composers Gershwin and Stravinsky; artists Matisse and

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[1]Although I hope to show that the use of jazz is not confined to black America, I include this quotation to demonstrate how jazz exceeds its musical form. Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993) 156.

Picasso; writers Kerouac and Ginsberg. In this thesis, I intend to examine the use of jazz as a means of expression and identity for French Caribbean[2] authors in Guadeloupe, Martinique and Haiti.

Like jazz, French Caribbean literature eludes conventional definition. Attempts to define this literature tend to generate more questions than answers. Does the French Caribbean literary community include all writers living in the French West Indies, regardless of the various *métissages*? What if an author is an immigrant or has emigrated elsewhere? Must an author's subject-matter deal exclusively with the French Caribbean? Should a writer include the Creole language? The list continues. According to Madeleine Cottenot-Hage, the controversy surrounding what should and should not be considered "Caribbean Literature" arises because: "[...]définir la créolité signifie non seulement cerner un espace géographique, culturel et linguistique ou réécrire l'Histoire, mais aussi faciliter l'accès à une vision intérieure de soi dans une société diverse, complexe et en 'flux constant'."[3] This "flux constant" has been marked by identifiable literary movements, namely, Aimé Césaire's *négritude*; Édouard Glissant's *antillanité*; as well as Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant's *créolité.* However, these aspirations at categorization have proven themselves somewhat transient, particularly those prescribing static methodologies for further production. Glissant's *créolisation* is the latest of these theories on French Caribbean

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[2] In my text, I will use the terms French Caribbean, French Antillean and French West Indian inter-changeably to refer to the artistic production of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Haiti.

[3] Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenot-Hage, *Penser la créolité* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995) 15.

literature; nevertheless, it may have the greatest longevity because of its open-endedness.[4] Jazz, like French Caribbean literature, has witnessed stylistic movements such as ragtime, swing, bebop, hard bop, and free jazz. Such movements have affected the development of jazz as a musical genre. However, the characteristic vitality and dynamism inherent in jazz are largely due to the music's ability to escape these forms of classification. As tenor saxophonist Lester Young commented: "Without [originality] [...] art or anything else worthwhile stagnates, eventually degenerates."[5] Perhaps it is French Caribbean literature's state of "flux constant" that makes it such a complementary setting for the integration of jazz.

To elucidate the fusion of jazz and French Caribbean literature, I have chosen three texts that emphasize the aural/oral dimension of music: *L'Isolé Soleil*[6] (1981) by Guadeloupean writer, Daniel Maximin; *Zombi Blues*[7] (1996) by Haitian-Canadian writer,

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[4] In Glissant's recent theoretical novel, *Poetics of Relation* (1990 French Edition; 1997 English translation), he differentiates his concept of *créolisation* from the notion of *créolité* presented by Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant in *Éloge de la créolité*. *Éloge* posited itself as the next evolutionary step in French Caribbean literary theory following Glissant's seminal text, *Caribbean Discourse* and his concept of *antillanité*. Although *Éloge* reflects an admiration for *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant feels the authors oversimplify many of his ideas. In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant makes clear his dislike for models, definitions and reductionist theories that negate the diversity of the French Caribbean reality: *"Creolizations [créolisations] bring into Relation but not to universalize; the principles of creoleness [créolité] regress toward negritudes, ideas of Frenchness, of Latinness, all generalizing concepts --more or less innocently."* Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) [89]. Subsequent references to this novel are given in parentheses after the quotation, i.e. (PR page).

[5] Douglas H. Daniels, "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat: Lester Young as Spiritual Figure," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 4 (1988): 167.

[6] Daniel Maximin, *L' Isolé Soleil* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981); *Lone Sun*, English translation by Nidra Poller. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989). Subsequent references to the English translation are given in parenthesis; the page references to the French edition are given in square brackets, ie. (LS page [page]).

[7] Stanley Péan, *Zombi Blues* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1992). Subsequent references

Stanley Péan; and *Tambour-Babel*[8] (1996) by Martinican author, Ernest Pépin. Of these three novels, *L'Isolé Soleil* is the only work currently recognized as a French Antillean classic. It has been the subject of numerous scholarly studies since its publication, notably those by F. Nick Nesbitt, Kathleen Gyssels, Ronnie Scharfman and Clarisse Zimra. In time, the other two books in this study may provide similar frameworks for future research. Yet, to date, they have been virtually untouched by academic criticism. Both types of novels, (new and classic) pose different challenges. In the case of *Tambour-Babel*, and particularly *Zombi Blues*, it is a question of forging a new path. Whereas, *Lone Sun* requires the creation of an alternate path beside those which are well-worn. I look forward to both challenges because using tradition as a springboard to propel one forward is part of the jazz mentality.

Until recently, jazz has played a minor role in the literary production of the French Antilles. As music theoretician Albert Murray explains: "The synthesis of European and African musical elements in the West Indies, the Caribbean, and in continental Latin America produced calypso, rhumba, the tango, the conga, mambo, and so on, but not the blues and not ragtime, and not that [...] riffing and improvisation which came to be known as jazz."[9] In her article titled, "Le Jazz dans le roman afro-antillais," Kathleen Gyssels reveals that when jazz did appear on the Caribbean literary scene it favoured the English-speaking islands because of "la proximité linguistique des îles anglophones de l'Amérique

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to this novel will be given in parentheses after the quotation, i.e. (ZB page).

[8] Ernest Pépin, *Tambour-Babel,* (n.p.: Éditions Gallimard, 1996). Subsequent references to this novel are given in parentheses after the quotation, i.e. (TB page).

[9] Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976) 63.

noire et la "fragmentation" de l'archipel [...]".[10] She explains that although Anglo-Caribbean writer Kamau Brathwaite composed treatises on "Jazz and the West Indian Novel, I, II and III" in the 1960s, the French Antilles by contrast, did not see a significant integration of jazz in literature until the publication of novels such as Maximin's *L'Isolé Soleil* in 1981, or references to jazz in Édouard Glissant's *Le Discours antillais,* published in the same year. Once introduced, it was difficult to deny the importance of jazz as a vehicle to describe not only the anglophone West Indian reality, but the francophone West Indian reality as well.

Maximin, Péan and Pépin allude to a variety of different musical styles, which they inscribe on thematic, structural and metaphoric levels in their novels. The importance of music in all three novels is highlighted by the choice of musicians as central characters. Stanley Péan's *Zombi Blues* presents jazz trumpeter Gabriel D'ArqueAngel, a Haitian immigrant "gigging"[11] in clubs in all the major North American cities from New York to Montreal. Gabriel is brought to Canada as a baby by a white couple: Ben Reynolds, a Canadian diplomatic attaché, and his wife Corinne. During a business trip to Haiti, the Reynolds save the baby boy from the arms of his dying mother, who is fatally wounded while attempting to rescue her children from Barthélémy *(Mèt)* Minville, "[l'ancienne] éminence grise du ministère de l'Intérieur sous Baby Doc" (ZB 38*).* Unbeknownst to Gabriel (Gaby), he has a twin brother that his mother was unable to save from *Mèt* Minville. A strange extra-sensory perception keeps the brothers linked through shared tormenting visions. Gaby

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[10] Kathleen Gyssels, "Le Jazz dans de le roman afro-antillais," *Europe* 820-821 (1997) : 124.

[11] A jazz term meaning to perform.

suffers from an uncomfortable relationship with his adoptive parents due to his feelings of alienation and his inability to replace their biological son Daniel, who died at age nine. He is also deeply troubled by his infatuation for his step-sister Laura, who is now married and has a daughter. Gaby's feelings of anger and frustration underlie the text's brooding atmosphere and find release through the "grognements rauques et hoquets chevrotants" (ZB 32) of his Martin Committee trumpet. Péan also includes chapter headings such as "Mood Indigo" (a Duke Ellington composition) and lyric fragments, such as *"You don't know what love is* [...]*"*(ZB 51) and *"for the road"(*ZB 50). The jazz influence in *Zombi Blues* is further evident in the book's title and front cover--a dynamic red and purple painting of a trumpet in motion.

The plot of Ernest Pépin's *Tambour-Babel* is centered around Napo the son of Éloi, a master drummer, in the town of Grosse-Montagne, Guadeloupe. Éloi waits years for his wife Hermancia to bear him a son to whom he can pass along his secrets of the drum. To his great disappointment, Napo is not blessed with the gift of rhythm. To aggravate matters, Napo prefers to listen to the musical styles "venues des quatre coins du monde" (TB 126). Meanwhile, the talented and ambitious Bazile has designs to usurp Napo's place in the musical lineage. Yet Napo's diverse musical education and his spiritual training with Hégésippe, a wise hermit, gradually enable him to assume his rightful place in the family's drumming heritage and win the love of l'aveugle, a blind dancer in the village. In the meantime, Bazile falls prey to the temptation of commercialism and the lure of fame and fortune.

One cannot refer to Pépin's novel as a "jazz novel" in the way one might talk of *Zombi Blues*, because Éloi and Napo are not jazz drummers but rather a *gwoka*[12] drummers, who play the traditional rhythms associated with the genre: *lewoz, toumblak, kaladja, graj, woulé, mendé,* and *pagyanbel* (TB 40). Although Pépin's text includes numerous allusions to jazz, these references are mentioned among a plethora of musical styles. This said, Pépin's uncomplicated plot conforms to Kamau Brathwaite's vision of the "jazz novel":

> The 'jazz novel', in the normal course of things, will hardly be an 'epic'. Dealing with a specific, clearly-defined, folk-type community, it will try to express the essence of this community through its form. It will absorb its rhythms from the people of this community; and its concern will be with the community as a whole, its characters taking their place in that community, of which they are felt and seen to be an integral part.[13]

Tambour-Babel captures the "essence" and the "rhythms" of the people of Grosse-Montagne through Pépin's use of jazz performance techniques such as responsorial structures, repetition and improvised passages that accentuate the aural/oral quality of his text.

In *Lone Sun*, Maximin's protagonist Marie-Gabriel is not a musician herself, but the daughter of a saxophone player named Louis-Gabriel.[14] She never actually knows her father because, before his plane crashs on his way to meet her in Guadeloupe, he had been living in exile in the United States. After her father's death, Marie-Gabriel is orphaned, her mother,

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[12] Roberts tells us that the *gwoka* is the "big drum of Guadeloupe" and that its Martinican counterpart is the *ka or tanbo* (*belé* drum). John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds: African, Caribbean, Latin, and African-American Traditions,* 2d ed. (London: Schirmer Books, 1998) 7.

[13] Kamau Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995) 330.

[14] A number of other secondary characters are also musicians in *Lone Sun*, e.g. Louis-Delgrès is a violinist, and Siméa's father, Gabriel is a clarinetist.

Siméa having died during childbirth. Through a complex interweaving of letters, notebooks and journals, she writes her own historiography, in an attempt to reconstruct her mother and father's love affair and her eventual birth. She also undertakes the (re)writing of a historical fiction which includes French Caribbean hero Louis Delgrès's revolt and suicide at Matouba to protest the reinstatement of slavery by Napoleon's troops, as well as the years of the Pétain occupation in Guadeloupe. Although Maximin's highly dense text, like that of Pépin's simpler story line, alludes to numerous musical and literary giants of the black diaspora, his text privileges saxophonist Coleman Hawkins's rendition of "Body and Soul." Maximin's motivation for including this song is implicit in his character Antoine's desire to incorporate music in an up-coming production of Césaire's play, *Et les chiens se taisaient*, when he says:: "I'm sure that music will help them [in this case, Maximin's readers] understand the images in the play [in this case, the novel], and the images will help to understand this new jazz" (LS 267 [294-295]).

In jazz, the *standard* is the basis for improvisation. Standards constitute the repertoire of the jazz musician's library. They consist of easily recognizable tunes that serve as starting points for musical interaction. It is the fixed musical text of the standard (consisting of melody, instrumental changes and occasionally lyrics) that is improvised upon to create new melodic interpretations. Following this approach, I intend to compare my three chosen novels to standard theoretical texts familiar to those studying French Caribbean literary production. Texts such as *Return to My Native Land* by Aimé Césaire; *Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation* by Édouard Glissant; and *Éloge de la créolité* by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant will be alluded to, just as Billie

Holiday's "Strange Fruit", Coleman Hawkins's "Body and Soul", Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo", and so on, will be used as points of reference. Just as it would be inappropriate to judge jazz by the criteria of classical music, it would be equally unsuitable to analyze black literary production focusing on Western theory. For this reason, I will concentrate on theoretical studies by diaspora writers, such as the aforementioned French Caribbean texts, as well as those by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Maryse Condé, Albert Murray, and so forth, to inform this study. Where possible, I have included direct quotes from jazz musicians and French Caribbean authors taken from seminars and published interviews.

Chapter One is devoted to themes, specifically the historical implications of jazz and the importance of the jazz musician in society. It examines the unique conditions of the Plantation system[15] that spawned jazz, as well as the effects of the Middle Passage on African musical traditions. Using Glissant's theory of "Closed Space, Open Word," from his theoretical study on French Antillean literary discourse, *Poetics of Relation,* I hope to show how the oppressive boundary of the Plantation provided a fertile space for cross-cultural *métissages* which resulted in the birth of hybrid forms of communication, including jazz and the Creole language. Next, I focus on the jazz musician's inferior status within a cultural hierarchy that privileges written art forms over oral methods of artistic expression. This section tries to show how stereotypes upheld by the Plantation and Christian religion continue to plague present-day musicians whose accomplishments are often reduced to by-products of an innate musical sensibility rather than a highly developed skill. Finally, I discuss the paradoxical treatment of artists who are simultaneously neglected and worshiped

[15] Henceforth, the term "Plantation" will be used to refer to the Plantation system.

by a public who often fails to acknowledge their talent.

Besides their thematic uses of jazz, Maximin, Péan and Pépin use music to structure their novels. **Chapter two** explores the various techniques employed to "jazzify" their texts. For the sake of discussion, this chapter is divided into four sections titled after musical elements familiar to jazz analysis: improvisation, call-and-response, quoting, rhythm and repetition. My title choices do not intend to suggest that jazz is limited to, or predicated on the inclusion of these elements, for that would impose an order on an ever-metamorphosing realm. Rather, I hope that my chosen elements will provide an impression of the constant mutation inherent in jazz. The first section, "Improvisation", explains the importance of tradition in the process of any new creation. Just as jazz musicians must be cognizant of the musical legacy that precedes them prior to embarking on their own improvisational explorations, our authors must also be knowledgeable of colonial History [16] before they can subvert it. In opposition to the universal modes of discourse proposed by History, Maximin, Pépin and Péan offer (hi)stories created through polyphonic interaction of multiple characters sharing various points of view. The remainder of this chapter compares this polyphonic expression to the jam session in jazz, where players exchange ideas in casual musical conversation (trading fours) or heated debate (cutting session).

In addition to the dialogue established between jazz musicians at a jam session, audience members are also expected to participate in a jazz performance. The second section in Chapter two entitled "Call-and-Response" discusses the various means used by Maximin,

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[16] The capitalization of "History" corresponds to Édouard Glissant's theory of a dominant colonial History that stifle other histories.

Péan and Pépin to encourage reader involvement in their texts. In jazz, audience members show they are "diggin'"[17] a performance by actively responding to a soloist's improvisation. The novels in this study recreate the dialogic relationship between jazz musicians and their listeners through questions, silence, mystery, quoting and signifying. The section concludes with an analysis on how initiated and uninitiated readers respond to signifying practices inherent in opaque novels. These practices can either encourage or hinder participation depending on the reader's ability to decipher surface and latent content in the text.

The section titled "Quoting" reveals the thin line that separates admiration from imitation. If a musician or author hopes to develop a personal style, he/she must eventually individuate from his/her influences. In *Lone Sun, Zombi Blues and Tambour-Babel* the authors, like their characters, struggle to establish what is referred to in jazz circles as a signature "voice" or "sound" that will at once acknowledge the past and translate their present reality. Their novels are rich in implicit and explicit references to landmark texts and musical recordings which are integrated into new settings in order to transcend imitation. Chapter two closes with "Rhythm and Repetition" which emphasizes the importance of rhythm in black artistic production. Maximin, Péan and Pépin use the drum, wordplay, sex, and repetition to infuse the written word with a jazz beat.

Chapter three discusses the use of jazz as metaphor in the novels. The opening section entitled "Jazz and the Volcano" discusses the use of the 1940s bebop jazz movement and the distinctly Caribbean metaphor of the volcano, as images of revolution, resistance and social change that counteract passivity and zombification. The second section entitled, "The

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[17] A jazz term meaning to appreciate or understand.

Flight of Freedom," centers around the use of bird imagery as a metaphor for artistic and spiritual freedom. This section maintains that jazz need not conform to a set political program in order to have revolutionnary import. In fact, theory and ideology are shown to smother artistic creativity. In this respect, Glissant's concept of *créolisation* differs from Césaire's notion of a single African root that denies the hybrid quality of the Caribbean reality. Rather, Glissant proposes the metaphor of the rhizome, an infinite network of branches and roots in Relation with other cultures. Glissant's concept is free of the geographical and linguistic boundaries outlined in *Éloge de la créolité* which tend toward exclusivity instead of open-endedness by insisting on the use of the Creole language and Caribbean content. Glissant's *Poetics of Relations* transcends these limitations and promotes heterogeneity. Nevertheless, *créolisation* carries its own risks of homogenization and cultural extinction if not carefully monitored. These risks are alluded to in my conclusion.

These chapters should not be seen as separate categories detached from one another. An idea introduced in one chapter may be repeated or completed in another following the call-and-response technique inherent in jazz. In this case, the "response" should not be considered the result of an oversight or lack of new ideas, but rather a development and affirmation of the initial idea or "call". I envision that the call-and-response approach used in the construction of this thesis will underline the circular, non-linear quality of jazz, as well as that of the texts in question. Moreover, this thesis will make no attempt to define jazz or the French Caribbean novel; rather, I hope that my research will add to the multiple points of view concerning these two subjects. My goal is therefore not to simplify, but to respect the ambiguity that makes jazz and French Caribbean literature so diverse and dynamic.

Chapter One: Jazz as Theme

The Genealogy of Jazz

> *La perspective historique est essentielle à toute littérature qui se respecte; une des fonctions du littéraire, en particulier dans notre monde obnubilé par* ***l'air du temps****, est de lutter contre l'oubli.*
>
> *-Stanley Péan*
> *Olivier, Interview 8*

> *[...] tout ce que j'exprime est forcément l'émanation de ma culture antillaise, de la communauté dont je suis issu,[...]. Et cette antillanité-là s'exprime naturellement comme on respire, comme on marche, comme on parle.*
>
> *-Daniel Maximin*
> *Mpoyi-Buatu, Interview 35*

> *Nous avons comblé* le silence de l'Histoire avec des histoires...
>
> *-Ernest Pépin*[1]
> *Tambour-Babel, "Prélude"*

When considering black artistic production in the New World, whether it be musical or literary, an examination of the cultural climate that engendered these forms of expression is indispensable. Jazz is the offspring of the Plantation.[2] This assertion can be traced back

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[1] Although Pépin does not cite his source, this quotation is derived from Glissant's "History [with a capital H] ends where the histories of those peoples once reputed to be without history come together." Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989) 64.

[2] Édouard Glissant discusses this theory of the origins of jazz in *Poetics of Relations.*

to the traumatic uprooting of Africans from their native land, the Middle Passage and subsequent Plantation existence which caused a severe cultural dislocation: tribes were separated, religions suppressed, and in many cases, drums outlawed. Customary forms of expression and worship were crushed in an effort to annihilate identity. According to Raphaël Confiant, music is considered "l'Art par excellence" of diaspora blacks because it is the only art form to have survived the slave trade.[3] Music was an essential means of communcation on the Plantation because colonists, fearing conspiracy and revolt, separated slaves from other members of their tribes who spoke the same language. Although Africa has a diverse musical background, there were similarities between tribes such as responsorial structures, repetition and rhythmic patterns which served as common points of reference for new modes of relation. Therefore, music was an important vehicle for the cultural continuation of African traditions. It was also the site for new interlocking innovations born from the interrelation of various African tribes, as well as the syncretic clash with colonial culture. Jazz formed as a result of this cross-fertilization of different cultures, mixing, for example, African syncopation, polyphony, call-and-response, with European instrumentation and techniques such as harmony.

Music was an integral part of the black experience in the New World, just as it had been in the motherland. As master drummer, Abrahim Adzenyah says of music in Africa:

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[3] Raphael Confiant, "L'écrivain antillais et la musique," in *L'Écrivain et la musique: communications de la XXI^e rencontre québécoise internationale des écrivains tenue à Sainte-Adèle et à Montréal du 20 au 24 avril 1993*, eds. Louise Maheux-Forcier and Jean-Guy Pilon (Montreal: Hexagone, 1994) 43.

> In African community life, music making is regarded as a part of the traditional way of life and not an embellishment of it. It is as necessary to the fullness of living as any other human *need* that has to be satisfied. A village that has no organized music or neglects community singing, drumming and dancing is, therefore, said to be dead.[4]

One could say that music was even more important on the Plantation because it was the only "human need" granted the slave. Music was not merely a means of survival, communication and cultural continuation, but more importantly it was an affirmation of their very being. As Maximin asserts, "c'est dans la création qu'on prouve qu'on existe."[5] Prison songs and work songs helped ease the drudgery of forced labour by providing rhythmic accompaniment to repetitious manual tasks. The Plantation owners encouraged this music as a harmless aid to increase productivity. Moreover, there was a certain prestige in owning slaves with musical abilities that could provide entertainment for social events.

Outside working hours, the spirituals and the blues helped slaves bear their intolerable existence. The lyrics in these songs, often served a multiple purpose. Besides purging feelings that could not be openly expressed, the lyrics were often encoded with messages retelling important events, fires, deaths, legends, or more subversive content such as plans for escape. In a system where all forms of communication were closely monitored, music acted as a secret language whose ambiguity served it well. In keeping with some

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[4] A. Kobina Adzinyah, "Traditional Music of Africa", Seminar on African Drumming (Banff, Alta.: Banff Centre for the Arts, July 1966) 1. [emphasis mine]

[5] Thomas Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin à propos de son roman:*L'Isolé Soleil,*" *Nouvelles du sud* 3 (1986): 36.

African societies whose funeral music can be "gay and tumultuous as a marriage feast,"[6] the slaves often veiled pain, anger and resistance in up-tempo songs. A quote by Langston Hughes in the epigraph of *Zombi Blues* explains how this tradition was carried out in blues music, and later in jazz:

> Les Blues sont presque toujours des chansons tristes; pourtant, leurs paroles comportent des éléments comiques. Au-delà de la tristesse du blues se cachent l'humour et la force. Ce sont probablement ces qualités, que le jazz a héritées du blues, qui ont fait aimer cette musique au monde entier. (ZB "Epigraph")

The Plantation owner, however, assumed that a "singing negro" was a "happy negro," and by extension, content with his subordinate position within the Plantation system. This was not so.

In his seminal essay "Lieu clos, parole ouverte", French Caribbean writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant talks of the shared Plantation heritage that links black people throughout the southern United States, the Caribbean Islands, the Caribbean coast of Latin America, and the northeastern portion of Brazil, as well as those countries (including those of the Indian Ocean), constituting what Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant call the territory of *créolité* [creoleness] (PR 63). Glissant describes the Plantation as a "closed" space founded on a racial hierarchy aimed at compartmentalizing the various races: the white colonial Plantation owners or *békés* on top of the pyramidic power structure, seconded by their white or mulatto overseers, and the African slaves (or Hindus in the Caribbean) at the bottom. Despite attempts to demarcate divisions between these cultures, the closed space of

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[6] Francis Bebey, *African Music: A People's Art,* trans. Josephine Bennett (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1975) 126.

the Plantation served as a "laboratory" (PR 74) wherein these races inevitably interacted. Glissant's study further reveals that due to shared structural principles, " no matter which region we contemplate from among those covered by the system, we find the same trajectory and almost the same forms of expression" (PR 68). Thus, although Plantations were closed entities situated in multiple geographic locations, they nevertheless shared a type of "kinship" (PR 64). Therefore, we can talk of the black diaspora and black artistic production in the New World even though the artists, or the artistic forms discussed span diverse locations such as Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Louisana and Alabama. In an interview with Nathalie Olivier, Péan, a second generation Haitian immigrant living in Montreal, explains the importance of the Plantation past on his current artistic production:

> Sans vouloir jouer sur le remords de l'Occident, qui m'indiffère, je pense qu'un Noir ne peut pas vivre en faisant abstraction du poids de **L'Histoire.** L'arrachement à l'Afrique, l'esclavage, les préjugés de couleur (qui d'ailleurs circulent dans un sens comme dans l'autre) -- tout ça fait partie de mon imaginaire et de mon quotidien; tout ça détermine mon identité autant que les circonstances qui ont mené mes parents à fuir Haïti ou que l'impasse politique canadienne.[7]

Glissant proceeds to outline the effects of the Plantation on French Antillean literary production by identifying three moments in the literary trajectory: survival, delusion and memory. As discussed earlier in this chapter, survival to the slaves meant finding a means of communication which did not threaten the system's hierarchical structure. Glissant explains that because reading and writing were prohibited, the only recourses for expression

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[7] Stanley Péan, "Stanley Péan: l'oeuvre au noir," interview by Nathalie Olivier, *Lettres québécoises* 90 (Summer 1998) : 8.

were oral forms of communication. To the list of musical forms already mentioned, Glissant adds tales, proverbs and sayings--all of which are methods of communication passed down from the African oral tradition. As he explains, these oral techniques were used as forms of "detour", in other words, a symbolic language that worked to "say without saying" (PR 68). The result was a fragmented, non-chronological literature that welcomed ambiguity to veil subversive meaning. The authors in our study maintain this approach and require the reader to decipher the hidden text.

Glissant dissects three types of speech that functioned within the realm of the Plantation that would later influence black literary aesthetics: *direct speech*, the vocabulary necessary to carrying out daily Plantation tasks; *stifled speech*, everything left unsaid due to censorship and the inaccessibility of reading and writing; *deferred or disguised speech*, referring to the need for detour and symbolic code to circumvent stifled speech. As Glissant points out: "The Creole language integrated these three modes and made them jazz" (PR 73). He goes on to present music as a liberating force within the oppressive structure of the Plantation, especially at night when the work was over and the slaves were no longer under the watchful eye of the overseer. To show how music transcended imposed silence and communicated the injustice of their situation, where direct speech could not, Glissant evokes some of the many forms of black music that evolved from the Plantation: negro spirituals, blues, jazz, *biguines,* calypsos, salsa and reggae.

Just as jazz emerged from the syncretic encounter between African and European cultures in America, so did the Creole language[8] result from African and European cross-fertilization in the French Caribbean. Of the nations of the Caribbean, Daniel Maximin says, "Oui, tu es d'un peuple originaire de deux ou trois langues. Tes langues maternelles: la musique, le créole, le français."[9] Maximin emphasizes Creole's double heritage in the following quotation: "Le maître et l'esclave ont crée la langue créole, et le créole a servi les ordres et le fouet, la soumission et la révolte, le marronage[10] et les tambours."[11] Both jazz and Creole resist a common notation due to their hybrid composition and oral background. Jazz musicians and French Caribbean writers have noted that these oral forms of expression tend to lose some of their vitality when transferred into a written format. It is precisely this challenge that the authors of our study have undertaken: to make their language resonate with the rhythms of jazz and Creole[12].

The second type of literature discussed in Glissant's essay is that of *delusion*. The purpose of this colonial literature was to justify the oppression of the black race and thereby consolidate the racial hierarchy. Colonists, Planters and European travelers quenched their

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[8] Food, religion and dance were among other customs affected.

[9] Daniel Maximin, "À ton singulier pluriel," *La Quinzaine littéraire* 436 (Mar 16-31, 1985): 34.

[10] In my text I will use the spelling "marronnage" as found in Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* on page 68. An alternate spelling of "marronage" (Glissant, *Poetics of Relations*, 71) may appear in quotes.

[11] Maximin, "À ton singulier pluriel," 33.

[12] Creole is not as prevalent in *Zombi Blues* as it is in *Lone Sun* and Tambour-Babel.

readers' thirst for the primitive and the exotic by idealizing the beauty of the Caribbean landscape and presenting the slaves as pleasure-seeking and sexually promiscuous. Hence, the results of this delusionary literature were to further dehumanize the slaves and "blot out" (PR 70) the harsh realities of the Plantation. The outsider's curiosity for the "other" continued in minstrel shows, where both white and black entertainers blackened their faces, smiled, sang and danced in the tradition of the "happy negro slave" like Al Jolson's characterization in the movie "The Jazz Singer."[13] Black musical forms including blues, jazz, Rhythm and Blues, disco, rock and roll, rap and hip hop have been since viewed as sinful, primitive and exotic by white middle-class morality, and occasionally, by the black elite as well. As Leroi Jones, alias Amiri Imamu Baraka, notes in his study *Black Music:* "Jazz was collected among the numerous skeletons the middle-class black man kept locked in the closet of his psyche, along with watermelons and gin, and whose rattling caused him no end of misery and self-hatred."[14]

After the abolition of slavery, literature generated within the old system began to flourish. The oral literature of the Plantation became a model for a new written form of expression, which Glissant calls the literature of *memory.* The methods of detour which were a form of necessity on the Plantation were given a privileged place in texts as an affirmation of the survival of black culture and identity. Glissant notes that this symbolic language

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[13] *The Jazz Singer* (1927).

[14] LeRoi Jones (Amiri Imamu Baraka), *Black Music* (New York: Da Capo Press,1998): 11.

transcended the imposed colonial language and is equally employed by French Caribbean writers and American writers whether they write in English, Spanish or French (PR 71). This shared black aesthetic introduces "obscurities and breaks, [...] processes of intensification, breathlessness, digression, and immersion of individual psychology within the drama of a common destiny" (PR 71). Thus, from the "inextricable knots within the web of filiations" (PR 71), a new voice, the cry so long stifled by oppression was let loose, free from the suffocating air of the slave ship, free from the crushing weight of the Plantation's pyramid, and free to wail like Coltrane's saxophone.

Musician in Society

Music is such a constituent part (because of rhythm) of our historical and everyday existence that we run the risk as a community of under-estimating its "discipline": the arduous work to achieve perfection.
-Édouard Glissant
Caribbean Discourse "Forms of Music " 110

Despite the dismantlement of the Plantation system, stereotypes popularized by the literature of delusion continued to persist. Jazz and blues were the "Devil's music", produced by blacks born with an innate sense of rhythm; whereas, classical music required training, intellect and skill. Even at present, jazz musicians struggle to receive the same respect as their classical counterparts and equal treatment in scholarly studies and university music programs. According to theoretician Henry Louis Gates, Jr., written language has enjoyed privileged status since Rene Descartes and the Age of Reason, while oral and musical forms like Creole and jazz have been considered by many to be primitive art forms.[15] It follows that classical music enjoys a certain prestige among the black[16] and white elite because it requires musicians to "read" notated music whereas jazz musicians have traditionally played by "ear"-- without sheet music. The Plantation's enduring hierarchical value system refuses to acknowledge the contribution of jazz to most modern musical styles and thus continues to deny jazz its rightful place in the history of American culture. Glissant

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[15] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 129.

[16] In *Zombi Blues*, Minville likes Beethoven, Wagner (ZB 136) and Berlioz (ZB 223).

objects to the "ethnocentric arrogance" that likewise refuses Creole its status as a language.[17]

The hierarchical opposition between jazz and classical music is evoked in Péan's text through Laura's discovery of jazz. As a result of to her father's interest in symphonic music, Laura is raised exclusively on "[la] Grande musique et [la] chanson française"[18] (ZB 56). She knows nothing of jazz until her adopted brother Gaby gives her his jazz CD, entitled "*Zombi Blues.*" After repeated listening, Laura discovers that jazz is "aussi complexe que du Stravinsky, aussi immédiate que le rock" (ZB 56). Alto saxophonist Charlie Parker appreciated classical composers such as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Hindemith, Ravel, Debussy, Wagner, Bach and Bartok,[19] much like Napo, in Pépin's text, who enjoys Mozart and Berlioz among a variety of other musical styles. Parker disliked attempts to classify music into separate categories. In regard to his own musical innovations, Parker stated "Lets not call it bebop, lets call it music."[20]

Despite attempts by musicians, such as Parker, to eliminate the binary opposition that persists between jazz and classical music, prejudice continues to elevate one musical form above the other. In *Zombi Blues,* for example, Laura's mother Corinne resents her husband

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[17] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989) 184.

[18] Note the use of the adjective "Grande" to emphasize classical music's stature in relation to "other" music of lesser importance. In *Tambour-Babel*, the classical music station Napo listens to on the radio is called "Petites pages de grandes musiques" (TB 147).

[19] Carl Woideck, ed., *The Charlie Parker Companion: Six Decades of Commentary* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998) 52.

[20] Woideck, *The Charlie Parker Companion* 65.

Ben for buying their adopted son a trumpet instead of an oboe. Ben ensures their son is steeped in formal classical training, yet nonetheless, Gaby develops an interest in jazz, which according to Corinne is "[la] musique de bordel"(ZB 56). Later in the novel, Laura explains for the reader's benefit that "[...] à l'origine, le mot "jazz" désignait la copulation dans l'argot de New Orleans" (ZB 188). Due to the derogatory connotations associated with the word "jazz", many musicians perceive the name assigned to their musical genre as a further degradation of their artistic production.

The Christian religion has been equally prejudiced against jazz musicians and their music, accusing them of doing Satan's work by stimulating latent savage and sensual desires in their listeners. At one point in *Zombi Blues,* Gaby is referred to as "un charmeur de serpents" (ZB 188). He puts Laura under his spell so that by the end of the set, "Laura constate qu'elle le désire" (ZB 188). In *Lone Sun,* Louis-Gabriel and other members of the Fairness Junior Jazz Orchestra are able to "[touch] the very heart of the old commune, not so easily aroused out of its aristocratic indifference as lifelong companion of the slumbering volcano."(LS 166 [184]). Later, the saxophonist's rendition of "Body and Soul" captures Siméa's heart. His playing also has a tremendous effect on Angela, a mute intern at the asylum where Siméa works, who suddenly jumps up from the crowd and breaks Louis-Gabriel's clarinet in two. Nice, a nurse at the institution, tells the clarinetist, "[...] I think it was your jazz there that excited her too much . . . that's maroon music . . .sa pas bitin civilisé, not hardly civilized!"(LS 187) [208] It is precisely the jazz musician's ability to

move an audience and incite action which prompted missionaries to call blues and jazz "the Devil's music."

In Pépin's novel, it is the priest at Hermancia's church that attributes Éloi's sudden loss of talent to a punishment from God. The priest claims that "la bamboula mène en enfer car le tambour est l'instrument du diable" (TB 124). When Hermancia gets jealous of the time Éloi devotes to his drum, she vituperates all the stereotypes associated with his music: "Tambour, c'est une maladie de vieux-nègre qui traîne dans son sillage la perdition du rhum, des femmes à culottes sales, des macommères-sodomites et des et cetera de vices" (TB 18). Nonetheless, Hermancia is proud of her husband's musical accomplishments, even though he likes to drink. Eloi considers rum the "[...] boisson divine qui avait toujours loyalement servi le nègre en allégeant sa douleur" (TB 31). Albert Murray asserts that "alcoholic beverages and other concoctions are [...] traditional antidotes, or in any case personal fortifications, against the pernicious effects of the blues."[21] Intoxicants are, therefore, used as a means to dull physical and emotional pain, and to forget or escape the harsh realities of everyday existence. It is important, however, to dispel the notion that musicians are reliant on substances for creativity.

In the media today, musicians continue to be portrayed as addicts and sex fiends, an immoral group destined to die young from a drug overdose. Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins admits that working in a jazz environment "you're susceptible to get involved in these things. But to go from that point to say that drugs are an integral part of the music or

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[21] Murray, *Stomping the Blues* 16.

that everyone in music is involved in drugs, would, I think, be a wrong conclusion."[22] This said, Gaby in *Zombi Blues* likes "Jim Beam" (ZB 30), "bourbon" (ZB 33), " whisky" (ZB 50), "double scotch *straight no chaser*" (ZB 52), "Montecillo" (ZB 73), " un pichet de bière"(ZB 131) and "Glenlivet" (ZB 154). Both his sister Laura and his pianist Elaine worry about his tendency to over-indulge. When the haunting visions of Caliban interfere with Gaby's thoughts, his subsequent erratic behavior is immediately attributed to substance abuse. Elaine fears he is "un musicien accro" with a "monkey sur son dos" (ZB 101) (drug problem). The club manager Nando Sànchez thinks Gaby cannot hold his liquor, and warns him: "Quand on ne sait pas boire, *manolo*, on s'abstient [...] ?" (ZB 102). These assumptions reinforce Sonny Rollins's assertion that people unnecessarily link jazz musicians to alcohol and drug abuse. Although the trumpeter concedes that he occasionally has too much to drink, he is annoyed that his friends presume he is a "junkie", and he swears he has not "tiré une *puff* [marajuana] ou sniffé une ligne [cocaine] depuis des lustres" (ZB 102). Péan parodies the "mythe du jazzman alcoolo" (ZB 209) by making alcohol the secret agent which counteracts the negative effects of the serum that turns Gaby's twin into an assassin for *Mèt* Minville.

Counter to the negative image that plagues jazz musicians, there also exists the idolatry of these artists as spiritual icons worshipped by dedicated fans. This paradoxical treatment of the musician parallels the attitude toward *griots* in Africa. The Camerounian writer Francis Bebey tells us in his *African Music: A People's Art*, that the *griot's* talents for

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[22] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 168.

communicating with the spirit world through music, makes him "much admired" and equally "treated with contempt."[23] Similarly, in *Tambour-Babel,* Éloi's drumming "suscita même une frayeur, car pour beaucoup il sortait tout droit du royaume de l'en--bas" (TB 17). Ironically, though many jazz musicians have impressive titles, such as "Lady" Day (Billie Holiday), "Count" Basie, "Duke" Ellington, the "First Lady" (Ella Fitzgerald), the "Divine One" (Sarah Vaughan), the "Prez" (Lester Young), Nat "King" Cole, Joe "King" Oliver, the "Queen" of the Blues (Dinah Washington), their economic renumeration rarely equals the admiration they receive. In *Zombi Blues,* for example, when Gaby is in town for his stepfather's funeral, he has a "chambre crasseuse" in a "sordide bâtisse" (ZB 33). When Laura drives him home from the cemetery, she can hardly believe the state of the motel where he is staying. Gaby sarcastically reminds her that he cannot afford anything better because, unlike Laura, he is not a doctor with the money to drive an Audi (ZB 33). In *Lone Sun,* Louis-Gabriel also claims to be a "bad dude, routine musician without do-re-mi" (LS 181 [200]). Trumpeter Kenny Dorham has similarly expressed that in jazz, "the amount of money you get is kind of insulting."[24]

In *Tambour-Babel,* Pépin uses the real-life story of *gwoka* drummer Vélo, to show the unjust treatment of musicians in society. Vélo plays for hours under the kiosk of the "Place de la Victoire" to the deaf ears of the passer-bys. No one stops to listen; they are all too busy, scurrying around like "des fourmis folles et sourdes" (TB 160). He lives in

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[23] Bebey, *African Music* 24.

[24] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 234.

extreme poverty, wandering the streets and sleeping "à même le ciment gris du marché" (TB 156). After his death, the kiosk where he used to play is transformed "en haut lieu de veillée mortuaire" (ZB 163), where people come from all around to celebrate the passing of a national hero. Napo expresses the irony of Velo's situation when he asks, " Comment un homme qui a mené une existence aussi misérable a pu être enterré comme un roi? "(TB 184). Author and record producer John Storm Roberts notes that thanks to Vélo, *gwoka* has not disappeared like many other dance forms, but has rather "been revived as [a symbol] of black pride or nationalism or both."[25] It is unfortunate Vélo never knew the impact of his music.

Saxophonist Charlie Parker shared a similar fate as Vélo. Though Parker had avid fans, for the most part, his importance to the jazz community was often overlooked. As Carl Woideck explains: "Soon after [Parker's] death, the words "Bird Lives" began to appear on buildings, fences, and subway steps and walls -- and through his music he does live. But for all the sincerity found in these graffiti, they were also symbolic of his deification by beatniks, many of whom knew little about his music."[26] The idea of the "pseudo-fan" is also evoked in Stanley Péan's description of the listeners at the Montreal Jazz Festival: "des badauds et vacanciers pour qui, le reste de l'année, le jazz ne signifie pas grand-chose" (ZB 185). Writer Maryse Condé has expressed a similar frustration with her status as a writer in Guadeloupe: "Cela veut dire être quelqu'un qu'on ne lit pas, quelqu'un qu'on regarde,

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[25] Roberts, *Black Music of Two World* 31.

[26] Woideck, *The Charlie Parker Companion* 57.

quelqu'un peut-être qu'on aime bien, puisque les paroles étaient toujours gentilles".[27] If Caribbean society envisions cultural production as an integral part of its future, it will need to address the paradoxical reverence and debasement of its artists.

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[27] Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1992) 33.

Chapter Two: Jazz as Structure

Improvisation

Besides the thematic use of music in *Lone Sun, Zombi Blues* and *Tambour Babel,* the novels incorporate jazz elements such as improvisation to organize their texts. Whereas a classical performer strives to faithfully render a composition in its original form, a jazz musician uses an initial composition (standard[1]) as the fertile base for his/her exploration of new interpretations. A typical performance of a jazz tune is divided into two parts: the statement of the head[2] played at the beginning and end of the piece; and an improvised passage,[3] carried out in the middle. Péan's novel provides an example of this process when Gaby takes a solo on his composition, "Zombi Blues": "Une fois le thème énoncé, D'ArqueAngel enfonce sa sourdine Harmon dans le pavillon de la trompette et entame son solo" (ZB 188). This description parallels Charles O. Hartman's analysis of the 1939

[1] A traditional composition that belongs to a library of jazz tunes easily recognizable to both jazz musicians and their fans, e.g. "I've Got Rhythm."

[2] The "head" is a jazz term used to refer to the chorus or melody.

[3] Experimentation based on the chordal progression of the initial melody.

recording of "Body and Soul", by tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins: "The opening strain of his first chorus states the melody, more or less, but the whole remaining solo is devoted to working out the melodic implications in the chords of the tune."[4] In *Lone Sun,* Maximin compares Louis-Gabriel's improvisation on "Body and Soul," to "[...] a sail escaping from the limits of coasts and charts, sailing from measures to surprises, with only the most basic harmonies for compass [...]" (LS 166 [184]).

The common error made by an uninitiated jazz listener when assessing such improvised passages, is to assume they are entirely spontaneous and lacking in forethought. Louis-Gabriel critiques this popular myth by sarcastically suggesting: "Anyway, don't they say that jazz improvisation is an invention of lazy musicians incapable of giving the customer the melody he ordered on his record-player platter, or nightclub dance floor tray" (LS 170 [188]). The uninitiated reader may make the same mistake of presuming that the fragmented, discontinuous narratives which characterize French Antillean texts, such as those of Maximin, Péan et Pépin, are lacking in structural organization. As Krin Gabbard points out: "Especially in the minds of the Surrealists, black jazz artists had succeeded in finding a direct route to the unconscious without first having to consult ideological manifestoes."[5] Douglas Malcolm makes a similar observation in regard to Beat poet Jack

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[4] Charles O. Hartman, "Lee Konitz: "All the Things 'All the Things You Are' Is," in *Jazz Text; Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz, and Song* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 19.

[5] Krin Gabbard, "The Quoter and His Culture" in *Jazz in Mind: Essays on the History and Meanings of Jazz,* eds. Reginald T. Buckner and Steven Weiland (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991) 95.

Kerouac who formulated his stream of consciousness writing style in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" based on his understanding that jazz improvisation was an unpremeditated art form.[6]

However, jazz is not automatic, and to assume improvisation is an unconscious effort is to do jazz an injustice. Part of this misconception relies on the colonial primitivist theory of the negro as innate, instinctive musician. Pépin subverts this racial stereotyping by choosing Napo, a hopeless musician as his protagonist. Napo requires intense musical and spiritual training before he is able to master the technique of the drum and make it "talk." Similarly, although a jazz player's improvisation gives the exciting sensation of being created on the spot, a lot of preparation is required before a soloist can improvise with convincing dexterity. In order to improvise, the musician must have a good knowledge of the standards, "know the changes"[7] as they were written, and be aware of previous interpretations of the same piece. For multi-instrumentalist Arthur Rhames[8] successful improvisation is the direct result of serious woodshedding [9] :

> Improvisation is an intuitive process for me now, [...] but in the way

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[6] Douglas Malcolm, " 'Jazz America': Jazz and African American Culture in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road,*" *Contemporary Literature* 40 (1999) : 106.

[7] A jazz term for knowing the chordal progression of a composition.

[8] A disciple of John Coltrane, Rhames (1957-1989) was an admired pianist, saxophonist and guitarist on the New York scene. Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD: The Comprehensive, Critical Guide to Recorded Jazz--From Its Beginnings Until the Present*, 3d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1996) 1092.

[9] A jazz term meaning to practice.

> in which it's intuitive, [...] I'm calling upon all the resources of all the years of my playing at once: my academic understanding of the music, my historical understanding of the music, and my technical understanding of the instrument that I'm playing. All these things are going into one concentrated effort to produce something that is indicative of what I'm feeling at the time I'm performing.[10]

An amateur musician attempting "Body and Soul" follows in the footsteps of the "Hawk."[11] Any new rendition should at once acknowledge the recording by the master, and take into account the composer's original intentions for the song. Finally, the player should express his/her own impressions of the material. As Albert Murray explains, improvisation is "far more a matter of imitation and variation and counter-statement than of originality."[12] Thus, rather than spontaneous/unconscious improvisation, we have informed/conscious improvisation. Jazz pianist Horace Silver outlines the parameters within which the jazz musician operates: "I wanna have a lot of freedom within the band. Freedom, but within an organized context [...]. Not just total chaos or total, you know, looseness where you can do completely everything you want to. There has to be certain guidelines and things you must follow. But within that, there's plenty of freedom to do your thing."[13] Thus, it is through the negotiation of present and past, freedom and constraint, that the musician expresses his own reality. As the first chapter in this study explains, it is impossible to speak of black art,

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[10] Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz; The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 16.

[11] Nickname for the tenor sax legend Coleman Hawkins.

[12] Murray, *Stomping the Blues* 126.

[13] Ben Sidran, *Talking Jazz: An Oral History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995) 143.

be it music or literature, without considering the tradition that preceded it. In this sense, jazz is more evolution than invention. Hence, for the initiated jazz listener, the enjoyment of jazz consists of noting how particular musicians respond to previous interpretations and how they vary the known melody.

Maximin, Péan and Pépin all use improvisation as a model for their literary creation. In *Lone Sun,* Marie-Gabriel/Maximin transform the dominant colonial History in much the same way as a jazz musician plays off a standard. She/he incorporates fragments of colonial documentation into his/her text in order to show their ineptitude at (re)constituting the French Antillean reality. As Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant confirm in *Éloge de la créolité,* the French Caribbean History (or rather histories) are "dessous les dates, dessous les faits répertoriés."[14] Marie-Gabriel improvises on these excerpts, filling in gaps and creating new commentary on these standard facts. The lack of information surrounding many of the important events deemed marginal by official colonial History, such as Louis Delgrès's suicide at Matouba, allows Marie-Gabriel freedom in her fictional (re)creation of the French Antillean past. However, just as jazz musicians must have a good understanding of how a standard is written before they alter it, F. Nick Nesbitt explains that Marie-Gabriel/ Maximin's fictional improvisation "[...] ne se fait nullement à partir d'une liberté absolue ("anything goes"), mais plutôt grâce à la liberté qui surgit d'une connaissance profonde des éléments qui constituent l'identité guadeloupéenne et d'une créativité critique en rupture

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[14] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité* (Mayenne: Gallimard/Presses Universitaires Créoles, 1989) 38.

avec le poids du passé."[15] It is up to Marie-Gabriel and authors like Maximin to (re)member the bones of the skeletal histories of the Caribbean and then flesh in the missing tendons, muscles and skin. Just as her African ancestors were forced to improvise in the New World to establish survival methods out of a ruptured past, Marie-Gabriel must (re)compose the (hi)stories of her father and mother, as well as those of the French Antillean people in order to find her own voice and place herself within the continuum of tradition and innovation.

Stanley Péan also uses historical precedent as a catalyst for his fiction. In *Zombi Blues,* his character *Mèt* Minville is an implicit parody of Roger Lafontant,[16] the Minister of the Interior during President Claude Duvalier's reign in Haiti. Few are thrilled when Lafontant, like Minville, escapes Haiti to settle in Montreal following the dismemberment of Baby Doc's oppressive regime. Around this historical event, Péan improvises a macabre tale about the ex-*makout's* Frankenstein-like experiments on twin babies, whom he attempts to transform into his personal trained killers. In a review of *Zombi Blues* , Carrol F.Coates remarks, this "element of the supernatural [...].situates [Péan's novel] on the borderline between reality and fantasy."[17] It is precisely this mixing of fact (standard information) and fiction (improvisation / imagination) that typifies Péan's jazz-like approach to the construction of his text.

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[15] F.Nick Nesbitt, "Jazz et mémoire dans *L'Isolé Soleil*: techniques vernaculaires d'historiographie dans la littérature antillaise," *LittéRéalité* 10 (1998) : 75.

[16] Carrol F. Coates, review of *Zombi Blues* by Stanley Péan, *The French Review* 71 (1998) : 1091.

[17] Coates, review of *Zombi Blues* 1091.

In *Lone Sun*, Maximin improvises on the level of language. His careful selection of words and their various meanings parallels the highly flexible and inventive quality of jazz. Wordplay in his novel imitates jazz experimentation by considering a standard word, varying it, and coming up with something new. The book's title, for example, plays with the letters e,i,l,l,o,s to create *"L'Isolé Soleil"*. Maximin's character Adrien provides the reader with an example of how the game works in his notebook: "I wanted to be SOLEIL / SUN. I played with words. I found "L'ISOLE / LONE" (LS 102 [114]). Maximin's other characters enjoy these anagrammatic challenges as well, thereby underlining the multiple possibilities for literary and musical creation. This lexical game is used as a *mise en abîme* for Marie-Gabriel/ Maximin's texts by showing how context, arrangement, exclusion, and inclusion affect meaning. As John D. Erickson's study points out, the anagram is used as a model for the novel's construction:

> Anagrammatic play involves a rearrangement of basic elements; its repetitive use within the novel transforms it into an allegory of the novel itself (Maximin's), as well as the novel within a novel (Marie-Gabriel's), and the search by both author and character to recast past events into a new configuration, a new history of the Antilles.[18]

The same is true of the jazz performer who improvises off a standard composition to express his own point of view. Maximin succeeds in manipulating colonial History as well as the colonial language to express his reality and that of the French Caribbean people. He is not

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[18] John D. Erickson, "Maximin's *L'Isolé Soleil* and Caliban's Curse," *Callaloo* 15 (1992): 122-123.

concerned with a faithful representation of the French language; rather, he subverts the dominant discourse by creating a personalized expression out of the master's language.

Linguistic improvisation is also abundant in *Tambour-Babel.* Consider, for instance, the phrase: "Un soir, Éloi eut tellement honte, une honte si tellement honteuse, une hontaison bien raide [...]" (TB 37). One can find similar wordplay in *Zombi Blues*, such as "On jase jazz" (ZB 185) and "Son lit, une île. / Lit-île. / Li-il. / Li." (ZB 218). However, Péan's text seems less preoccupied with subversion on the level of language than *Lone Sun* or *Tambour-Babel.* In his review of the novel, Carrol Coates informs us that "Péan has been accused by purists of writing 'Canadian' French."[19] This judgement highlights the problem with headings and categories. Even if one concedes Péan's French to be "Canadian", one cannot deny the Haitian influence in his choice of subject matter, structure and technique. Elsewhere, we will examine the alternate methods employed by Péan to "jazzify" his text.

Improvisation's forum is the jam session. During a jam, each musician in the group is given the opportunity to improvise over the chordal progression of the tune. Maximin, Péan and Pépin use the jam session as a model for polyphonic discourse in their novels. In *Lone Sun*, the multiple points of view of Marie-Gabriel, Adrien, Antoine, Ève, Jonathan, Siméa, and so forth, are expressed through a collage of "endotexts-histories, fictions, biographies and autobiographies, poems, songs, and political treatises" as they appear in

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[19] It should not surprise the reader to recognize a Canadian influence in Péan's text; after all, the author was born in Haiti, but grew up in Canada from an early age. His style, therefore, reflects his experience as a Haitian-Canadian writer. Notice, for instance, that despite the historical Haitian backdrop in *Zombi Blues*, the action is centered in Montreal.

letters, clippings, journals and notebooks.[20] These modes of expression simulate the interaction of spoken conversation. In an interview with Mpoyi-Buatu, Maximin explains why he favours this polyphonic approach in *Lone Sun:*

> [Mes personnages] disent ce qu'ils pensent. Et ce que je veux montrer c'est une génération ainsi que ses contradictions. C'est pour ça que les personnages sont souvent en discussions multiples, en débats, etc. Ce n'est pas ma pensée à moi.[21]

Although the correspondence between Marie-Gabriel and Adrien occupies the greater part of the narrative, Scharfman notes that "the authority of authorial voices is multiplied and therefore relational rather than hierarchical."[22] The same is true in a jam session where all the instruments have an equally important role to play; no one voice is given privileged status until it is their turn to solo. Whether it be a rhythmic instrument such as the drums, or a melodic voice such as the saxophone, each player has his/her opportunity to present their point of view on the given material. The final page of Maximin's text is signed "Daniel", as the narrator/author takes his turn to solo on equal terms with his characters. This phenomenology of perception, expressed through the multiple points of view within the text, undermines the colonial discourse that proclaims itself the one and only purveyor of History to the detriment of a profusion of other histories. Thus, in Maximin's text, stifled histories are granted a voice and a written mode of expression.

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[20] Ronnie Scharfman, "Rewriting the Cesaires: Daniel Maximin's *Caribbean Discourse*." In *L'Héritage de Caliban*, ed. Maryse Condé (Paris: Éditions Jasor, 1992) 233.

[21] Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin" 45.

[22] Scharfman, " Rewriting the Cesaires" 235.

In *Tambour-Babel*, the democratic[23] and dialogic nature of the jam session is evoked by either introducing or letting each character introduce himself/herself within the narrative. Pépin's novel begins with the unknown voice of a third person narrator introducing *le père* Éloi and the two loves of the musician's life: his drum and his wife. The second chapter, although unnamed and unnumbered, presents a first person "moi" explaining Eloi's obsession with wanting an heir to carry on the tradition of the drum, and Hermancia's attempts to give her husband the son he had always hoped for. On the final page of the chapter, Napo reveals himself as the frustrated "moi" unable to live up to his father's desires. Chapter three is the voice of Hermancia reproaching Éloi for his lack of compassion toward their son's inability to master the drum. She also introduces Bazile, the upstart who hopes to usurp Napo's place in the musical lineage and Éloi's place in her heart. Chapter four is Bazile himself who unlike Napo, states his name in the first sentence on the first page. Never modest, he asks to be called "'maître Bazile s'il vous plaît' car je suis maître au plus haut de mon art" (TB 47). He also speaks of Hermancia's suspected magical powers which he figures are responsible for Éloi's esteemed drumming ability. Unable to win Hermancia's affections, let alone her respect, he hopes that Sosso, a beautiful dancer from an English-speaking island, will be "l'outil pour surpasser Éloi" (TB 55). As a reminder of the conversational aspect of jazz, in Chapter five, Sosso "demande passage!"(TB 59). She has waited her turn to improvise and now she is ready to tell her version of the events.

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[23] I borrow this term from jazz pianist, Billy Taylor. Taylor, "Jazz as a Metaphor for American Culture," Unpublished Seminar, Jazz in July Workshop, Amherst, Mass. July 1999.

Sosso underlines the importance of each character's contribution to the narrative when she proclaims: "Toute cette histoire n'aurait pas de sens sans moi" (TB 59). This quote also conforms to "[...] what black vernacular musicians feel and assume as they nonchalantly claim that when they play they are 'telling a story'."[24] By granting his characters the ability to express themselves in the first person, Pépin recreates the conversational quality of African oral traditions, and the dialogue of the jam session. He also imitates the jazz musician's technique of repeating the final phrases of the previous soloist's improvisation in order to build upon them through variation and extension. Notice how each character is presented through the voice of another in the chapter preceding their first person introduction of themselves.

After Pépin's characters have had the opportunity to present themselves, the third person narrator (from the first chapter) resumes the narration for the following ten chapters. In chapter 11, the narrator takes an opportunity to address his readers directly: "Lecteurs (lectrices), la vie est un mal-tête qui surprendra toujours notre besoin de claireté" (TB 136). Once Napo has found his voice and assumed his rightful place in the drumming lineage, he narrates his own story in chapters 16 , 17 and 18. From chapters 18 to 24, the third person narrator alternates with Napo to describe the events surrounding the imprisonment of Jojo Faitout, a black man arrested for assaulting a white teacher who attacked a black student.

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[24] Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "Ring Shout; Literary Studies, Historical Studies and Black Music Inquiry," *Black Music Research Journal* 11 (Fall 1991) : 277.

The incident erupts into a civil war among the Guadeloupean residents of Pointe-à-Pitre. Meanwhile, the competition between Bazile and Napo approaches its climax. Pépin's choice of vocabulary draws an analogy between the drumming contest and the fight for Jojo's release. He compares the "vraie guerre" (TB 203) of the civilian "combattants" (TB 222) to the "escarmouches" and "bourrades" (TB 207) between Napo and Bazile, "les lutteurs" (TB 207). This comparison is reinforced by Napo's aggressive playing style: "Les premiers sons partirent comme des boulets de canon. [Il] enchaîna les autres avec un fracas de volcan enragé. [Il] chargeai comme une armée d'éléphants dévastant une forêt" (TB 208). The "duel" (TB 210) between the two drummers resembles a cutting session at a jam where each soloist tries to surpass the other. Count Basie describes a similar rivalry between Lester Young and Hershel Evans, two saxophonists in the Basie Band in the 1930s. Basie explains: "No matter how much the first one 'broke it up',[25] the other one came on in there and did his thing and got the crowd excited all over again."[26] This type of musical competition is referred to as a "cutting session" at a jam.

The italicized passages in Pépin's text (TB "Prélude", 67, 111-112, 131, 134-135, 146, 188, 191, 200, 214, 217, 235) can also be compared to solo improvisations in jazz, Tangential to the plot, these passages break away stylistically from the rules that govern the standard narrative. The punctuation, for example, is decidedly different. One notices the

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[25] A term meaning to impress an audience.

[26] Albert Murray, *Good Morning Blues: The Autobiography of Count Basie as told to Albert Murray.* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1985) 198.

sudden generous use of exclamation marks and suspension marks[27] to evoke the energy and exploration of a solo improvisation. None of the passages has an identifiable speaker, with the exception of two sections entitled, "Paroles du Commandeur sur les hauteurs de Morne d'Or" (TB 188) and "Paroles de l'aveugle" (TB 235) --"Paroles," of course emphasizes the oral quality inherent in these excerpts. The words of Napo's spiritual leader and drum teacher consist of a list of ten commandments, reminding the reader of the novel's biblical allusion to the Tower of Babel. Item five on the list proclaims, "*Babel c'est belle beauté*!" (TB 188) and number nine reiterates the importance of multiplicity and tolerance by declaring, "*Celui qui n'aime qu'une musique n'aime pas la musique*" (TB 189). The final italicized entry which constitutes the closing pages of the novel are reserved for Napo's new lover, l'aveugle, who happens to be Hégésippe's daughter and the keeper of Napo's *djimbé* drum. Given that both characters assigned italicized passages are somehow linked to the drum, one could extrapolate that the remaining passages are the voice of the drum itself. Note that in these passages, the sound of the drum is not evoked through the use of italics, as it is throughout the main body of the text (e.g. *'Toumblak! Toumblak*!) (TB 13). The change in font shows the drum is no longer subordinate to the written text or standard composition (i.e. Houmbo-Houmboko! Houmba-Houmboko!) (TB 111) but free to take a solo.

During an improvised section in a jazz tune, musicians will sometimes "trade fours,"

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[27] Other passages in the main body of the text contain similar uses of punctuation but none quite so obvious or extensive.

by alternating four bar solos with one or more players rather than improvise an entire chorus. This pattern can be gradually reduced from four measures, to two, to one, in order to create excitement. This practice is used in jazz to showcase the ideas of each member of the group on the same source material, much like each person expressing their opinion on a specific topic in a lively conversation. The chapter entitled "Barracuda" in *Zombi Blues* provides an example of these multiple perspectives. The section is dedicated to the introduction of Barthélémy *Mèt* Minville, the ex-*makout* who earned the nickname "Barracuda" for his uncontrollable lust for flesh and blood during Baby Doc's (Jean-Claude Duvalier) dictatorship in Haiti. The chapter is cleverly constructed of contrasting viewpoints which expose Barracuda's multi-faceted character.

Our initial introduction to Minville is through the eyes of "Marie-Marthe", a waitress at the "Manje Lakay", a Haitian restaurant in Montreal. She has lived in Quebec from a young age and is only aware of the *tonton-makout* through the stories of her elders and the news media. The next exposé of Barracuda comes from Marie-Marthe's boss, Ferdinand Dauphin. The restaurant owner has a seething hatred for the *makout* who tortured and murdered his older brother, Hector, for being a "poète 'subversif'"(ZB 39). When Ferdinand discovers Barracuda has been admitted into Canada and is residing in Montreal, he vows to avenge his brother's murder. It is Lorenzo Appolon, a Montreal policeman, who tries to dissuade his old friend from plotting a crime against Minville that would get him into trouble with the Canadian law, this despite Lorenzo's own desire to see Minville and "ses confrères *homo papadocus"* (ZB 42) pay for their inhumane crimes, including the rape of his cousin

Nina. Then there is Ti-Alice Grospoint, a voodoo healer living in Montreal, whose worst nightmares comes true when she learns that the man who murdered her father and attempted to rape her twenty-five years earlier in Haiti, is in Montreal, the city she fled to in order to escape him.

On the other hand, for Jacynthe Roussel, a white maid working at the hotel where Minville is staying, "[...] cet homme élégant et posé ne correspond pas au monstre décrit par les médias" (ZB 44). Truthfully, she finds Minville somewhat attractive. Jacynthe is unaware of the physical, mental and emotional cruelties Barracuda has in store for her as he sizes her up "tel un boucher jaugeant un quartier de boeuf "(ZB 44). To close the chapter, Péan presents the man himself -- Barracuda and his entourage: Claude-Henri Faustin, for twenty years Minville's "bras droit" (ZB 47) and Gaby's twin Caliban, Minville's personal hitman. Minville proceeds to explain his choice of a peach silk suit for his upcoming television interview with Simone Aubut as a ploy to make naive viewers, such as Jacynthe Roussel, see him "sous un jour angélique" (ZB 46). Faustin asks himself why he has remained loyal to "ce caïd déchu"(ZB 46). Faustin, like his namesake Faust, has sold his soul to the Devil (Minville). Eventually, he will feed his flesh to Caliban.

In order for Péan's "trading" approach not to become redundant for the reader, each character offers a new piece of information on Barracuda's personality. Similarly, if each musician in a quartet simply repeated the solo the preceding player, the ensuing musical conversation would be monotonous for the audience and the musicians alike. In fact, this would defeat the entire purpose of "trading" ideas on a given composition. Péan's

"Barracuda" chapter demonstrates how the phenomenology of perception can be used in literature, as in jazz, to construct a whole consisting of disparate and sometimes contradictory parts, this is also true of the Caribbean reality.

Call-and-Response

They say you have to choose in life: either you can be a man of witness, or a man of participation. That's not true. You have to participate in order to bear witness
-Adrien
Lone Sun (LS 92[103])

Lâcher douce roue libre. Le son et l'écho. L'écho et le son.
-Ernest Pépin
Tambour-Babel - "Prelude"

La relation écrivain-lecteur n'est "brouillée" que si le lecteur le veut bien.
-Maryse Condé
Delas, Le Français aujourd'hui no. 106: 55

In jazz, interplay is not restricted to the musicians on stage; there is also an open interaction between the musicians and their audience. Unlike the listeners at a classical concert who express their appreciation at the end of a piece, jazz fans play active role throughout a jazz performance. It is customary for a jazz audience to voice approval for a good solo or a clever turn-of-phrase, in order to incite a soloist to attempt more daring improvisational feats. It follows that classical music has by tradition been associated with the concert hall, where performers retain a physical distance from their audiences. Jazz, on the other hand, favours clubs like the "Sensation Bar" and "L'Emprise" in *Zombi Blues*

where performers and club goers can intermingle.[28] As Geneva Smitherman explains, the communal aspect of jazz finds its origins in Africa, where "individual participation is necessary for community survival. Balance in the community, as in the universe, consists of maintaining these interdependent relationships."[29] This chapter examines the means utilized by our authors to stimulate a call-and-response relationship with their readers.

Francis Bebey explains that in Africa, "the voice of the drum is employed-- to communicate a piece of news or to send a message from one village to another."[30] This tradition was continued in the New World as Pépin's text illustrates: "Si l'on veut rassembler à toute vitesse des nègres pour une mortalité, pour une révolte, pour les voltigements du lewoz, il n'y a pas meilleur maître que le tambour" (TB 24). Thus, the drum can serve as a call to action. Pépin's "Prélude", like the drum call, is an invitation for readers to contribute to the reading/writing process: *"À la mosaïque des sons apporte ton écot... Écoute et lâche ton corps! À la roue libre les bras croisés!"* (TB "Prélude"). Kathleen Gyssels [31] and Bernard Mouralis [32] have made analogous observations regarding the function of Maximin's

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[28] The relatively recent introduction of jazz to the concert hall setting reflects the growing acceptance of jazz on the mass market.

[29] Geneva Smitherman, *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) 75.

[30] Bebey, *African Music* 94.

[31] Gyssels, "Le Jazz dans de le roman afro-antillais" 130.

[32] Bernard Mouralis, "*L'Isolé Soleil* de Daniel Maximin ou la sortie du ventre paternel," *Présence Africaine* 121/122 (1982): 418.

opening text:

> *Nightfall glows with firefly light, night calls out joy and misery, chants, poems of love and rebellion choked in the throats of men and women undressed of their anguish, writing to each other from island to island, a story in the shape of an archipelago traced by our four races, seven languages and dozens of bloods. (LS 1 [7])*

This opening passage, like Pépin's, can be compared to the drum that solicits audience participation.

Once Pépin has his readers' attention, he proceeds to attune their ears to the auditive dimension of his text. The novel opens with an extended description of Éloi's drumming style *"Toumblak!Toumblak!"* , followed by a veritable sound-scape of Eloi's childhood in Grosse-Montagne, not far from the sugarcane fields and factory. The reader, like Éloi with his exceptionally large "oreilles attentives" (TB 14), hears:

> Le monter-descendre des charrettes grinçantes et des camions qui sonnait [...], La locomotive [...] La sirène qui faisait hurler midi en une longue plainte. [...] Le tapage des entrailles de l'usine où d'obscènes engrenages broyaient avec voracité [33] [...] Les cris des marchandes [...] Le chuintement des feuilles [...] Le bruit des bottes aux pieds des coupeurs et des amarreuses, [...] Le raclement métallique d'un sabre sur l'asphalte [...]." (TB 15) [34]

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[33] This description of the factory in Grosse-Montagne echoes Émile Zola's personification of the Voreux mine as a beast monster in *Germinal*, see page 12.

[34] Similar auditive passages appear throughout the text, such as when Napo first ventures into the woods:

> [...] le bruit de ses pas résonnait, s'ajoutant au chahut des oiseaux, au chuintement des sources et au craquement soudain d'une branche qui choit. La nuit, les bois semblaient agiter un énorme trousseau de clés accompagné de bruit crécelle et de sifflements mystérieux." (TB 129)

Pépin's novel begs to be listened to, not simply read. The *aural* dimension of his text is characteristic of black diaspora novels that privilege the *oral* nature of their African heritage.

Antiphonal structures that reproduce the dialogic quality of conversation provide the infrastructure for numerous forms of black expression. The Creole storyteller, for instance, calls out "Crik!" and expects attentive listeners to respond "Crak!". Maximin's text supplies an example of this Creole tradition:

> " . . . And crick!"
> "And crack!
> "Hung watah?"
> "Coco,"
> "Standin watah?"
> "Suga' cane" (LS 209 [231]).

Similar call-and-response patterns are evident when Louis-Gabriel and Siméa try to guess the significance of the three S's, that Angela, an intern at the asylum, embroidered into Siméa's carnival jacket. Louis-Gabriel suggests a word and Siméa must provide a related word beginning with the letter *S*: "If I say: . . . Night?" / "I reply: Sleep."/ If I say: Day?"/ " I reply: Sun [...]" (LS 177 [196]).[35] Maximin's reasons for integrating such oral structures into his novel are based on his belief that "l'oralité c'est la pratique culturelle la plus vivace, la plus rebelle et la plus symbolique de notre identité antillaise."[36] He compares Marie-

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[35] Although F. Nick Nesbitt's essay "Jazz et mémoire *dans L'Isolé Soleil"* cites this example of call-and-response in order to question the relevance of structural analysis, Maximin's extensive integration of such elements in *Lone Sun* underlines the importance the author places on these techniques and the rich source of material they provide for structural studies.

[36] Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin" 50.

Gabriel's various written correspondences to the conversational quality inherent in "la musique et le chant."[37] Another example of call-and-response in the text is evident at the carnival, where Maximin describes "the sweating groska of the toad drummer, in rhythm with the singing of the response: *Ingoui, Ingoua* [...]" (LS 230 [255]).

Responsorial sequences abound in Tambour-Babel as well. Éloi's *lewoz* supplies the ideal setting for the interaction between drummers, singers and dancers. Ti-Céleste sings the call, " Répondè répondez-moi! Répondè frappez lan main!" (TB 109) and the guests provide the response. Pépin's description highlights the reciprocal bond between the performer and the participants, which is reminiscent of the connection between jazz musicians and their audience at a jam session:

> [Ti-Céleste] prenait appui sur le choeur et laissait rebondir la reprise, mais le choeur aussi se nourrissait des trouées qu'il forait la nuit avec le chalumeau de sa voix. Un bel engrenage tournant en rond, avec de temps à autre les étincelles des aigus et des contrechants. (TB 109)

A second example of Pépin's use of antiphonal technique is evident in the description of Napo's relationship to his drum. As Napo plays to earn his title as a master drummer, his hands "scellaient un pacte d'alliance avec [son] instrument et celui-ci répondait comme une monture docile à l'appel de son maître"(TB 155). Pépin compares Napo's audience to a black church sermon where the minister sounds the call and the worshipers talk back[38] : "La foule

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[37] Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin" 50.

[38] Smitherman, *Talkin and Testifyin* 104.

cria au miracle et sentit sur elle passer la foi d'une congrégation. Un seul corps! Une seule chair! Un seul coeur!" (TB 220). This dialogic passage reveals music's ability to stir emotions and bring people together.

Maximin, Péan and Pépin use silence to create openings where their readers can enter into their texts. A consummate jazz performer also balances technical virtuosity with an effective manipulation of space. As Ben Sidran remarks in jazz, "[...] what you don't play is often more important than what you do play. The space that is left is for others to breathe [..]."[39] . *Zombi Blues* favours the mystery genre to draw its readers into the plot. In Péan's first chapter, "Misterioso", an unidentified woman, creeps through the streets of *Port-au-Prince* at night. Meanwhile, Corinne Reynolds, safely removed from the danger in the streets and the blood-thirsty *tonton-makout,* suddenly hears the footsteps of an intruder . . . The reader plays detective, linking the unknown woman in the streets to Corinne's visitor. John D. Erickson notes a similar use of mystery in the opening of *Lone Sun*, where "the narrative proper opens with a narrator whose identity initially remains unrevealed."[40] Subsequently, the reader discovers it is the voice of Marie-Gabriel addressing herself in the second person singular, "tu".

In *Tambour-Babel,* Pépin creates space for reader participation by asking questions without providing answers, or delaying his answers to disrupt the reader's expectations. For example, Napo meets a wise old man in the woods. Naturally the reader wonders: Who is

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[39] Sidran, *Talking Jazz* 5-6.

[40] Erickson, " Maximin's *L'Isolé Soleil* " 121.

this man? What is his significance the plot? Why is he in the woods? The narrator anticipates his listener's interest in the old man and verbalizes the question running through the reader's mind: "Qui était ce vieil homme rencontré par Napo?" (TB 136). However, the narrator evades a direct answer and accuses the reader of demanding "[les] explications pour comprendre les détours du racontement" (TB 136). He makes the reader wait approximately three pages before providing the old man's name: Hégésippe. Later in the text, Pépin emphasizes the importance of silence when Napo looks to Hégésippe for guidance during his spiritual search, and the *Commandeur* "[ferme] sa bouche sur un silence" (TB 144). In keeping with Napo's identity quest, Hégésippe's silence suggests Napo must find the answers to his questions from within himself.

Sometimes reader-response can be impeded if the reader does not hear, or understand the call. This can occur when readers find a text dense, or beyond their scope of reference. Maximin's text, for instance, has been described as "une histoire particulièrement complexe, formée d'une multitude d'éléments qui se recoupent, se superposent ou s'opposent sans pour autant jamais se confondre[...]."[41] *Lone Sun's* profusion of historical allusions, intertextual references, repetitions and revisions risk confusing or completely escaping the reader--especially readers unfamiliar with French Caribbean history and culture. Francis Bebey describes the non-African listener's similar reaction to African music: "The initial curiosity of a Western audience can be followed all too easily by contempt for a way of life that is so

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[41] Mouralis, "*L'Isolé Soleil* de Daniel Maximin" 419.

unlike their own and by the inability to appreciate the music that seems to them to be so much dissonance and noise."[42] Péan's text presents such a reaction to Gaby's music when a Chicago club owner hires the trumpeter to play jazz and then "sur un ton désobligeant, [exige] une musique moins 'jungle'" (ZB 53). Gaby, unwilling to cater to the proprietor's taste, responds by knocking him unconscious.

In his article, "Double V, Double Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," Eric Lott explains that the bebop playing style and the hip talk that accompanied this jazz movement, functioned as "a closed hermeneutic that had the undeniable effect of alienating the riff-raff and expressing a sense of felt isolation, all the while affirming a collective purpose--even at the expense of other [more traditional] musicians."[43] As Glissant explains in *Caribbean Discourse,* Creole fulfilled a similar purpose on the Plantation. It acted as a "system of significant insignificance"[44] that communicated meaning to those familiar with the nuances of the language, but struck "outsiders" as an "apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise."[45] Glissant further explains that opacity can occur on two levels in literature; a complex text which a reader finds "difficult" (such as *Lone Sun*) or a text which gives "the appearance of being clear and straightforward," yet conceals "hidden opacities" (such as

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[42] Bebey, *African Music* 1.

[43] Eric Lott, "Double V, Double Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo* 11 (1988): 600.

[44] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 124

[45] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 124.

Tambour-Babel) (PR 115/116). Glissant lauds both uses of opacity in French West Indian literature because he believes obscurity effectively counters the "alienating notion of transparency"[46] which reduces French Caribbean production to a mimesis of the dominant culture. *Éloge de la créolité* expresses an equal interest in preserving opacity in French Caribbean literature; its philosophy leaves an opening for the non-Caribbean reader: "Notre plongée dans la créolité ne sera pas incommunicable mais elle ne sera pas totalement communicable."[47] Likewise, Glissant does not envision opacity as a closed model cut off from other cultures, rather he feels "opacities can co-exist and converge, weaving fabrics" (PR 190).

In an interview with Janice Kaufman, Maximin claims, "[j]e n'écris pas dans l'exclusion, je suis obligé d'écrire pour tout le monde."[48] In different interview with Thomas Mpoyi-Buatu, Maximin says, "C'est ça la grande idée [de *L'Isolé Soleil*]: montrer la complexité des choses sur le plan économique, culturel, dans les événements de notre histoire."[49] Though one can interpret Maximin's initial statement as a rejection of Glissant's call for opacity, one cannot deny the complexity inherent in *Lone Sun,* particularly for the non-Caribbean reader. This seeming inconsistency is reconciled in a quote by Maryse

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[46] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 155.

[47] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité* 54.

[48] Janice H. Kaufman, "Interview with Daniel Maximin, 24 Mar.1997" in *"Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire: Creolization, Intertextuality, and Coiled Myth."* Dissertation. (University of Virginia: Dept. of French, 1997) 146.

[49] Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin" 44.

Condé:

> Un livre est la proposition qu'un écrivain fait à un lecteur d'un monde. Ce monde n'est pas transparent. Il nécessite de la part du lecteur un effort intellectuel. Cela peut être au niveau de la langue, de la technique et des procédés narratifs.[50]

Hence, the difficulty of a novel is in the hands of the reader. Maximin warns his reader in his description of Louis-Gabriel's improvisation on "Body and Soul" that *Lone Sun* intends to venture "far from the pretty little variations for lazy ears, delivering up the hidden richness around a melody turned and returned to the very limits of improvisation" (LS 166 [184]). The reader's understanding of the text is therefore relative to the effort they put into deciphering its opacities. Bebey offers the same advice to Western listeners wishing to relate to African music: "There are no short cuts. A real understanding of African cultures demands hours of attention, the will to look and listen carefully, to reject preconceived ideas, and to avoid hasty judgements."[51]

For those who give their time, Maximin's novels offers a wealth of detail which is otherwise wasted on "lazy ears." For instance, jazz aficionados will recognize Ariel's error when he tells Siméa that "Body and Soul" is Coleman Hawkins's "most recent composition" (LS 141 [156]). Siméa, in turn, passes this misinformation along to Louis-Gabriel, by telling him she heard Coleman Hawkins play the piece "he had just composed on his way back to

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[50] Daniel Delas (Réalisation). "De l'école à l'écriture littéraire en pays créole: Cinq écrivains répondent aux question du 'FA', Maryse Condé, Raphaël Confiant, Monchoachi, Ernest Pépin, Gisèle Pineau." *Le Français aujourd'hui* 106 June (1994): 55.

[51] Bebey, *African Music* 1.

Harlem"(LS 169 [187]). Those familiar with the jazz tradition know that the definitive 1939 recording by the "Hawk" is considered a landmark in the genre precisely because of its innovative interpretation of an old standard. It is Marie-Gabriel's friend and correspondent Antoine, a saxophone player, who reveals the flaw in her "use/analysis of music around the Cuban Cabana episode, because as he reveals, "Body and Soul' is not a Coleman Hawkins composition, though he certainly did the most memorable version" (LS 273 [301]). This is one of the many examples that demonstrate how Maximin keeps his initiated readers constantly on the alert, testing their knowledge at every turn, while motivating them to actively take part in his novel. Clearly, the uninitiated reader would not question Ariel's false attribution of "Body and Soul" to Coleman Hawkins. Nevertheless, a careful reader will have learned something new by the end of the novel, if he/she was reading attentively.

In his study *The Signifying Monkey*, theoretician Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to a practice called "signifyin(g)." This practice occurs when the same call is designed to be interpreted differently depending on its receiver. He traces the origins of this vernacular custom back to the African trickster, Esu-Elegbara and its African-American counterpart, the Signifying Monkey, as they appear in "the music, myths and forms of performance"[52] of the black oral tradition. Gates, Jr. uses the double meaning and interpretation methods associated with these two figures as the basis for a discourse of literary criticism[53] that stems from the

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[52] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 4.

[53] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* xi.

black culture itself.[54] In *Lone Sun*, Toussaint Louverture expresses his admiration for the monkey's ability to play, "with intelligence" (LS 221 [244]). Kaufman notes Toussaint's masterful display of the "double voiced utterance,"[55] when he recites a Creole translation of Damas's poem to Senegalese infantry men at the Carnival[56]. In the tradition of his trickster ancestors, Toussaint signifies on the soldiers "who applaud without understanding":

> *[...] Listen to de word we got fo' y'all*
> *put away de chop-chop, filth and crud*
> *Put away de pillage, steal and rape doins'*
> *All we gon' ask y'all is*
> *Get the fuck off the backs of the Huns*
> *And get your ass up there and invade Senegal!* (LS 201 [222-223])

Siméa, meanwhile, recognizes Toussaint's veiled attack and fears his tricks might get him into trouble. Later, Toussaint wryly concedes, " I admit that I monkeyed around a bit too much for a clever monkey" (LS 222 [245]).

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. identifies two types of signifyin(g): motivated and motivated. For an illustration of the latter, Gates, Jr. cites "black musicians who perform each other's standards."[57] Péan's likening his protagonist to Miles Davis, and Pépin's tribute to Miles in the following passage of *Tambour-Babel,* can both be included in this category of "reconfiguration as an act of homage": [58]

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[54] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* xiv.

[55] Gates, Jr. , *The Signifying Monkey* xxi.

[56] Kaufman, *Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire* 145

[57] Gates, Jr., *Signifying Monkey* xxvii.

[58] Gates, Jr., *Signifying Monkey* xvii.

> *Miles Davis... Un tranchant de trompette zèbre l'air. Souffle fluide. Miles, libre soufleur de verre! Déconstruction! Accelerando, ritardando, rubato! Comme une pierre taillée, montre les strates! Black Power! Dissonances! Délace le fouet de la trompette... Un son est un trou où cacher ton trésor...* Miles ahead! [...]. (TB 214)

Gates, Jr. compares this unmotivated style of musical quoting to pastiche in literature; evident in Maximin's multiple revisions of the texts of Suzanne and Aimé Césaire in *Lone Sun*. On the other hand, Gates, Jr. relates motivated signifyin(g) to parody, underlining its intention to critique. In *Zombi Blues*, an analysis of the conversation in that takes place between Gaby and "Une Blanche," both guests at a prestigious house party, provides a classic example of motivated signifyin(g). Despite the white woman's lack of knowledge about jazz, she tries to seduce Gabriel with the hopes that he is a famous musician, specially invited by the wealthy Cameroonian host. Whereas in fact, Gabriel is at the party, indulging in the free alcohol at the invitation of Nando Sánchez, the owner of the "Sensation Bar" where Gaby performs. Annoyed by the woman's groupie-like worship, the trumpeter decides to have some fun at her expense:

> - Rappelle-moi comment tu t'appelles, mon beau, fait la fille, calepin et stylo en en main, au cas où je tomberais sur un de tes disques au magasin . . .
> -Kenny G., soupire D'ArqueAngel.
> -Hé, je connais ça, ce nom-là!
> -C'est normal. J'ai enregistré avec Céline Dion. (ZB 154-155)

To jazz audiophiles, the name Kenny G. is synonymous with no talent.[59] Nevertheless, his watered-down jazz recordings have received mass market success, particularly with pop

[59] I have seen musicians wearing T-shirts with a symbol barring his name.

audiences impressed by the saxophonist's Guinness World Book record for holding a note for a ludicrous length of time. Similarly, Montreal pop singer Céline Dion's sentimental love songs have earned her international status in the pop world and established her as a household name, but her songs have little to do with the jazz idiom. Therefore, Péan's passage can be read as an implicit wink to readers familiar with jazz . For other readers, "most of these interwoven mysteries impede the plot in the manner of detective fiction by depicting, as does jazz, several simultaneous actions whose relationship is not apparent."[60]

Understanding signifyin(g) is therefore based on the reader's ability and effort to differentiate between surface and latent content.

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[60] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 230.

Quoting

[...] la tentative du créateur ne se limite pas à imiter quelqu'un, même s'il est prestigieux, mais consiste à essayer de trouver une voie originale, à partir des influences subies.

-Ernest Pépin
"L'Itinéraire d'un écrivain guadeloupéen"
Condé, Penser la créolité 205

I must be a creator myself [...] That doesn't mean I haven't taken ideas from other people, but when I've done it, I've made a creation out of that in itself. Made a thing with my own conception.
- Dizzy Gillespie
Taylor, Notes and Tones, 131

Maximin, Péan and Pépin use intertextuality[61] in their texts as a means of paying homage to their influences, demonstrating their knowledge of Caribbean heritage and testing their reader's awareness of the same material. Intertextuality in literature has a parallel function to quoting (or sampling) in jazz. During an improvisation, a performer may refer to another player or tune, in the same manner that an author cites another writer or text within the framework of his/her novel. Since Maximin, Péan and Pépin combine these two

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[61] I will not delve into intertextuality as it is beyond the musical criteria for this study. For those who are interested, there are a number of comprehensive studies that discuss Aimé Césaire's influence in Maximin's work, namely Danielle Dumontet's article: "Antillean Authors and Their Models: Daniel Maximin and Raphaël Confiant." Kaufman also notes intertextual references to feminist writer Hélène Cixous in *Lone Sun.*. A short book review by Carrol Coates acknowledges Péan's inclusion of elements from Jacques Stephen Alexis's novels, *Les Arbres Musiciens* et *L'Espace d'un cillement.* In *Tambour-Babel,* I noticed intertextual references to Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Telumée Miracle.*

practices by integrating musical references into their books, I will name this procedure "intermusicality", in order to acknowledge the combination of these two genres. *Lone Sun, Zombi Blues and Tambour-Babel* include a litany of intermusical references cited in the form of musicianvc names, jazz festivals, song titles, lyric fragments, and musical movements such as the blues, swing, and bebop.[62]

The chapter titles in *Zombi Blues* provide an example of intermusicality. As noted in Péan's glossary, which names the composers for his chapter titles, "Les mélomanes avertis auront noté que les titres des chapitres renvoient à des oeuvres plus ou moins connues du répertoire du jazz." (ZB 286 "Glossaire"). Nevertheless, even if the reader is unfamiliar with these jazz tunes, their titles provide clues as to the mood and content of each chapter. For instance, the second chapter, entitled "*Melancholia*" after a Duke Ellington composition, is devoted to the exposition of Gaby and Laura's tumultuous love affair. The ill-fated lovers, brother and sister through Gaby's adoption, are both melancholic because they cannot be together. After years of separation, they reunite on the day of their father's/adoptive father's funeral. As Laura suspects, her brother avoids the official ceremony and visits the cemetery late in the evening. They leave the graveyard together and head to Gaby's motel to get reacquainted. While Laura drives her car, Gaby's flips through the radio stations stopping at singer Helen Merrill's interpretation of "What's New?" Although Péan does not include the lyrics, jazz aficianados know that Merrill's sorrowful rendition is the perfect

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[62] See discography for more detail.

accompaniment for the reunion of these star-crossed lovers:

What's new, how is the world treating you?
You haven't changed a bit,
Handsome as ever, I must admit.

What's new, how did that romance come through?
We haven't met since then,
Gee, but it's nice to see you again

What's new, probably I'm boring you,
But seeing you was grand,
And you were sweet to offer your hand, I understand.

Adieu, pardon my asking what's new.
Of course, you couldn't know,
I haven't changed; I still love you so.
(Lyrics by J. Burke / B. Haggart)

Similarly, a reader unfamiliar with the jazz tradition might overlook Pépin's implicit reference to singer Billie Holiday's famous recording of "Strange Fruit," in *Tambour-Babel.* Pépin's sentence, *"Ce ne sont pas des fruits qui pendent des arbres mais des gorges d'hommes noires . . ."* (TB 146) recalls Holiday's striking metaphor for lynching:

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees [...]
(Lyrics: Lewis Allen)

Likewise, in *Lone Sun*, Maximin relies on "Body and Soul" as the theme song for Siméa's love life. Siméa first hears the song when Coleman Hawkins plays it at the "Cuban Cabana" at the end of her love affair with Ariel, her white lover. She later recognizes the tune when Louis-Gabriel plays it on his clarinet. This piece functions like Proust's "Sonata" in

Remembrance of Things Past. The melody triggers a memory of things 'past' surrounding the song, in much the same way that the drum symbolizes Africa for diaspora blacks.

Maximin and Péan also make intermusical allusions to the jazz idiom through their choice of certain character names.[63] In *Lone Sun*, the name, "Louis-Gabriel", at once pays tribute to Guadeloupean hero (and violinist) *Louis*-Delgrès; legendary trumpeter and founding father of jazz *Louis* Armstrong; and the ArcAngel *Gabriel*, a trumpeter from the Gospels and a hero in the black church. A statement made by trumpeter Kenny Dorham reinforces the connection between these two names: "Well, my sister heard Louis Armstrong, in about 1936, and she mentioned the fact that they called him Gabriel, saying he must be the Gabriel written about in the Bible."[64] It is no mere coincidence that the name "Gabriel" reappears in *Zombi Blues*. Not only is Péan's main character a trumpeter, but he is also the leader of his own jazz group called the "Gabriel D'ArqueAngel Quintet" (ZB 34).

Péan's description of Gabriel pays tribute to another trumpeter--Miles Davis, who happens to be one of the author's favorite musicians.[65] According to Amiri Baraka, Péan is not alone among diaspora artists who turn to Miles for inspiration: "There are few artists of my generation, whether writers, painters, dancers, who do not know his [Miles's] work, and

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[63] Pépin also makes intertextual allusions through his choice of certain character names, however, they do not refer to the jazz idiom. For instance, Vélo and Ti-Céleste are patterned after real *gwoka* musicians.

[64] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 230.

[65] Péan's music collection consists of over 100 Miles Davis CDs including numerous bootleg recordings. Olivier, interview, *Stanley Péan: L'oeuvre au noir* 10.

who are not influenced in some ways by his work [...] Who have not stayed up all night whacking away at the typewriter while "Walkin'" "Steamin'" or "Cookin'" made the darkness give up its lonely aesthetic to art."[66]

Le "Sombre Mage,"[67] as Péan likes to refer to Miles, serves as the model for his protagonist. Consider, for example, Gaby's playing style; his "sonorité voilée"(ZB 31) evokes Davis's trademark muted horn. His stance with "tête inclinée, trompette embouchée pointée vers le sol" (ZB 34) follows what Miles once said about himself: "You can tell everything about the way I play by watching how I stand."[68] The trumpeter's signature Serengetti sunglasses are also indicative of Miles's attention to style. Gabriel's moody, anti-social behavior, characterized by his unexpected exit from the stage show at the "Sensation Bar" (ZB 88), is equally reminiscent of what was called "the Miles Davis mystique" in jazz circles.[69] Puerto Rican bar owner Nando Sánchez expresses his disapproval about Gaby's deliberate lack of interaction with the audience: "Ne t'avise plus jamais de me faire ce coup à la Miles: quitter la scène en plein milieu du premier *set!*"(ZB 103). In his autobiography, Davis explains his attitude toward the audience: "I stopped talking to the audience because they weren't coming to hear me speak but to hear the music I was playing. A lot of people

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[66] Jones (Baraka), *The Music: Reflections on Jazz and the Blues* (New York: Morrow, 1987) 290.

[67] Péan, "Portrait de l'auteur" 7.

[68] Sidran, *Talking Jazz* 5.

[69] Miles Davis, *The Autobiography of Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989):229.

thought I was aloof and I was."[70] Miles's distaste for the 'entertainer' aspect of the music industry differentiated his performance style from those of Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie. Davis has acknowledged the talent of these trumpeters and their influence on him as players, however, he disapproved of "the way they used to laugh and grin"[71] because he felt it presented an "Uncle Tom" persona to the audience.[72] Péan underlines this difference between Miles and his predecessors when Gaby jokes to himself, saying, "Peut-être devrait-il s'esclaffer à la manière du vieux Satchmo [Armstrong], qui, d'un éclat de rire, balayait sous le tapis les tracasseries du quotidien " (ZB 124).

Gaby's sister, Laura, is an equally mysterious character whose name is associated in the text with David Raksin's haunting composition with the same name. Most jazz fans would make the connection between Péan's heroine and the famous jazz standard recorded by numerous musicians including Ella Fitzgerald and Charlie Parker. However, for those readers who have not caught on by page 54 of the novel, Péan makes the affiliation explicit by citing Nat King Cole's rendition of the Johnny Mercer lyrics:

> *Laura is the face in the misty light*
> *Footsteps that you hear down the hall*
> *Laughter that floats on a summer night*
> *That you can never quite recall*
> *And you see Laura on the train that is passing through*
> *Those eyes how familiar they seem*
>
> *She gave your very first kiss to you*
> *That was Laura, but she's only a dream.*(ZB 54)

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[70] Davis, *The Autobiography* 180.

[71] Davis, *The Autobiography* 83.

[72] Davis, *The Autobiography* 83.

Even jazz audiophiles may be unaware of this composition's interesting genesis, which is discussed in K.Kalinak's astute analysis "Not exactly classical, but sweet". Originally scored for "Laura" (1944), a film based on the novel by Vera Caspary, Kalinak explains that the choice of theme song was a source of conflict between the author Caspary, the composer David Raksin, and the director and producer, Otto Preminger. Caspary conceived Laura as a liberated woman, Raksin thought Laura was a romantic and Preminger considered her a temptress whose multiple followers (Waldo Lydecker, Shelby Carpenter and Lieutenant Mark McPherson) were a confirmation of her overt sexuality.[73] Whether Péan's intermusical choice of "Laura" is related to this controversy is unknown. Nonetheless, *Zombi Blues* highlights Laura's ambiguous character as a mother, a wife, and a lover. Her adulterous affair with her adopted brother Gaby transgresses the taboos of incest, even though they are not consanguine brother and sister. Here, Péan makes no value judgements; he presents the story and lets the reader make up his/her own mind.

For the score, Preminger chose George and Ira Gershwin's "Summertime" and Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" as possible theme songs for Laura, because as K. Kalinak notes, film music, which by tradition was classical, "used jazz as a musical trope for otherness, whether sexual or racial."[74] Jazz drummer, Eddie Lockjaw Davis makes a similar

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[73] K. Kalinak, "Not Exactly Classical, But Sweet." (n.p.: University of Wiscousin Press, 1972) [McMaster University Custom Courseware, Music 2A03: Music for Film, Television & Cartoons, prepared by Dr. J. Deaville, January 1997]: 36.

[74] Kalinak, *Not Exactly Classical But Sweet* 37.

observation:

> Jazz was always put in the context of something bad, something evil. You can look at old movies - anytime there was a scene where girl meets boy, college type, clean-cut, there were violins in the background or an accordion. If the film showed a wayward daughter or a delinquent son, a hot jazz trumpet was used as background music.[75]

Kalinak further claims that while jazz struck Preminger as the ideal vehicle to imply Laura's non-conformity to white middle-class America's conception of womanhood, Raksin, on the other hand, wanted to escape the stereotypical alliance between jazz and the sexual lasciviousness associated with black culture. Although Raksin was known for his modern arrangements and frequent use of jazz instrumentation, he decided to subvert the "classical score's formulaic conventions for the representation of female sexuality"[76] by ironically opting for the classical instrumentation typically reserved for loftier characters. However, while the classical score was normally composed of multiple themes, Raksin's use of "Laura" dominated the score, reoccurring at several intervals throughout the movie.

In a similar manner, there is always an aura of mystery whenever Laura appears in Péan's text: "Une sensation d'irréalité imprègne l'atmosphère" (ZB 32), or "un brin mystérieuse"(ZB 35). Mercer's lyrics express Gaby's feelings of "mélancolie" and "manque" (ZB 36) which are generated by his unrequited love for Laura, a woman who is always just

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[75] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 90.

[76] Kalinak, *Not Exactly Classical But Sweet* 38.

beyond his reach. Laura's haunting presence is evoked by "les draps imprégnés" (ZB 36) with her lingering scent after she spends the night in Gaby's motel. Later as Gaby makes love to Suzanne, his mind is filled with thoughts of Laura, "brillant à la manière d'une apparition" (ZB 77). Over the radio, Chet Baker sings, *"There's a girl here and she's almost you"*, from Elvis Costello's song, "Almost Blue."

The effective incorporation of such intermusical references in the texts of Maximin, Péan and Pépin create rich polyphonic texts with multiple layers of meaning. Yet, the success of these novels resides on the authors' abilities to balance admiration, imitation and innovation to create unique works of art. Personal style is an aspiration for any artist. For a jazz musician, it is the highest accomplishment possible. Unlike the emphasis on "proper" technique in classical music, jazz is tolerant of unconventional approaches which are considered the hallmarks of innovation; for example, Lester Young's angled saxophone, and Dizzy Gillespie's bent trumpet bell and puffed cheeks. These idiosyncracies are prized for their ability to represent the individual. Jazz amateurs initially learn by patterning themselves after their favorite players[77], but they must eventually move beyond these models if they hope to graduate into the world of jazz performance. As Lester Young stated: "A man can only be a stylist if he makes up his mind not to copy anybody."[78] In *Zombi Blues,* Gaby's alto saxophonist, Picard, commits the ultimate sin in jazz: he is a copyist, in this case an

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[77] This patterning can include copying a player's sound; choice of clothes; particular way of breathing, phrasing, talking or holding their horn; as well as stance and stage presence.

[78] Daniels, "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" 167.

"ornithologue", imitator of "Bird", the legendary saxophonist, Charlie Parker. Gaby's terse reaction to Picard's Parker stylings reveals the degree to which copying is shunned within the jazz community: "Écoute, si je voulais entendre Bird, je ne t'engagerais pas; je ferais jouer un disque!" (ZB 53). Pianist Errol Garner makes a similar assertion: "I'd just as soon hear the real thing than the imitator."[79] One of the reasons jazz musicians disapprove of imitation is that it goes against the "flux constant" that gives jazz its vital flow, keeping it in a continuous state of metamorphosis. Drummer Art Blakey explains the infatuation with Bird and the need to look the legend in order for jazz to evolve: "The music goes on. Charlie Parker wasn't the end of it. The sun goes down and we go through a period of darkness, then all of a sudden somebody rises up, the sun comes up and there's a great leader in music."[80]

For an innovative artist like trumpeter Miles Davis, the future of jazz is in jeopardy because the next generation of young players are neglecting to develop an individual "voice"or "sound". He felt impelled to declare: "Lester Young had his own sound, Coleman Hawkins, Clifford Brown, Fats. You know, there's no more "sound" today [...] it's ... during those days when you didn't hear anybody to copy, guys got their *own* sound."[81] In *Zombi Blues,* what differentiates Picard's slavish imitation of "Bird" from Gaby's affinities with Miles is Gaby's ability to make his horn express personal emotion. When Gaby plays at the

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[79] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 96-97.

[80] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 249.

[81] Sidran, *Talking Jazz* 11.

gravesite of his recently deceased adoptive father, he is not concerned with how much he sounds like his icon. Although Péan describes Gaby's "tristesse pudique"(ZB 31) as reminiscent of Miles, the feeling beneath, "si spleenétique qu'elle vous lacère, corps et âme," (ZB 31) is undeniably Gaby's. Charlie Parker, one of the most imitated jazz musicians in the world, cautioned his followers: "If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."[82] Picard fails to recognize that experience and emotion are impossible to simulate. His playing will never achieve the signature style of "Bird", or "Hawk", because his solos do not emanate from his *Body and Soul.*

In *Lone Sun,* Siméa and her daughter Marie-Gabriel undergo the painful process of finding their own voices. For Siméa, the forced abortion of her first child causes her to question the trust she had placed in her bourgeois mother Rozette and her white lover Ariel, who conspired together with Mme Léonne to kill her baby. Following the loss of her child, which Siméa describes as "a season in hell" and "a rape," she finds that poems such as Breton's "Free Love" and the lyrics of Alberto Beltran's love song lack authenticity. Before her abortion, she thought these artists expressed her reality: "All my hope lived on absolute trust in our poets and musicians" (LS 133 [248]). After her traumatic experience, all she finds in their art is "[womens'] desires filtered through [mens'] eyes"(LS 132 [147]). She grants "death" (LS 128 [142]) to Breton and surrealism and reclaims her black poets.

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[82] Sidran, *Talking Jazz* 5.

Siméa soon discovers that the black male poets do not speak on her behalf either. She reproaches them their neglect of womens' contributions to French Antillean history in their texts: "Where are the women in your "Bois d'ébène"(Ebony wood), Roumain? Where are they in your *West Indies, Ltd.*, Guillén? What do we do, Damas, in your *Pigments*?" (LS 134 [149]). Siméa's daughter, Marie-Gabriel, levels a similar complaint at Caribbean poets, revolutionaries, novelists and historians who think that the "*only function of black women is to give birth to [Caribbean] heroes*" (LS 105 [118]). Both Marie-Gabriel and her mother criticize the glorification of heroes like Delgrès, whose legendary suicide is like "the tree that hides the resistance of the forest" (LS 185 [205]). To combat women's status as non-history in French Antillean literary discourse, Marie-Gabriel ensures that her texts do not "*forget to let the mothers speak, because they have roots and bear fruit*"(LS 107[119]). Marie-Gabriel's artistic creation is a form of maternity because it brings to life the voices of women (Miss Béa, Ti-Carole, Angela, Siméa) neglected in patriarchal French Antillean texts.

Only when Siméa frees herself from her male models of identification can she voice her emotions through her own literary creation-- a journal to her unborn child (a son which she transforms into a daughter). Siméa imparts her new knowledge to her mentor, Suzanne Césaire, by scribbling some words of advice concerning the author's use of Frobenius as a secondary source in her *Tropiques* article, "What's a Martinican?":

> Suzanne, you want to find the absolute depths of our black essence and you go looking for it in the pages of a white anthropologist! Then you bring in reinforcements from psychoanalysis, ethnography, Marxism, and surrealism! Will we always need *them* and their *reasons*? What's the use of rejecting their reason only to adopt their

> science? It's up to us to invent a future, without expecting much from the African past and the European present. This is very important. I believe that *identification is the enemy of identity*. (LS 191 [212])

Despite Siméa's admiration for Suzanne Césaire, she cautions her mentor not to appropriate European models, nor idealize ancestral Africa to voice the French Antillean reality. In a later conversation with Louis-Gabriel regarding the above passage, Siméa stresses that French Caribbean artists must "adapt" not "adopt" (LS 197 [218]) outside influences in order to establish their own identity. Though models like surrealism helped *négritude* writers rehabilitate the black voice weakened by years of colonial enslavement, Maximin, like Siméa, feels the moment has come to constitute an identity "sans obligatoirement passer par une identification."[83]

Siméa also passes her new knowledge along to Toussaint Louverture, a dissident during the Pétainist occupation of the Guadeloupe, as well as the friend and fellow band member of her new lover, Louis-Gabriel. When Toussaint (a mulatto) declares he does not consider himself "nigger-black enough" (LS 225 [249]) to share the name of the famous Haitian hero Toussaint Louverture, Siméa counters his feelings of inadequacy by stating her new found sense of identity: "For me, authenticity doesn't mean giving value to a slice of yourself to the detriment of the rest, but rather understanding and offering yourself entirely, with light and shadow [...]"(LS 224 [248]), in other words, expressing oneself *Body and*

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[83] Mpoyi-Buatu, "Entretien avec Daniel Maximin" 43.

Soul. She warns Toussaint that until he can accept himself fully, "successful acts will be nothing more than illusory reprieves in a reality of self-destruction, that [he] will dress up in reassuring forms of sacrifice for freedom or the effects of dry rum on [his] music" (LS 225[250]). This quote suggests Toussaint's horn playing will lack conviction if he does not feel at ease with himself. Siméa, through her awakening as a woman and as a writer, has discovered that one must have a sound sense of self before one's voice can emerge.

Unlike Toussaint's playing, which Siméa implies might find its inspiration in alcohol, Louis-Gabriel's saxophone stylings do not "compensate for a lack, an uneasiness, a failure; every note was the expression of the most naked, simple, generous desire to create" (LS 226[250]). Louis-Gabriel's musical sincerity has a tremendous effect on Angela, an intern at the asylum where Siméa works. His music has a therapeutic effect on the mute girl, eventually stirring her to use the voice that had refused to sound since she witnessed the shocking death of her father years before. Interestingly, Louis-Gabriel's playing speaks to both Siméa and Angela, even though Maximin's text hints that music, like poetry, has tended to exclude women, or place them in an inferior position to that of men. For example, Mahlia, the singer at the "Cuban Cabana" tells Siméa: " If they could imitate our voices, musicians would gladly do without us [female singers?]. Music is men's property" (LS 134 [149]). In Siméa's apartment, Louis-Gabriel expresses his surprise when he sees Siméa owns a conga drum: "Can you play this big *male* drum?. . . You're a nurse at the asylum?" (LS 171[190] emphasis mine). Louis-Gabriel's question implies that a female nurse could not possibly

own a drum, let alone play one! Siméa answers: "I've always dreamed of playing those so-called men's instruments, drums, and the bass too" (LS 171[190]).

Louis-Gabriel expresses equal surprise to "meet someone [...] in Saint-Claude -- especially a *woman* -- who likes jazz so much" (LS 169[188] emphasis mine). His reaction is indicative of the lack of recognition women receive in the jazz community, music anthologies and jazz history books. The *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD* acknowledges the chauvinistic attitude toward female players such as pianist Mary Lou Williams (1910-81), who "[...] was treated dismissively by male colleagues for much of her career," even though Duke Ellington described her as " perpetually contemporary,"[84] and Count Basie said, "If they were looking for somebody who could play in all them bad ass keys Hawk was calling for, Mary Lou was the one to get."[85] The assumptions regarding women in jazz are that they are, by default, vocalists and inferior to male instrumentalists, as Mahlia's earlier statement attests. The opening sentence in the entry for female horn player Ingrid Jenson in the *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD* states that her talent, "wholly confounds the notion that 'girls' can't play effective jazz horn."[86] While many female singers like Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Sarah Vaughan have enjoyed a certain success for their contribution to jazz, regrettably female jazz instrumentalists continue to be overlooked and overshadowed by their male counterparts.

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[84] Cook and Morton, *Penguin Guide to Jazz* on CD 1367.

[85] Murray, *Good Morning Blues* 149.

[86] Cook and Morton, *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD* 702

Like Maximin, Pépin mentions the affiliation between man and the drum in *Tambour-Babel*. Éloi will not allow Hermancia near his drum because he believes that "un peau [drumskin] vit selon les humeurs de la lune et d'une manière générale le tambour se méfie de l'odeur des femmes" (TB 25). This conception of the drum as a male instrument can be traced back to Africa, where, by tradition, the drums "are normally played by men only."[87] In Pépin's text, the ability to play the drum is associated with virility. Napo tries to win Sosso's heart through poetry, but to Sosso his failure as a drummer is indicative of his lack of talent as a lover. According to Sosso, "À la manière de battre on reconnaît l'amant!" (TB 116). Likewise, the town gossips nickname Napo "concombre sans graines"(TB 127) to suggest his impotence. Napo's sexual maturity and mastery of the drum coincide in the novel. Only after his first success on the drum, "le jour de [sa] résurr(é)rection" (TB 170), does Napo notice "un semblant de considération" (TB 169) from Sosso. When Napo masters the drum, the gossips revise their original statement: "Napo avait tout ce qu'il fallait pour faire un bon mari [...]"(ZB 221). However, part of Napo's sexual, spiritual and musical awakening includes his realization that his true love is not Sosso, but l'aveugle, keeper of his *djimbé*.

For Marie-Gabriel, the mother-daughter bond is central to her quest to discover her own voice. In her article, "Mirroring and Mothering in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Telumée Miracle* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*," Ronnie Scharfman underscores

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[87] Bebey , *African Music* 102.

the importance the maternal gaze, which "represents the first external mirror, eventually internalized, into which a girl-child looks to discover her identity."[88] Unfortunately, Siméa's death in childbirth deprives Marie-Gabriel of this critical stage of identification that later aids in differentiation. Her orphaned status can be compared to the Exile in search of his/her origins prior to the cultural rupture with the native land, mother Africa. To compensate for the void of her absent mother, Marie-Gabriel writes, "Mother's Song", a fictional (re)creation of her mother's love affair with Louis-Gabriel and Marie-Gabriel's subsequent (re)birth. It is this (re)birth which finally enables the daughter to individuate from her mother. As Scharfman points out in her essay "Rewriting the Cesaires; Daniel Maximin's *Caribbean Discourse*," Marie-Gabriel's new identity is evident in her shift to the first person singular, "je", from the second person singular, "tu".[89] After her (re)birth, she is finally able to say, "YOU and I equals us, Siméa and Marie-Gabriel [...]" (LS 248 [273]). The seven waves of blood that accompany her birth and cause her mother's death, are also associated with the French Antillean Renaissance's struggle to establish its own voice. One can interpret Marie-Gabriel's assertion to her mother, "Yes, I come out of you, but I don't want to keep you,"(LS 248 [274]) as Maximin's implicit advice to the French Caribbean literary community which still clings to Césaire and the *négritude* movement. Indeed, Maximin seems to imply Césaire has done his job; *négritude* has run its course; and the time has come to move forward.

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[88] Ronnie Scharfman, "Mirroring and Mothering in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 89.

[89] Scharfman, " Rewriting the Cesaires" 233.

Like the characters in their novels, Maximin, Péan, and Pépin face similar struggles as writers to find their own "voie/voix". They are required to distance themselves from their influences in order to establish their own distinctive style. In his interview with Thomas Mpoyi-Buatu, Maximin explains how the sun in his novel is representative of this distance necessary for creation; the sun nutures growth but from a distance. In Maximin's perception, "cette distance est nécessaire pour essayer de percevoir, de comprendre les autres, de comprendre soi-même, de comprendre sa communauté et ensuite de créer à partir de là: faire un tableau, faire de la musique," and of course, write a novel.[90] In *Lone Sun*, Marie-Gabriel speaks on behalf of many writers when she says: "In those days, we were disciples, we knew our favourite works almost by heart: *Cahier d'un retour, Bois d'ébène, Black Label,* and *Pigments.* How long it takes to stop living as layered plants propagated from our chosen fathers" (LS 255[282]). This quote stresses the need for the Caribbean literary community to move beyond outdated models that no longer express the current reality.

For his part, Pépin claims he became "un petit per plus autonome . . . plus Ernest Pépin, quoi . . ."[91] when he took a step back from Césaire and *négritude* literature. Simply because writers or musicians individuate from their influences to become separate entities, does not mean they no longer respect the inspiration and instruction that their models provided. To quote an old saying : "We all stand on the shoulders of giants." Much like

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[90] Mpoyi-Buatu, *Entretien avec Daniel Maximin* 47- 48.

[91] Ernest Pépin, interview by Patrick Chamoiseau, "Ernest Pépin: Boucan de mots libres", *Antilla* no. 428(5-11 Avril 1991): 28.

Pépin's character Napo, who listens to music from around the world, Péan the youngest writer in this study finds inspiration from a wide variety of sources inside and outside the diaspora. In his interview with Nathalie Olivier, Péan cites Edgar Allan Poe, Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, Rod Serling, Harlan Ellison, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Borgès, Kafka, Anne Hébert, and Jacques Ferron as his mentors.[92] His musical tastes are equally diverse. He admits to liking " de musique américaines (jazz, soul, R'n'B, blues, pop-rock) mais [il est] aussi un inconditionnel de Brel, de Ferré, de Gréco et autres géants de la chanson francophone."[93] Péan succeeds in combining these multiple influences to create a style that expresses his own reality as a Haitian writer living in Montreal. Literary icons, such as Césaire and Damas, will continue to be rites of passage for young Caribbean writers retracing their cultural roots, but the new generation of writers must also build upon these archetypes in order for the genre to evolve. Thus, *négritude* became *antillanité*, which in turn became *créolité*, which is now *créolisation*, which will become . . . , and so we have the "flux constant". As Marie-Gabriel states: "Today, we can't stop being born and reborn" (LS 256 [282]).

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[92] Péan, interview with Olivier, "L'Oeuvre au noir" 9.

[93] Péan, interview with Olivier, "L'Oeuvre au noir" 9.

Rhythm and Repetition

> *[...] for us music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how we first managed to emerge from the plantation: esthetic form in our cultures must be shaped from these oral structures.*
>
> *-Édouard Glissant*
> *Caribbean Discourse--"Overtures" 248-249*

> *La musique est pour moi presque tutélaire lorsque j'écris.*
>
> *-Ernest Pépin*
> *Interview with Chamoiseau 25*

Although improvisation, call-and-response and quoting are important aspects of jazz, rhythm is the music's motivating force, its crucial ingredient.[94] As Duke Ellington states, "It Don't Mean a Thing If it Ain't Got That Swing." Newcomers, however, often have difficulty grasping jazz's syncopation and polyrhythmic layerings. For instance, an uninitiated listener will typically clap on beats one and three, the strong beats in Western music, instead of beats two and four, which constitute the "back beat" in jazz. The black audience by contrast, associates jazz rhythms with the heartbeat of Africa, the drum. Francis

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[94] In classical music, percussion is generally limited to rhythmic accompaniment, with the exception of an occasional tympani solo at a musical climax. By contrast, rhythm has always had a central function in jazz music. However, it was not until the advent of bebop that rhythm section instruments such as drums, bass and guitar were acknowledged as solo instruments on par with melodic instruments like sax, trumpet and trombone.

Bebey asserts that "the drum, is without question, the instrument that best expresses the inner feelings of Black Africa."[95] For diaspora blacks, the drum is the link with mother Africa, the bridge between the past and the present. In *Tambour-Babel*, Pépin tells us that "le tambour est bon pour maintenir le lien (une chaîne de morts sous les eaux salées) entre la terre de Guinée et Grosse-Montagne" (TB 24). The drum survived the Middle Passage providing the foundation for black musical forms such as *gwoka,* salsa, *zouk* and jazz. Today, the drum supplies the beat for black literature as well.

The drum pulsates loudest in the novels of Maximin, Péan and Pépin in passages alluding to the traumatic uprooting of Africans from their native land. In the opening chapter of *Zombi Blues,* the sound of the drums fill the Haitian night, accompanying "les battements [du] coeur" (ZB 20) of Gaby's mother, as she steals through the dangerous streets of Port-au-Prince hoping to save her twin babies from Minville. Péan's poetic description, personifies Africa as a weeping mother: "L'Afrique chantonne, dans cette langue de tam-tams dolents, un blues plus noir que la nuit. Elle pleure, l'Afrique, telle une mère à qui on a arraché ses enfants" (ZB 18). He also employs the drum as a metaphor for "[...] le coeur déchiré de l'Afrique ancestrale qui emplit l'air de ses hoquets chagrinés" (ZB 18). Péan makes use of the drum to equate the cultural rupture caused by the slave trade to the biological rupture between Gaby's mother and her sons. A similar passage appears later in the novel when

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[95] Bebey, *African Music* 92. The author reminds us that drums are not the only African instrument, as is often the assumption. There are also a number of string, wind, air and keyboard instruments, as well as the prominent use of the human voice.

Gaby, kidnapped and drugged by Minville, "[...]entend le grondement sourd des tambours ancestraux, souvenirs de ces cérémonies à la veille des grandes chasses enfouis au fond de la mémoire génétique"(ZB 216). In *Poetics of Relation,* Glissant supplies the image of a fibril (PR 5), a diagram akin to an umbilical cord, to evoke this "mémoire génétique"(ZB 216) that links the French Caribbean to Africa. This cultural dislocation is also evoked in *Lone Sun,* when Adrien writes in his notebook: "Africa is the absent mother of my childhood" (LS 88 [99]). Adrien's feelings of exile echo those of the orphaned Marie-Gabriel, who writes "Jonathan's Notebook" and "Mother's Song" in an effort to reconstitute the cultural and biological ruptures that characterize her life as well as those of the French Antillean people .

The heartbeat is the first link between mother and child. According to Berliner, "Some consider that the earliest musical conditioning takes place in the womb, where the heartbeat of the mother accompanies her baby's growth. Late in its development the unborn child also reponds to sounds outside the womb as they are transmitted through the mother's body [...]."[96] In *Tambour-Babel,* Napo describes this pre-natal phenomenon from the foetus's point of view. To the comforting rhythms of his mother's heart are added the *gwoka* rhythms which his father taps out "[...] à même la peau de manman Hermancia avec la boule de ses doigts"(TB 35). Napo responds to his father's drum sequences "[...] en tapant du pied: *Toum-toutoum! Toum-toutoum!"*(TB 34) in a sort of Morse Code communication.

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[96] Berliner, *Thinking Jazz* 21.

After nine months, Napo is ready to individuate from his mother, and live "[...]le battement de l'en-dehors"(TB 36). According to Berliner, "the birth itself can be viewed as the newborn's first performance."[97]Later, Napo inherits the "Royal" *djimbé* that beats like "le coeur de la terre" (TB 188). This recalls Louis-Gabriel's improvisation at the nurses' party in *Lone Sun,* when he plays "[...] a dizzying suite of calls in rhythm with the beating hearts of earth and drummers" (LS 211[233]).

Glissant concurs that "the embryonic rhythm of the drum," can also be found in Creole speech.[98] This is not surprising if one appreciates that in Africa the drums are said to "talk". Francis Bebey reveals that the "method of playing spoken phrases on a drum is particularly appropriate in the case of tonal languages, such as *Yoruba* or certain *Bantu* languages,"[99] where it is "possible to tune an instrument so that the music it produces is linguistically comprehensible."[100] When Bazile plays in *Tambour-Babel,* the drum "[...] parle et déparle, pleure et dépleure, chante et déchante, soupire et dessoupire [...]" (TB 47). To surpass Bazile, Napo must come to the realization "[...] qu'il ne suffisait pas de jouer mais qu'il fallait parler à travers le tambour" (TB 219). Just as the drummers in his novel strive to make their instruments speak, Pépin endeavors to infuse his written text with the subtleties

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[97] Berliner, *Thinking Jazz* 21.

[98] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 124.

[99] Bebey, *African Music* 95.

[100] Bebey, *African Music* 119. Bebey notes that the hourglass drum (94) and the slit drum (119) lend themselves to speech production.

of spoken language. In an interview with Patrick Chamoiseau, Pépin concedes:"Il y a dans mes poèmes une dimension orale qui correspond à mon rythme intérieur. Il faut savoir aussi que j'aime beaucoup la musique, que je pratique le violon."[101] Pépin is able to apply his musical knowledge to his written style, which is apparent in *Tambour-Babel's* circumvention of orthodox French language usage and conventional narrative processes. In a review of *Tambour-Babel* , Hal Wylie comments:

> There is little plot or action in *Tambour-Babel*, and even less character development in the parable/poem instead; Pépin delights in giving the reader long descriptions of the metaphysics of drumming -- his game is transforming the French language into "Creole music", producing a spicy linguistic stew which may be (intentionally) rather difficult going for non-Creole readers.[102]

Pépin's approach is, therefore, reminiscent of the African *griot*, and the Creole storyteller who vary tone, revise and repeat to add rhythm to their stories and affect meaning.

In the *Signifying Monkey,* Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls "speakerly" those texts which like Pépin's generate the "illusion of oral narration."[103] Onomatopoeia, enumeration, alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, unconventional punctuation and unorthodox sentence structure are among the myriad of devices incorporated in *Tambour-Babel* and *Lone Sun* to recreate

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[101] Ernest Pépin, "Ernest Pépin: boucan de mots libres," interview by Patrick Chamoiseau 25.

[102] Hal Wylie, review of *Tambour-Babel*, by Ernest Pépin, *World Literature Today* LXXI (1997): 434.

[103] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 181.

the rhythm of speech.[104] For example, Pépin employs onomatopoeia extensively in his text to evoke the tonal variety of the drum (e.g. *Boudoung-boudoung! Ouap!-ouap!*). These drum sounds are interjected throughout the text for emphasis, and to attune the listener's ear to the oral/aural aspect of the novel. Pépin also makes use of enumeration to suggest the rhythm of speech and the drum. Noteworthy is his citing of musicians in multiple genres:

> Myriam [sic: Miriam] Makeba, Harry Belafonte, Cesaria Evoria [sic: Evora], Louis Armstrong, Robert Mavounzy, John Lee Hooker, Ella Fitzgerald, Joséphine Baker, Jessy Norman, Barbara Hendricks, James Brown, Carlos Jobim, Mighty Sparrow, Nina Simone, Bob Marley [...]" (TB 166)[105]

These names highlight the rich musical sources that the author uses as inspiration for this text, while creating a syncopated rhythm made up of repetition (listing) and breaks (commas separating each name on the list).

A number of Pépin's passages use alliteration to create musical movement. The following excerpt evokes a drum being struck (*cogné*) repeatedly:

> Le ka calcule la souffrance. Le ka ne capitule pas, il caracole en tête de toutes les révoltes. Le ka cabale à l'occasion et répète les signes cabalistiques. Le ka câble toutes les

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[104] As mentioned earlier, Péan does not focus on creolizing his language.

[105] Other examples of enumeration in Pépin's text include: the list of things guaranteed to incite Père Délos's anger [this passage includes fourteen occurrences of the word "ceux" and repeated use of the imperfect tense (TB 89)]; Hégésippe's list of lovers: "[...] femmes pygmées, touaregs, norvégiennes, marocaines, "femmes baveuses [...], femmes sèches et chiches [...], femmes-éléphants, femmes velues[etc ...]"(TB 140-141); a list of writers (black and white), "Sablier Aimé Césaire, sablier Saint-John Perse, sablier Guy Tirolien, sablier Pablo Neruda" (TB 165); a list of all those in attendance for Jojo's release from prison: "Les pleureuses, les annonciateurs de mauvais sort, les envoûteurs (TB 228).

> mémoires et décabosse l'oubli. Le ka cabriole et cadenasse les caciques et les caïds. Le ka dessine une nouvelle calandre pour l'espoir et ouvre des ailes de calao-guerrier. Le ka câline le sang et allume un calumet de chaude passion couleur de canna. (TB 53)

The hard "c" and "k" consonants in the above quote emulate the explosive contact of the drummer's hands hitting the head of his instrument. The repeated use of "ca/ka" and "ba" sounds imbue the text with a pronounced beat while the generous use of the consonant *L* creates a lilting counter-rhythm. A similar passage achieves the same drumming effect by repeating words, sentence-structure and punctuation over several lines of text:

> Cognait jusqu'à modifier l'air qu'il respirait. Cognait un scandale de cogner. Cognait à la manière d'un jongleur.[...] Cognait sans débander. À toute! Cognait pour dix mille. À toute! Se mulitpliait en cogner! À toute! Cognait et déréglait les aiguilles du temps. À toute! Cognait et donnait la main à tous les nègres du monde. À tous! Cognait et déverrouillait les volcans. À toute! (TB 159)

The repeated verb "cognait"[106] at the beginning of each sentence, punctuated by the interjection, "À toute/À tous!," as well as the short sentences and intentional use of the

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[106] Pépin's use of word repetition and sequential sentence structure is also evident in the sequence of sentences beginning with "je"followed by a verb in the present tense (TB 115); the repetition of the word "misère" (TB 139); sentences starting with "Ainsi"followed by a noun (TB 143); repetition of "Des sons" followed by the adjectives "clair", "gais", etc. (TB 155); the third person singular pronoun "Il"(Napo) which starts eight consecutive sentences (TB 168); the word "Plaisir" repeated at the opening of six sentences, each phrase ending with ellipsis points (TB 190); repetition of the third person singular pronoun "Elle" (Rosane, Jojo's sister) repeated seven times, each instance followed by a verb in the imperfect tense (TB 201); repetition of "*moi aussi...*"at the end of each paragraph (similar to a musical refrain)(TB 214-15).

exclamation mark[107] all contribute to make this excerpt throb with the rhythm of the drum.

There are several instances in *Tambour-Babel* where Pépin's drumming descriptions parallel his own approach to writing. One example appears on the first page where Pépin depicts Éloi's drum stylings: "Il déroulait ses phrases musicales en longues coulées en introduisant de multiples variations de tonalités, de tempos, de rythmes [...] De temps à autre, il répétait une frappe de façon obsessionnelle, cherchant à atteindre l'âme secrète de tout ce qui portait la vie dans son entourage" (TB 13). Another example appears in Pépin's rendering of Père Délos's *gwoka* technique: "Il détachait des sons expressifs comme des onomatopées. Il les reliait entre eux de longues séquences. Il les répétait dans des combinaisons obsédantes comme des litanies."(TB 118) The "ka" and "cognait" passages mentioned earlier demonstrate Pépin's use of onomatopoeia, word repetition, distinctive punctuation and sentence structure to vary tone and tempo. Elsewhere, the author uses "de longues séquences" such as the sentence spanning four pages to delay the revelation of Hégésippe's identity to the reader (TB 136-139).

Kathleen Gyssels observes similar stylistic techniques in Maximin's efforts to create a Creolized language using "[...] l'omission de la ponctuation, l'émancipation de la syntaxe

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[107] Similar use of punctuation is found in Hermancia's warning to Éloi to be wary of Bazile's false friendship. It contains the repeated use of question and exclamation marks (TB 44); the italicized passages which include generous doses of exclamation marks and suspension points (TB 111, 112, 146, 191, 200, 214-15); the exclamation marks used to express Hermancia's distaste for Bazile's success on the radio (TB 151); the exclamation marks employed to describe the dancers at the drum circle (TB 164); the exclamation marks used to evoke the sounds of the drum, for example, "*Pitang! Pitang*!" (e.g.TB 211); the exclamation marks used to convey Napo's excitement of touring the world with the group Van Lévé (TB 231).

française [et] l'enchaînement des propositions sans subordination."[108] An example of single word repetition is used to describe Siméa, Louis-Gabriel and Toussaint's involvement in dissident political activity: "You three were so warm, you were so thirsty, a good thirst, thirst for fire, thirst for water, thirst for air, but no burning, no drowning, no suffocating"[109] (LS 235 [260]). Elsewhere, alliteration appears in the form of the "Subtle Secret Symbolism" (LS 179 [198] of the three S's," for which Siméa (whose name also begins with an *S*) provides possible answers like sun, Saint-Claude, scorpion, serpent, or siren, *soufrière*, spring, sand, serenade and so on (LS 176 [196]). The rhythm of the call-and-response game is briefly interrupted when Louis-Gabriel suggests "fear" and Siméa answers "mask" (an allusion to Fanon), which of course does not begin with the letter *S*. Siméa proceeds to replace her initial answer with "Spectator" (LS 178 [198]). This sudden stop in the rhythmic flow is referred to as a "break" jazz. Maximin uses the break technique to play with the reader's expectations. His repetitions with variations and sudden breaks resemble the jazz musician's twists and turns through standard melodies seeking new modes of expression that will surprise and delight the attentive listener.

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[108] Kathleen Gyssels, "Le Jazz dans le roman afro-antillais', *Europe* 820-821 (1997) 130.

[109] Single word repetition is also evident in Maximin's use of the word "little" to signify on the frequent use of the word "petit" in the French language: "[...] little this and little that, daybreak that they call little morning [petit matin], little bread [petit pain], little day [petit jour] (LS 126[139] This particular repetition of the word "little" suggest the danger of redundancy present in the French language. Other examples of repeated word use occur with the term "niggers," which appears eight times in one paragraph (LS 242-43[268]) and the inclusion of the song title "Body and Soul" which is also reiterated eight times in one passage (LS 142[156-157]).

In jazz, repetition can appear in the form of a riff, a cell idea that provides a stable foundation for improvisation. Albert Murray describes the riff as "a musical phrase used as a refrain chorus, background chorus, response chorus, echo chorus, and so on." A "riff tune", he explains, "is one constructed mainly of riff choruses,"[110] like Gaby's composition "Zombi Blues," which is constructed of "de petites phrases décousues, répétées inlassablement par la section rythmique, où les cuivres n'interviennent que pour lacérer le semblant de mélodie" (ZB 187-188). In *Lone Sun , Zombi Blues and Tambour-Babel* words, images, and objects recur throughout the text like a riff in a jazz tune. In Péan's novel, for instance, there is the consistent mention of the red eyes of Gaby and Caliban: "[...] ses yeux, presque bridés, brillent d'une lueur écarlate" (ZB 24); "l'éclat surnaturel de ses yeux rouges," (ZB 86); "un regard cruel illuminé d'une lueur écarlate" (ZB 123); "une lueur écarlate au fond de ses iris" (ZB 179); "ses yeux brillaient d'une lueur écarlate" (ZB 205); " Émergeant du brouillard écarlate, il cligne les yeux" (ZB 249); "rougeur lumineuse des pupilles" (ZB 252); "flammes rouges dans le regard" (ZB 258); "la lueur surnaturelle" (ZB 263); "des rubis étincelants" (ZB 264); "les yeux étincelants"(ZB 266). The red eyes are side-effect of Minville's scientific experimentation to transform Gaby and his brother into assassins programmed to realize his "fantasmes sanguinaires" (ZB 184). The numerous allusions to scarlet red eyes evoke the violence inherent in the novel. The increased

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[110] Murray, *Stomping the Blues* 104. Murray explains that the word ' riff' can also function as a verb. Riffing can refer to the act of creating and perfoming riffs; or it it can be used as another name for a jam session.

reference to red eyes is directly proportionate to the increase in bloodshed as the novel progresses to its climax and Gaby's thirst for blood rivals that of his brother's.

Blood also is a reccurring image in Maximin's novel particularly in the descriptions pertaining to Siméa's abortion and Marie-Gabriel's birth. Red's complementary colour, green, is also present in "green socks" (LS 162[179]), "green as Pelamanlou" (LS 164[182]), Angela's green wool socks, green shirt, green belt, green scarf, and green slacks (LS 165[183], 215[237]), the green eyes of Louis-Gabriel, both Jonathans, Marie-Gabriel's friends Adrien and Antoine[111] (LS167[185],179[199], 214[236], 278[306]), "the last emerald-green ray at sunset"(LS 178[198]), and a "sheet of green paper folded in four"(LS 208[229]). Incidently, "Body and Soul" was composed by Johnny "Green." Images, objects, songs and sayings function like jazz riffs by providing stable units for Maximin's otherwise fragmented and discontinuous improvisation.

According to Glissant, "repetition of these ideas does not clarify their expression; on the contrary, it perhaps leads to obscurity."[112] This is certainly the case with many of the repetitions in Maximin's novel which require the reader to catalogue them through shifting time periods. For example, John D.Erickson traces the wanderings of Jonathan's bracelet, from Delgrès, to Ti-Carole, to Louis-Gabriel, to Marie-Gabriel's grandfather Gabriel, and

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[111] Kaufman notes this reoccurrence of green eyes. Kaufman, *Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire* 160.

[112] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 4.

eventually to Marie-Gabriel herself.[113] Hence, certain repetitions become less obtuse as the story unfolds, such as the affiliation between "toit"(roof) and "toi,"(you) in the proverb, reinforcing Marie-Gabriel/the French Antillean people's quest for identity in spite of cultural and biological dislocation.(LS 52[59]) Pépin repeats proverbs to similar effect in *Tambour-Babel.* The Creole phrase: *"On bat batè ka bat kon milpat milat an lè plat a kat patat gwo kon chat!"* (TB 30) appears several times during the story. The first citing of the phrase is followed by a French translation (TB 30), but subsequent citings (TB 35, 36, 167) require the reader to recognize the phrase and recall its initial translation. By the end of the novel a novice reader of Creole may have learned some of the language.

Another method used by our authors to suggest rhythm and repetition in their texts is love-making[114] . Interestingly, Maximin, Péan and Pépin fuse these sexual passages together with music. In *Zombi Blues*, the first time Gaby and Laura consummate their love, a recording of Rodrigo: le *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Miles Davis and Gil Ewans is playing in the background. The lovers' sexual rhythm is synchronized with the music:

> À chaque envolée de l'orchestre d'Evans, [Laura] se cabre, dans une sorte de hypnose [...] À la faveur d'une montée de la trompette de Miles, [Gaby] pénètre [Laura] d'un violent coup de reins [...] Leurs membres se répondent comme les sections de l'orchestre][...] (ZB 178-179). [115]

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[113] John D. Erickson, "Maximin's *L'Isolé Soleil* and Caliban's Curse, *Callaloo* 15 (1992): 124.

[114] A similar analysis of dance and rhythm, or nature and rhythm could be examined in these texts.

[115] Note the call-and-response pattern in this passage.

One can compare that passage to the implicit sexual innuendo present in the following description of Gaby's trumpet solo on his composition, "Zombi Blues", performed at the "Sensation Bar" during the Montreal Jazz Festival; Laura is in attendance:

> Gabe donne l'impression d'accumuler une pression terrible, dont il ne laisse percevoir qu'une infime partie. Au faîte du solo, lorsque cette tension attein son paroxysme, il arrache la sourdine puis braque soudain sa Martin Committee en l'air. Toute l'énergie contenue jaillit avec une violence inimaginable, les notes volent en tous sens, explosent sur un rythme d'enfer, tels des feux d'artifice. Survoltée, Laura sent un filet de sueur froide sur son échine. (ZB 188)

Pépin takes a similar approach to the sexual passages in *Tambour-Babel.* Consider, for example, the love scenario between Hermancia and Éloi:

> Piano, glissando, presto, il balançait une cadence jusqu'au final quand tout l'orchestre de leurs deux corps instrumentait un requiem d'apocalypse [...] Il appelait, elle répondait, il répondait, elle appelait et tout leur en-dedans sonnait un frapper de ti-bois à l'infini. *Tac-ti-tac-ti-tac! Tac-ti-tac-ti-tac! Tac...* Plus ils volaient haut, plus Éloi tombait sur le tambour en déchirant les rythmes du toumblak [un des sept rythmes du gwoka].[116] (TB 28)

Both Pépin and Péan include musical passages with implicit sexual allusion. Père Délos for example, "cogna et cogna encore jusqu'à la délivrance finale qui le laissa hébété, vidé de toute son énergie, mou sur jambes au point qu'il fallut le soutenir,"(TB 119) and Vélo, "[...] ne jouait pas: il faisait l'amour avec son tambour." (TB 157) In *Lone Sun,* it is the song "Body and Soul" that accompanies Siméa's love life. The piece accompanies her break from

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[116] Note, once again, the call-and-response pattern in this passage.

Ariel and her bond with Louis-Gabriel.

Repetition is often shunned in Western art forms for fear of redundancy, or lack of originality. However, according to Gates, Jr., "repetition and revision are fundamental to black artistic forms, from painting and sculpture to music and language use." Thomas Spear confirms that "la répétition est un outil de base du conteur créole,"[117] just as it was for the *griot* in Africa. Janice Kaufman undertakes a meticulous inventory of the repetitions in *Lone Sun* connected with the numbers two, three, seven and eleven. She mentions, for instance, two Georges who each lose an ear; two sets of sisters named Angela and Elisa; a second interpretation of Angela and Elisa's story using the names Geneviève and Jenny whose names begin with the same letters as Miss Bea's twins Jonathan and Georges;[118] two Siméas (Marie-Gabriel's mother and her mother's friend Siméa); Toussaint's connection to Toussaint Louverture; and the twin musicians Pélamanli and Pélamanlou.[119] Kaufman also remarks that eleven is "le chiffre de la gémellité"(in other words, the mirror image of the number 1) represented in *Lone Sun* by the section entitled, "Eleven proverbs."(LS 40[47])[120]

To Kaufman's list of doubles, Ronnie Scharfman adds Ti-Carole's twins, Louis and Ignace, two earthquakes in 1843 and 1897, Louise's twins Louis-Gabriel and Jean-Louis

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[117] Condé, *L'Héritage de Caliban* 26.

[118] Scharfman notes this repetition. Scharfman, *Rewriting the Cesaires* 230.

[119] Kaufman, *Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire* 160-170.

[120] Kaufman, *Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire* 165

(there is of course the repetition of the name Louis which refers back to hero Louis-Delgrès and Gabriel that reoccurs in Marie-Gabriel, Gabriel is also the name of Siméa's father). This leaves the two heartbeats Siméa creates when she writes her aborted baby into existence (LS 112 [125]), the Pierrot twin costumes Siméa and Louis-Gabriel wear to the nurses' party, and the repeated image of the armored fish that represents both the plane that kills Marie-Gabriel's father and the German submarine that kills the father of the intern Angela.

Zombi Blues is also centered around twins. Gaby and Caliban are referred to as *"Marasa"* in the text, which as Péan's glossary explains is a voodoo term for twins with supernatural powers. The confrontation between Gaby and his alter ego (TB 267) takes place in the second-to-last chapter entitled "Gemini" in Part IV (2x2) of the novel-- gemini of course being the astrological sign represented by a set of twins. According to *Secrets of the Zodiac*, Geminis "[...] are traditionally double-sided - one twin representing the witty, charming optimist, the other bleak, morose, and pessimistic."[121] Gaby would certainly appear to conform to the second side of this equation. However, despite his moody character, he still manages to charm Suzanne, Élaine, Laura and "la Blanche". The dual nature of this sign also has interesting ties with African mythology. According to Henry Louis Gates Jr., the African trickster "Esu [...] is often represented by carved male and female figures, linked by a chain of cowrie shells. [...] he is also represented as a carved figure with two heads."[122]

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[121] Jane Lyle, *The Secrets of the Zodiac* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), Plate III.

[122] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 38.

Interestingly, Esu and his American cousin, the Signifying Monkey, are linked to words with "double" meaning.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. notes that while many scholars try to reduce black fiction to a "binary opposition between black and white,"[123] the number three is equally important in Esu legends because as Gates, Jr. notes, "The three is the synthesis, " [...] the procreative element, the third principle, the Igba-Ketu of the system."[124] In *Lone Sun,* Maximin tells his French Antillean readers to break the mirror of the other and "listen carefully to the silence of [their] double [...] observe the superimpositions of moving images on [their] three faces of evasion, communication and creation" (LS 259 [285]). Kaufman and Scharfman both note that triangles connect many of the characters in Maximin's novel. The friendship between Siméa, Louis-Gabriel and Toussaint, for example, subverts "[...] the oppressive hierarchical relations of power that obtain in most situations of opposition [...]."[125] Siméa is also one of three daughters, her two sisters being Irene and Odile (LS 186 [206]). Of the three *S*'s on Siméa's jacket, Louis-Gabriel says, "[...] I'm sure it's the number that counts, and I'm going to give you the sense of the oracle: he chants:

> *"The blacks of all the Guineas will find happiness when they have lived through three births in the womb of their three parents: fire, earth and water.*

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[123] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 55.

[124] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 38.

[125] Scharfman, *Rewriting the Cesaires* 237.

> *"Those who are born of a single parent can have strength, because strength is what belongs to one alone.*
>
> *"Those who are born of two parents can have the word, the third birth will have the gift of creation, because creation is the path from one to two.*
>
> *"But only those who know how to follow the power of their third birth will have the gift of creation, because creation is the path from two to three, and always the child of three beings, just like the cauldron, needs three stones to hold it over the fire.*
>
> (LS 179-180 [199-200])

Later, Marie-Gabriel speaks of "the three stones of our love" to Siméa.

The number seven is accorded privileged status in Maximin's text. To Kaufman's thorough list of instances in the novel that highlight the number seven, can be added references to: Marie-Gabriel's seventeenth birthday (LS 248 [274]), Siméa's journal, written seven years after the abortion of her baby (LS 162 [179]), the Creole folktale of Pelamanli and Pelamanlou, who defeat a seven-headed beast (LS 164 [182], 180 [200], 195 [200], 196 [217], 277[305], 278[306-307]) that has fourteen eyes (7x2) and a tail that wraps seven times around its body and still trails seven leagues behind (LS 277[305]), a scale with seven dishes (LS 164[182]), the seven lives of black cats (LS 174[194], 229[253]), seven-headed zombies (LS 175[194]), the seven thousand people who died in the eruption of Mount Pelée (LS 182 [203]), seven kilometers around (LS 195[217]), the snail and the hare that both have a seven year life span (LS 218[241]), the seventh caress (LS 278[306]), the prison visits that take place between Jonathan and Georges after Jonathan turns seven(LS 279[307]). The number seven is also related to African mythology. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. states that Legba is the seventh son of Mawu-Lisa. In the Fon myth of origin, "Legba was assigned the role of

linguist between kingdoms and gods, and gods and men." He is considered an intermediary of sorts, a "wandering signifier."[126] Blues man Willie Dixon, composer of the song the "*Seventh Son*"[127], asserts that for blacks, "The number seven has been considered lucky for generations." Willie himself was the seventh child born in the seventh month, July.

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[126] Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* 23.

[127] I would like to thank singer Harrison Kennedy for bringing this song by Willie Dixon to my attention.

Chapter 3: Jazz as Metaphor

Jazz and the Volcano

Kamau Brathwaite states that jazz is "the emancipated Negro's music" and "not 'slave' music at all."[1] Unlike the traditional folk music of the islands which Brathwaite claims is best suited for dancing, jazz can express feelings of turmoil and rupture associated with the traumatic uprooting of blacks from their native land. In *Lone Sun,* Maximin highlights the 1940s bebop movement pioneered by jazz legends like Charlie Parker and Max Roach. These musicians sought to break free from the 1930s big band swing music which threatened to "whiten" the Africanisms which had helped to establish jazz as a genre in the first place. Bebop's dramatic stylistic departure from traditional swing music "[...] was linked to the new postwar articulation of black dissatisfaction and anger."[2] Fast tempos, technical virtuosity, disjunct melodies and pronounced polyrhythms alienated many listeners and traditional players who found the music too "hot" or aggressive. White audiences, in particular, were excluded from the Africanisms prevalent in bebop. However, Beat writers like Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg embraced this style of modern jazz for its ability to critique the Western status quo. In the manner that Césaire used the subversive French

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[1] Brathwaite, *Jazz and the West Indian Novel, I, II and III* 336.

[2] Hartman, *Jazz Text* 146.

Surrealist movement to explode the dominant French discourse, the Beat generation looked to black expression as a vehicle for their own rebellion.

French Caribbean writers, have similarly adapted African-American jazz music to express their revolution. In *Caribbean Discourse,* Glissant echoes Brathwaite when he asserts that unlike jazz, Caribbean musical forms such as the *biguine* have not evolved to suit the needs of the community.[3] Glissant tells us that folkloric forms have led to "a reduced kind of automatic churning out of music, in clear response to the apathy created by the collapse of all productivity and creativity in the country [Martinique]."[4] In *Lone Sun,* Louis-Gabriel backs Glissant's assertion by criticizing West Indian musicians of being "too obedient to the whims of their dance-music customers"(LS 170 [189]). He suggests that instead, they "should make music for it's own sake" (LS 170 [189) like the jazz musicians in America who acquire freedom through their musical endeavours. Siméa also reproaches the male Cuban singer at the "Cuban Cabana" for his trite lyrics devoted to "love strategy"(LS 132 [147]) that only the "rhythms of improvised jazz can break" (LS 132 [147]). It is Siméa who declares, "Liberation will be musical or it will not be at all," (LS 170 [189]) and Adrien who overhears black activist Stokely Carmichael say that "*the only real revolutionaries he had met were musicians in a jazz cellar.*"(LS 87 [96]) Contrary to the

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[3] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 111.

[4] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 111.

revolutionary symbolism of modern jazz, Caribbean music of the kind Adrien and Antoine discover in a Paris record store perpetuates the colonial stereotype of the West Indian as "happy and carefree", "sensitive" and "courteous"(LS 96 [108]).

Péan adapts the explosive energy of jazz to accompany his graphic plot. Where many listeners found bebop too aggressive, many readers find Péan's books too violent and explicit. One cannot deny the brutal aspect of passages in *Zombi Blues* such as Minville's savage murder of an adolescent *pangnòl* (Spanish prostitute) the day following the *dechoukaj* of Baby Doc and his entourage from Port-au-Prince (ZB 225-26.) The memory of that bloody night, haunts Faustin who was responsible for disposing of the corpse, just as it haunts the reader. The reader is equally disturbed by the graphic description of Barracuda's attempt to rape Jacynthe, his live-in maid turned sex-slave, in front of Ti-Alice Grospoint and her daughter Naïma. When Minville fails to get an erection, he counters his humiliation by strangling and then breaking Jacynthe's neck in front of his horrified on-lookers. (ZB 238-239) In an interview with Nathalie Olivier, Péan explains the violence in his novels as a reflection of the world in which we live. For Péan:

> Ni la littérature ni le cinéma ne sont à la source de la violence qui existe dans la réalité, contrairement à ce qu'insinuent les bien-pensants et les coeurs sensibles. Et puis, comme disait ma mère, les lecteurs qui s'indignent de la violence de *Zombi Blues*, par exemple n'ont pas idée de la violence infiniment pire, une violence quotidienne et banalisée, qui a sévi en Haïti sous Duvalier.[5]

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[5] Péan, *Interview by Olivier* 9.

Similarly, bebop was no longer simply entertainment or musical escapism. Musicians were not smiling and courteous; they were angry volcanoes spewing hot lava from the bells of their horns, lava repressed and suppressed by years of colonial oppression. As Péan remarks in his novel: " La vie [...] relève davantage du cinéma d'épouvante que du conte de fées"(ZB 280). The author includes jazz in his novel to narrate the harsh reality of Haitian existence.

In *Tambour-Babel,* the *gwoka* drum fulfills a similar function as jazz in the other two texts. The drummers in Grosse-Montagne know that "tout près les Américains noirs juchés haut sur la crête du blues, embusqués dans les temples du gospel, plongés dans les rapides du jazz, prenaient le même chemin"(TB 112). Unlike most traditional Caribbean music, *gwoka* has an affinity with the jazz revolution. By contrast, Pépin's depiction of other folk forms like tango, rhumba, *valse créole* and bolero for instance, suggest "une harmonie aussi douce et onctueuse qu'une clair corossol" (TB 24). Elsewhere, "l'aisance d'une biguine"(ZB 134), "*[les] voix si gaies des biguineuses*" (TB 134), "*biguine-madras-bijoux créoles au rire dentelles blanches . . .* " (ZB 135) reveal the glaring opposition between old Plantation genres and jazz's "cri de coq aussi puissant que les trompettes de Jéricho, aussi énigmatique que les trompettes de Miles Davis, aussi pur que les trompettes de Wynston [sic: Wynton] Marsalis lorsqu'elles secouent l'Amérique blanche comme la peur [...]" (TB 137). Pépin evokes what Glissant calls the "trap of folklore"[6] when he describes the dance troupe of

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[6] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 321.

Mme Madeline, a dance teacher specializing in folkloric shows destined to "donner aux préfets, aux hôtels, aux navires en arrivance ou en partence leur contentement de doudouisme et de douceur des îles." (TB 156). Glissant notes that it is precisely the Caribbean community's propensity to "present itself" rather than, "reflect on itself "[7] that stagnates the growth of folk forms.

Maximin, Péan and Pépin employ the metaphor of the zombie to stress the torpid state of the Caribbean people. This notion is diametrically opposed to the dynamic state of flux characteristic of the volcano and bebop. As the definition in the epigraph to *Zombi Blues* explains, a zombie can be an individual drugged into a state resembling death and then forced to submit to the will of a voodoo sorcerer, or a person who seems absent, passive, lifeless or spiritless. Caliban, Gaby's twin, fits the first description; he is infected with a serum that turns his skin white (like in death) and puts him under Minville's control. Shakespeare's Caliban, also, was forced to submit to Prospero's control, just as the Haitians "hauntent les catacombes sous le Palais national, transformés en zombis," (ZB18) by Baby Doc's oppressive dictatorship. In the same manner, the slaves were the *béké's* property . In *Tambour-Babel,* the Plantation workers in Grosse-Montagne file to work in the early morning like "des zombis déterrées" (TB 15). The zombie symbolizes the Caribbean community's unwillingness to fight their oppression; their preference to numb themselves

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[7] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 207.

from the pain. Éloi, for example, who retreats from life when he loses his talent for drumming, and mopes around "en roulant des yeux vides de zombi" (ZB 223). In *Zombi Blues,* Jacynthe similarly becomes "plus obéissante qu'un zombi" (TB 223) following Caliban's brutal decapitation of her ex-boyfriend, whom she calls to save her from Barracuda's prolonged verbal and sexual abuse. From that point on, "elle [perd] toute volonté de résistance . . . " (ZB 194). She resigns herself to own demise because as far as she is concerned, "Elle est déjà morte" (ZB 238).

Pépin's novel calls for the Caribbean people to awaken and participate in the formation of their own identity. In *Tambour-Babel,* he tells them: "C'est nous les taupes! Nous creusons les galeries du désespoir avec nos mains de zombis chantants et dansants" (TB 196). To counter the passive folkloric musical forms of the island, he proposes *gwoka* which like jazz is able to "[déverrouiller] les volcans" (TB 159) and express "[les] cris de nègres marrons"(TB 159). Glissant explains how the resistance of the maroons who refused Plantation existence became "intensified over time to exert a creative *marronage*" (PR 71), that today expresses itself in dynamic forms of expression like Creole, jazz and *gwoka.* It is worth stressing that when Gaby plays his trumpet in *Zombi Blues,* Elaine "a l'impression qu'en lui, quelque chose se prépare à exploser" (ZB 83). Laura similarly notices that "sous ce détachement feint couve une flamme qui menace de tout embraser d'un instant à l'autre" (ZB 56). As Haitian poet René Dépestre explains, cultural *marronnage* "salvaged from

zombification all that could be salvaged in religion, magic, the fine arts, dance, music and, of course, also salvaged the capacity to resist oppression."[8] The volcano is a symbol of this cultural *marronnage*.

In *Lone Sun,* Miss Béa's son, Jonathan, becomes a maroon after killing his white childhood friend, Elisa. He murders Elisa to avenge the rape and murder of his sister Angela by white colonizers. Jonathan believes the only way to ensure that the colonizers will pay for their crime is to convince the authorities they murdered a white girl. He assumes correctly; the rapists are executed, but not for Angela's murder. Meanwhile, Jonathan abandons his condition as a freeman to join the resistance under rebel leader Louis Delgrès. In spite of his admiration for Delgrès, Jonathan questions his leader's tactics since they will result in the suicide of "*three hundred bloods spurting up into the sky of Matouba*" (LS 85[95]). Jonathan is convinced that suicide is a form of passive resistance. Hence, he warns Caribbeans "*to stop wishing to fall asleep in the violent but familiar company of death*"(LS 36[44]). Maximin presents cultural *marronnage,* such as Louis-Gabriel's saxophone playing and Marie-Gabriel's written creation, as more effective methods of resistance. Maximin's text states: "*the Antilleans are dormant volcanoes that we have to awaken with stories of zombies, macaques, bamboo, straight rum, music, and cutlasses*" (LS 17[24]).

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[8] Denis-Constant Martin, "Filiation or Innovation? Some Hypotheses to Overcome the Dilemma of Afro-American Music's Origins," *Black Music Research Journal* 11(1991): 32.

The Flight of Freedom

> *Gros-ka should not be subject to dance or politics. It is in itself dance and politics.*
> *Antoine -Lone Sun (LS 267[294])*
>
> *They say music speaks louder than words, so we'd rather voice our opinion that way.*
> *Charlie Parker -(Woideck 4)*
>
> *Comme dans le blues, je crois qu'on doit convertir l'angoisse, la souffrance en autre chose, en sagesse peut-être, sans céder à la colère.*
> *Toni Morrison - (ZB Epigraph)*

Although jazz, and in particular bebop and Free Jazz, can stir thoughts of revolution in its listeners, musicians need not conform to a set political imperative, or cultural manifesto. One of the champions of artistic freedom in Caribbean literature is writer and theoretician, Maryse Condé. She claims that "si un écrivain arrive avec un programme ce n'est pas un écrivain, c'est un homme ou une femme politique."[9] Similarly, tenor saxophonist Eddie Lockjaw Davis, believed musicians should "remain neutral in their profession"[10] and keep the political and artistic spheres separate. In *Lone Sun,* Louis-Gabriel

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[9] Françoise Pfaff, "L'Arène politique, *Les Derniers Rois Mages* et autres histories: Entretiens Maryse Condé: suivis d'une bibliographie complète, " (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1993): 133.

[10] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 88.

tells us that when he plays jazz he thinks about freedom. He clarifies this idea by adding: "But don't get me wrong, I'm not talking about any big political idea, equality, fraternity and all that . . . No I'm just trying to play something that resembles free music"(LS 170[189]). For Maximin, the same rules apply to literature; his novel states: "The first duty of the writer is to write revolutionarily, not to describe the revolution"(LS 276[304]). Maximin uses oral techniques such as jazz and the Creole language to accomplish his task.

Although Maximin and Pépin[11] both include significant amounts of Creole in their texts, writers like Condé and Péan should not be penalized, or excluded from French Caribbean literature because of their sparing use of the language. Condé reproaches *Éloge de la créolité,* because it limits her individual freedom by insisting that "authentic" Caribbean literature must integrate the Creole language and center around themes concerning the Caribbean. In *Zombi Blues,* Gaby is similarly annoyed with bar owners "qui se croient en droit de lui dicter un répertoire"(ZB 53). He prefers clubs like "L'Emprise" where the manager lets him "mener sa barque comme il l'entend" (ZB 53). Gaby also deems journalist Ginette Gringras's attempts to pigeonhole his music into "la mouvance d'un certain jazz progressif d'inspiration néo-bop modal, matiné de traditionalisme" (ZB 121-122) a waste of time because he places no value in labels: "Il joue de la musique, un point c'est

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[11] Pépin is considered an important contributor and supporter of the *créolité* movement which favours the use of Creole to express Caribbean identity.

tout" (ZB 122). Charlie Parker also had an aversion to "aesthetic cubbyholes"[12], like the term bebop, which ascribed a static list of characteristics to his innovations. As Glissant explains in *Poetics of Relation,* such "Generalization is totalitarian: from the world it chooses one side of the reports, one set of ideas, which it sets apart from others and tries to impose by exporting as a model" (PR 20-21). Although *Éloge* is free to suggest the use of Creole to evoke identity, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant should not expect subsequent artistic production to conform to their literary model. Condé and Péan explode these boundaries, just as bebop subverted the formulaic musical approach of the swing bands. As Condé proclaims, "Vive la pluralité des voix caribéennes!"[13]

Artistic freedom is represented by the metaphor of the bird in *Lone Sun* and *Tambour-Babel*[14]. In Maximin's novel, Louis-Gabriel's improvisation is likened to "a bird flying over a forest, exploring every path, plunging into the clearings, soaring breathless from the openings [...]"(LS 211 [233]). In Pépin's text, when master drummer Vélo plays, "il partait en grand voyage dans les ailleurs jamais vu"(TB 114). Meanwhile, when Éloi loses his drumming gift, "*pour la première fois l'aigle baissait la tête* [...] Le son même le quittait,

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[12] Woideck, *The Charlie Parker Companion* 4.

[13] Delas , "De l'école à l'écriture littéraire en pays créole" 55.

[14] Interestingly, Ryan and Májoza note the use of the bird motif in Toni Morrison's *Jazz.* Judylyn S. Ryan and Estella C. Májozo, "Jazz... on 'The Site of Memory'." *Studies in Literary Imagination* 31 (1998): 125-52. 38. Janice Kaufman in "Maximin, Cixous, and Césaire" discusses the concept of flight in Maximin's novel on pages 144,153,155,157.

refusait décollage, se plaquait, étouffé, sur le peau du tambour. [...] Embourbé dans la peine, les ailes plaines de glu, il se débattait en vain et et s'enfonçait soudain" (TB 121). Napo's ascent parallels his father's decline. Napo's first experience with flying occurs while listening to the pot-pourri of musical styles that allow him to fly above the "manger-cochon qui nous tient lieu de monde" (TB 38)." This quote suggests that musical freedom is not only available to the performer, but to the listener as well. Later during Napo's spiritual and musical training with Hégésippe, he smokes a herb-filled pipe and travels "dans une autre dimension du temps et de l'espace" (TB 143). Eventually, Napo recreates this state of spiritual ecstacy through his drumming. When Napo first starts to play, he flies like a baby bird "avec un battement d'ailes maladroit", but eventually, "Il fendait l'air, léger, à l'aise" (TB 167).

A white bird lands on Napo's drum the day he dethrones Bazile, who up until then had been enjoying his success "haut dans des hauteurs de menfenil royal [a type of bird]" (TB 145). This time when Napo plays, "il tambourina pour envoyer son message à toutes les divinités de la Création" (TB 219). Amiri Imamu Baraka claims that even before ancient Egypt, the bird hieroglyph symbolized spirit.[15] When Napo drums, Vélo's spirit gives him strength. Incidentally, Charlie Parker's nickname was "Bird"; and instrumentalist and singer

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[15] Jones (Baraka), *Black Music* 278.

Guy Konkèt used to call Vélo, "the Charlie Parker of the gwo ka."[16] Through the transformative power of music, Vélo, like "Bird", was able to convert "sa chiennerie de vie en une frénésie pleine d'orgasmes"(ZB 157).

In most Western traditions, a distinct division separates sacred music from secular music. By contrast, Douglas Henry Daniels maintains that in black musical forms, "music cannot be isolated from art, or life, or religion."[17] Hence, it follows that jazz musicians like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane were considered spiritual leaders and healers because of the therapeutic effect their music had on their listeners. Ironically, it is Bazile who underlines the important role of the musician as therapist for the community when he asks, "Que deviendraient les malheureux sans une langue pour chanter les profitances qu'ils endurent et sans deux mains pour cogner le tambour-ka?"(TB 53). In *Lone Sun*, Maximin uses bird imagery to express the link between the drum and the spirit. The repeated refrain "Our ears will be tuned to the drums of the toads and our eyes lifted on high to the hummingbirds' flight" (LS 39 [46]) recalls the opening line of the novel's epigraph, "A flight of colibris alight on the open sea soothing their wings broken on the beat of the big tambour-ka." (LS Epigraph) This imagery evokes slaves arriving on the shores of the New World whose wings/spirits, damaged during the Middle Passage, must be mended before they can rise

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[16] Jocelyne Guilbault, *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 238.

[17] Daniels, *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* 163 .

above colonial oppression.

Like birds, jazz musicians are associated with a nomadic lifestyle. In *Lone Sun,* Louis-Gabriel tours with the Fairness Junior Jazz Orchestra and lives in New York during the bebop movement. Coleman Hawkins[18] plays gigs in Sweden, Paris and Harlem (LS 139[154]). In *Zombi Blues*, Gaby has club dates in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Montreal and plans to play in Port-au-Prince (ZB 34). In *Tambour-Babel* Napo's band, Van Lévé tours Cuba, Malecon, Vieja Habana, Santiago la Negra, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Louisiana, Mississippi, Brest, Paris and Strasbourg (TB 232-33). The purpose of this travel? To share their music with others. As Napo declares, his group plays in "tant de lieux où l'oreille de l'homme est une fraternité!" (TB 233). Music has the singular power to defy cultural and racial boundaries. Societies that would otherwise not interact, experience music as a rich intersection for cross-cultural sharing and mutual appreciation.

The "immeasurable intermixing of cultures" constitutes what Glissant refers to as the "chaos-monde" (PR 138). For Glissant, modern Caribbean identity is no longer dependant on Césaire's reversion[19] to single root origins and binary oppositions of black and white. Instead, he proposes the intertwining branches and multiple roots of the rhizome as a positive model, not only for French Caribbean *créolisation*, but for worldwide relations in

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[18] Incidentally, Coleman Hawkins was also nicknamed after a bird, "The Hawk."

[19] This neologism belongs to Glissant. *Caribbean Discourse* 16.

the global village of the twentieth century and the coming millennia. Jazz is an ideal vehicle for Glissant's *créolisation* process. As pianist Billy Taylor affirms, "jazz is a very hospitable style of music. It welcomes input from many sources."[20] Like Creole, jazz from the outset was a synthesis of African and European cultures. Today, this music continues to promote its hybrid form and stylistic diversity. It is thus one can speak of latin jazz, Afro-cuban jazz, West coast jazz and so on.

In *Lone Sun,* Napo's love of musical styles from around the world demonstrates the benefits of *créolisation.* He enjoys reggae, salsa, *saudade*, *cumbia*, and gradually develops a taste for Chopin and Mozart. Just as many first time listeners of jazz or African music qualify the unfamiliar sound as "noise", Napo's first impression of European classical music, is that it does not "speak" to him: "Il avait là mystère d'un casse-tête sans fin dont on n'a pas la clé." (TB 148) Éloi reproaches his son's interest in music outside their own culture : "Que vas-tu chercher encore? Ce n'est pas cette musique qui arrose tes racines!" (TB 148) Éloi's closed attitude towards the music of the "other" represents the *négritude* notion of prizing a single root identity. Éloi is quick to compare classical music to "une soupe composée avec de la poudre et de l'eau!" (TB 148) However, he never takes the time to "chercher le sel" (TB 148) that would help him appreciate this foreign style. Meanwhile, Napo continues to study classical music, until one day he hears Ravel's *Boléro*, and suddenly understands "le

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[20] Taylor, "Jazz as a Metaphor for American Culture: 1.

'sentiment' de la musique classique" (TB 149). This composition "speaks" to Napo because its gradual crescendo matches Napo's ascent. Like the *Boléro*, Napo possesses un "tourbillon qui accumulait sa force à l'intérieur de lui-même avant d'exploser et de projeter sa matière musicale comme des bombes volcaniques." (TB 148) Napo's rhizomatic approach to the music of the world, results in the enrichment of his own *gwoka* playing.

Like the jazz musician, Napo is able to amalgamate a variety of styles and influences into a style all his own. In turn, he shares his musical creation with audiences around the world. His *gwoka* drumming no longer exclusively represents a black voice, but a human voice that can be appreciated by all those who make an effort to understand what his drum is saying. Similarly, jazz is acknowledged as an American art form with a worldwide fan base. Thus, music is the language of Babel -- "une langue pour remplacer toutes les langues perdues"(TB 111) -- a language that overcomes geographical and racial barriers to unite a world otherwise divided. In the section titled, "To Build a Tower", in *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant claims that at one time, dominated languages were forced to "live in seclusion or open up to the other [...]". (PR 103) By contrast, *créolisation* allows for cultural exchange without a loss of identity. As Napo discovers during his travels with Van Lévé, Guadeloupe is capable of receiving " la lumière de tous les grands soleils, mais aussi capable d'éclairer les nuits noires de la terre!" (TB 233)

Conclusion

Jazz and French Caribbean literature are hybrid art forms that welcome cultural interrelation. They do not require static theories, fixed origins, rigid ideologies, or stagnant definitions to prove their existence. Maximin, Péan and Pépin celebrate the composite nature of jazz in their affirmation of a diverse French Caribbean identity. In Glissant's view, the apparent chaos of the Caribbean archipelago ushers in a new perception of the world, opposed to hierarchical distinctions and universal tendencies. Nevertheless, Glissant warns there is a risk of homogenization in rhizomatic modes of Relation. For example, the present unbalanced exchange between continental France and the departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe threatens French Caribbean heterogeneity. The decreasing productivity of these islands and subsequent dependence on imported goods tips the scale in favour of France as producer -- French departments as consumers.

In *Tambour-Babel,* Napo points out the infiltration of French customs in Guadeloupe: "Beaucoup de gens qui n'ont même pas vu la couleur d'un avion ou d'un paquebot roulent un français plus pointu que la tour Eiffel!"(TB 153). Pépin's novel addresses the passive attitude of Guadeloupeans *vis-à-vis* their acculturation: "*Comment sortir de la nasse un poisson qui s'y sent bien*?"(TB 174) It is Pépin's hope that his exaltation of the *gwoka* drum will revive interest in Guadeloupean cultural production

and deliver the Caribbean people from what Glissant terms a state of "passive consumption"[21](232). As *Tambour-Babel* comes to a close, Napo realizes that his drumming "n'était rien d'autre qu'une façon de faire la guerre et peut-être de la gagner. . ."(TB 176) Thus, his artistic creation is his best protection against cultural assimilation. Similarly, at the end of *Zombi Blues,* Gaby makes the decision to go to Port-au-Prince where his trumpet might make a difference. Prior to his experience with Barracuda, the trumpeter showed little interest in Haiti, but his exposure to the *tonton-makout*, stirs in him a desire to play his instrument the way Haitian maroons used the *lambi* conch shell to communicate messages of revolt.

Commercialization is also a threat to the heterogeneity of jazz and French Caribbean literature. The American monopoly on communication, distribution, and mass markets tends to "yankiser, hamburgériser, mcdonaldiser"(TB 137) the production of other cultures. Traditional cultural forms struggle to survive in a sea of trends that change by the week. In *Tambour-Babel*, Napo expresses his concerns for the survival of the drum under the onslaught of "les guitares électriques [qui] faisaient l'aigle dans tous les quartiers." (TB 153) On the other hand, his rival Bazile shows little concern for safeguarding the drumming tradition. He steals the secrets of the drum from Éloi and then relegates his teacher to "le sac à linge sale de la honte"(TB 49). Bazile's ambitious

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[21] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 232.

nature is likened to crabs "[qui] montent les uns sur les autres, cherchant sans pitié le chemin du salut. [...] Ils arrachent une patte à droite, un mordant à gauche et vont devant-devant sans commission pour les perdants"(TB 48). Implicitly, Pépin criticizes Bazile's quest for fame by ensuring the vaunting drummer's eventual defeat. When Napo finally triumphs over Bazile, the narrator claims, "Il y a longtemps que Bazile méritait une leçon"(TB 221). From Bazile's prestigious status "haut dans des hauteurs de menfenil royal" (TB 145), he ends up "au niveau d'un fa dièse, donc plus bas que le sol!" (TB 220).

Although jazz's adaptability has proven itself essential to the music's longevity within a market characterized by one-hit wonders, lately the genre suffers from formulaic reproductions of known entities. In other words, record companies have an aversion to financing new artists and innovative approaches that are not guaranteed commercial appeal and economic success. Hence, artistic creation is reduced to a supply and demand scenario. Betty Carter, an unorthodox jazz singer, circumvented the limitations of record companies by founding her own label, "Bet-Car", which gave her complete artistic control over her own music. She claims that in jazz today: "There's no individuality, no creativeness. They're just doing what everybody else is doing so they can make some money."[22] The temptation for musicians to compromise artistic freedom for financial

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[22] Taylor, *Notes and Tones* 275.

gain threatens to reduce jazz to a commercially palatable form, driven by record sales.

Perhaps the greatest danger facing jazz and French Caribbean literature is society's propensity to take the artist's contribution for granted. As Francis Bebey cautions: "The musician needs to be constantly reminded that his music is essential and to be encouraged not to reject it."[23] To illustrate the unfortunate fate of many artists, one need only evoke the tragic life of *gwoka* drummer Vélo, who suffered in poverty from an indifferent public during his life and yet received posthumous glorification. The failure to appreciate artists and/or shelter them from political, economic and cultural exploitation, could lead to the impoverishment of individual voices and personal modes of expression. In *Lone Sun, Zombi Blues* and *Tambour-Babel,* Maximin, Péan and Pépin attempt to remedy the unjust treatment of the artist in society by presenting musicians as central characters in their novels. The authors parody stereotypes such as the black "entertainer", the addict and the lazy artist, to reveal the prejudice that has traditionally downplayed the integral function of the musician within the community.

Maximin, Péan and Pépin also strive to salvage French Caribbean literature and music from *doudouisme* and zombification. In *Tambour-Babel,* Pépin highlights *gwoka's* potential to express Guadeloupean pride and resistance, unlike other traditional forms like *beguine* which have become folkloric. In *Lone Sun* and *Zombi Blues,* jazz is

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[23] Bebey , *African Music* 140.

used in accordance with the metaphor of the volcano to show this musical genre's ability to explode linguistic, geographic and cultural boundaries. The ensuing literary discourse affirms a vital French West Indian culture that is no longer considered a dilution of the dominant culture. In the future, perhaps new musical forms such as Caribbean *zouk* and American hip hop will join forces with *gwoka* and jazz to reflect the voice of the black diaspora in French Caribbean literature. In conclusion, I concur with Glissant:

> *It would be more beautiful to live*
> *in a symphony of languages than*
> *in some reduced universal monolingualism --*
> *neutral and standardized.*
> *- Poetics of Relation 112*

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