Editor's Column

Black Circumstance

Near the end of his life, the Martinican poet and intellectual René Ménil—who played a pivotal if still underappreciated role in the inception of the Négritude movement as one of the main figures behind two key journals, the incendiary single issue of *Légitime défense* in Paris in 1932 and the incandescent *Tropiques* in Martinique during World War II—published an unsung gem titled "Sur un certain effet Ellingtonien dans la créolité" ("On a Certain Ellingtonian Effect in Creoleness"), a fascinating reflection on the black student scene in Paris in the interwar period.[1] What I've always found especially eye-opening about the essay is the way Ménil emphasizes the degree to which the tiny but vibrant network of privileged Caribbean and African students in the metropole (including Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon-Gontran Damas, Étienne Léro, Jules-Marcel Monnerot, and Pierre Yoyotte) were transformed by what Ménil calls their "rencontre émerveillée avec le jazz des nègres américains" ("astonished encounter with American Negro jazz"; "Sur un certain effet" 253).[2] Although he mentions Louis Armstrong—and although he wrote a poem in the fall of 1935 inspired by a Benny Carter tune (Ménil, "'Dream Lullaby'")—Ménil emphasizes Duke Ellington in particular as the composer whose music reshaped their sensibilities:

> La rencontre avec la musique neuve de Duke Ellington frappant de plein fouet notre sensibilité jusque-là modelée à l'image de la vie coloniale. . . . [L]a complexité, l'élégance différente, le maniérisme de Duke Ellington (tous traits esthétiques que comporte, plus ou moins prononcés, la mentalité créole, selon Lezama Lima dans son 'Paradiso'), répondaient davantage, nul doute pour mon compte en tout cas, au inflexions métisses de notre fonds culturel ainsi qu'à un projet politique et moral, confus mais agissant, qui s'ouvrait romantiquement sur la nouveauté des temps. Duke Ellington répondait donc à un émoi et l'exprimait pour nous et, en même temps, cette musique donnait une forme (musicale) à des sentiments encore informulés parce que sans forme. (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 254)

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> With the force of a whip, the encounter with the new music of Duke Ellington struck our sensibilities, which had until then been molded in the image of colonial life. . . . The complexity, the entirely different sort of elegance, the mannerism of Duke Ellington (all aesthetic traits that characterize in more or less pronounced ways the Creole mentality, according to Lezama Lima in his novel *Paradiso*), spoke more directly—in my case, anyway, without a doubt—to the mixed inflections of our cultural foundations as well as to a political and moral project, muddled yet active, which was romantically open to the newness of the times. Duke Ellington thus responded to an agitation and gave it expression for us and, at the same time, this music gave a (musical) form to feelings that were not yet formulated because they were formless.

In contrast to the wildly popular clarinetist and biguine bandleader Alexandre Stellio, whose music "set down our folklore and in so doing expressed, not without genius, the past and present of our native land," according to Ménil, above all by "reproduc[ing] with tenderness and pity the nostalgic songs of the period that culminated in the life of Saint-Pierre on the eve of the eruption" of the Mount Pelée volcano in 1902, in Ellington "folklore is not the point of arrival—the result of musical labor—but the implicit point of departure for a music to be invented."[3] Because the "wellspring" of jazz is improvisation, Ellington's music doesn't wallow in the "repetitive modulation of a memorized folklore (as Stellio's does)" but instead constructs a radically original "sonic language in a moment delivered to itself in order to seize an unknown new emotion in the mesh of a magic net."[4]

Revisiting Ménil's articles from the 1930s and 1940s in the light of his comments half a century later, it is difficult to overlook the "Ellingtonian effect." The shift in sensibility brought about by the discovery of Duke's music resonates, for instance, in the caustic survey of the feeble accomplishments of the "colored 'writer' in the Caribbean" that Ménil published in *Légitime défense*, where he counsels that "the black Antillean ought first to recognize his own passions and express himself only by taking the opposite direction to the useful, the route of dream and of poetry," drawing not only on African and Oceanic art and French avant-garde literature ("Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Jarry, Réverdy, the Dadaists and the Surrealists") but also on African American jazz ("le jazz des nègres d'Amérique") (Ménil, "General Observations" 52; trans. modified; "Généralités" 9). Ménil says in retrospect that in his articles in *Tropiques*, a decade later, too, "une réflexion critique se développe sous l'égide de Duke" ("a critical reflection is developed under the protection of Duke"; "Sur un certain effet" 257).

Ménil's late essay is not only remarkable as an example of what I have elsewhere described as "hearing across media": a literary aesthetic that is expressly elaborated under the formative influence of a musical model.[5] It is also fascinating in the way Ménil frames the "Ellingtonian effect" as a tutelary intradiasporic influence—in other words, one black modernism that takes shape in the wake of and adhering to what it takes to be the parameters of another black modernism from another part of the diaspora. As a way of situating the impact of jazz in interwar Paris, it is a marked departure from the usual exoticism we have come to expect even from the most sympathetic white European observers, who heard in jazz the specter of an absolute racial otherness, even as they encountered it in the nightclubs and cabarets of Montmartre. For white artists and writers, the intoxication was if anything amplified by their proximity to what Michel Leiris called "the Other who is not totally Other, the Other who appears *chez vous*" ("Jazz" 99). They took the music as "an orgiastic tribute to the colors of the moment" and, in a paradoxical triangulation, the thoroughly modern sophistication of musicians such as Ellington and Armstrong struck them as an emblem of colonial Africa, "the manifestation and the myth of black Edens."[6]

Ménil and his cohort primarily experienced jazz "autour du gramophone," on phonograph records rather than live in nightclubs, he notes, and so it spoke to them at a distance, through the mediation of the commodity form, as a disembodied voice from the other side of the Atlantic (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 255). They associated jazz with blackness—or in other words, as Fred Moten puts it, they

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understood it in a "rough translation" through the "general equivalent" of "stolen life" (88)—and thus with the ways they were beginning to think of themselves as artists of African descent, but part of the reason it was so potent seems to have been that it represented an unfamiliar blackness, an *other* blackness, an emanation of a racially inflected modernism not assimilable to the all-too-well-known vicissitudes of race in the colonial society of the French Caribbean.[7]

"Un espace sonore inédit" ("an uncharted sonic space"; 255), Ménil calls it, one that, even if it was built on an "original foundation of incorporated folklore," drawing on vernacular music including the blues and the spirituals, was itself an "elaboration" that could attain the refinement of symphonic composition, "using along the way all the technical resources within reach."[8] Ellington's music struck them as "a music of the second degree. Using sonic material and rhythms already in place, a secondary elaboration took shape in the industrial city to express the actuality of life and not the backward-looking exoticisms of the primitive forest; fields of sugarcane and cotton would only have a place in the musical composition as a foundation held at a distance."[9] In its "thickness of accumulated cultural influences (Arica, Europe, the Caribbean, the Americas) carried as living traces by the colored diaspora," the music "corresponded to the efforts that were emerging among the most conscious of the colonial students" to discover "a black and mixed-race aesthetic that would be fitting and appropriate."[10] More than any other music in earshot, Ellington's records for Ménil and his cohort came to "echo the unease and questioning provoked by their circumstances."[11]

As the title of Ménil's late essay already intimates, one aspect of the roughness of the translation is that the vague figuration in the titles of certain Ellington compositions, such as the 1927 "Creole Love Call"—which in fact was derived at least in part from a previous composition whose title invokes a seemingly different setting, King Oliver's "Camp Meeting Blues"[12]—and the 1932 "Creole Rhapsody," could come to suggest something like a "Creole" aesthetic in the specifically Caribbean sense of the term. Ménil recalls that for his cohort Ellington's music served to sketch "une créolité-de-valeur (une créolité exquise, complexe, déliée, vaste et ouverte)" ("a creoleness of value (an exquisite, complex, mobile, vast, and open creoleness)"; 258).[13]

In Ménil's contributions to *Tropiques*, this transposition results in some startling passages. One April 1942 essay is framed as a direct address to "cette trop grand fraction de la bourgeoisie de couleur que nous estimons définitivement perdue. . . . Toujours les mêmes: lâches, lâcheurs, lécheurs, arrivistes, admirateurs de tous succès surtout ceux de mauvais aloi" ("that too-large portion of the colored bourgeoisie that we consider definitively lost. . . . Always the same: layabouts, deadbeats, boot-lickers, careerists, admirers of every success, especially when adulterated"; "Laissez" 21). Right from the first lines, Ménil pulls no punches: "je vous demande, à vous même, quelle valable raison avez-vous d'exister? Quelle grand idée vous anime? Quelle aspiration grandiose vous donne le droit de gaspiller comme vous faites les forces précieuses de la vie? Ne voyez vous pas que vous gâchez le joyeux torrent de la vie au grand midi? Ne voyez-vous pas que votre parole est une insulte au grand jazz de la Caraïbe?" ("I'm asking you, yes, you, what valid reason do you have for existing? What great idea motivates you? What grandiose aspiration gives you the right to squander the precious forces of life the way you do? Don't you see that you're spoiling the joyous torrent of life in the brightness of midday? Don't you see that your words are an insult to the great jazz of the Caribbean?"; 23–24). If it thus opens by suggestively situating jazz in the Caribbean, the essay culminates with an unexpected and bewildering confrontation with the music deep in the Martinican forest:

> Mais je veux bien, colonial ami, car encore une fois, je vous l'assure et croyez-moi, vous me plaisez, charmant personnage, je veux bien lever pour vous, le temps d'une seconde, le coin du voile. Mais prenez bien garde que votre coeur sucré ne se soulève devant un spectacle fait pour un autre spectateur que vous. Vous comprendrez combien de mers nous séparent. . . . Une forêt, près de la montagne Pelée. . . . A ce moment, on entend, venue de loin, de derrière les

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> arbres qui bougent, qui ne bougent pas, cette romance tour à tour étouffée et éclatante de Duke Ellington, le merveilleux *Mood Indigo*. Une inquiétude soudaine vous étreint le coeur et vous tournez brusquement la tête à gauche, *vous attendant au pire*. Dans une clairière, jusque-là inaperçue, vous apercevez alors une scène d'une prodigueuse beauté. Baigné de lumière rouge-jaune, morte-vivante et il semble aussi des fameux accords ellingtoniens, un caraïbe plus grand que nature amoureusement dévore le passionnant objet de son amour. . . .
>
> Votre coeur, mon cher lièvre colonial, ne peut pas se faire à ce spectacle sublime, vous sentez que votre présence est incongrue et vous vous en allez, silencieusement, confus, sur la pointe des pieds, par un sentier propice . . . (26–27)

> But I very much want, my colonial friend—for once again, I assure you and believe me, I like you, you charming character—I very much want to lift a corner of the veil for you, if only for a moment. But take care that your sugared heart does not rise up before a spectacle made for another spectator than you. You will understand just how many seas separate us. . . . A forest, near mount Pelée, . . . Then suddenly is heard from afar, from behind the trees that rustle and then are still, that romance by Duke Ellington alternately muted and booming, the marvelous *Mood Indigo*. Your heart tightens with a sudden uneasiness and you abruptly turn your head to the left, *fearing the worst*. In a clearing you hadn't noticed before, you come upon a scene of prodigious beauty. Bathed in red and yellow light, both living and dead, and bathed seemingly too in those famous Ellingtonian chords, a Caribbean greater than nature lovingly devours the passionate object of its desire. . . .
>
> Your heart, my dear colonial hare, cannot abide this sublime spectacle, you feel that your presence is out of place, and you slip away, silently, embarrassed, tiptoeing, on the nearest path . . . [14]

It is a remarkable apparition: Ellington's *Mood Indigo* as a literal sort of "jungle style"—to allude to the euphemism under which his early orchestra was feverishly marketed at Harlem night spots such as the Cotton Club in the late 1920s (see Teal; Teachout 90)—a music emanating eerily from the forest itself to shock the petit bourgeois, the soundtrack to a "sublime spectacle" that somehow compresses the entire archipelago ("a Caribbean greater than nature") into a single chanced-upon clearing.

If Ménil's work can be considered a particularly striking instance of what I have described as tutelary intradiasporic influence, other examples come to mind, perhaps above all the late-1960s literary criticism of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, which likewise turns to jazz—which he describes as the "archetype" of the "general movement of New World creative protest" (62)—as a "working model" for a "possible West Indian aesthetic" (77). Through close readings of "rhythmic" strategies and "improvisatory effects" (87) in key works of Anglophone Caribbean fiction, including Roger Mais's 1954 *Brother Man*, Brathwaite argues that some of the most compelling fiction "taking its form from the pressures of West Indian social reality" has made recourse to "a form similar to that evolved by the American Negro in jazz" (93).

Taken as instances of a broader predilection in African diasporic thought, we might consider the cases of Ménil and Brathwaite as something like the obverse of the great bassist and composer Charles Mingus's humorous and habitual dismissal of the saxophonist Ornette Coleman as a "calypso player," which Moten has considered in some detail, juxtaposing it with the critique of US domestic racial policy in the lyrics of calypso hits such as Lord Invader's "Crisis in Arkansas." Ironically, as Moten observes:

> Mingus and Lord Invader share a political aesthetic that seeks to deploy strenuous rhythmic and lyrical resistance to and within self-imposed regulatory forms in order to facilitate flight from externally imposed regulation. Such flight is the ongoing performance of a shared diasporic legacy that is always articulated in close proximity to intradiasporic conflict. African American musicians' persistent denigration and distancing of Caribbean rhythms and sonorities and the deployment of those same elements in the service of Caribbean disavowals of an African American identity that is conceived as both dominant and abject, intimate a complex, many-sided whole. (115)

Despite the seeming diametrical opposition between these impulses—between emulation, on the one

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hand, and dismissal, on the other—all these cases must ultimately be understood as manifestations of "the complex system of intramural and extramural antagonistic hierarchies" that are the condition of possibility of "diasporic contact and solidarity" (112). To recognize this fact is to begin to make sense of the ways black internationalism is structured by *décalage*.[15]

In the 1930s and 1940s, Ménil and the other young intellectuals of the Négritude generation considered the jazz they were listening to as the kernel of "un thème littéraire, ou une idée littéraire" ("a literary theme or a literary idea"; Ménil, "Entretien" 439) that, in its emphasis on improvisation, corresponded with a number of the techniques and strategies (including automatic writing) being employed in the other major discourse that shaped them, surrealism. As Ménil recalled decades later, "[N]ous en avons fait une théorie, à un moment donné, à savoir que la bonne littérature devait être une littérature à l'image du jazz: une littérature d'improvisation qui se développait aux hasards des circonstances, ce qui cadrait très bien avec la conception surréaliste de BRETON" ("[A]t a certain moment we came up with a theory that good literature should be literature in the image of jazz: a literature of improvisation that was developed in the hazards of the circumstances, which fit very well with Breton's surrealist conception"; "Entretien" 439). The most elaborate case for a literature of improvisation is found in another essay he published in *Tropiques*, in May 1944, "Situation de la poésie aux Antilles" ("The Situation of Poetry in the Caribbean"), where he writes:

> For us, it is above all the major phenomenon of jazz that notably allows us, more certainly than any critical reflection, to conceive of the *historical* character of substance and form within the work, while ultimately conceding to them only an instantaneous value, as it were [*une valeur pour ainsi dire instantanée*].
>
> The essence of jazz is to improvise.
>
> An aesthetic derived from jazz would be a *technique for creating beauty as you go along* [*une technique à créer de la beauté au fur et à mesure*]. For jazz results from an approach constituted by the very jolts of life and its *style* is only the immediate information, through music or any other means—I can see how such an aesthetic might interest poetry in general—of feelings and images as they appear in the mind. Any crystallization, any indolent self-imitation, any hardening of life threatens the validity of this fragile elaboration.
>
> No rhythm is fixed in advance in its details.
>
> No content is preconceived concretely. . . .
>
> The "player" does not know and must not know what he will play next, what his next word will be, what his next adventure will be; yet he goes on, like an acrobat, across the tightrope of circumstance.
>
> A beautiful work is a work of circumstance [*Une belle oeuvre est une oeuvre de circonstance*].
>
> (129; trans. modified)

This passage adheres to a familiar conception of improvisation as the "particular discipline" of "allowing the idea to express itself . . . in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere."[16]

In November 2024 I was invited to take part in a symposium around the work of the contemporary Martinican novelist and theorist Patrick Chamoiseau organized by Thomas Trezise and Charly Verstraet at Princeton University. Over the course of two days, nine participants were asked to deliver short, informal talks taking up various themes and formal concerns running through the author's wide-ranging oeuvre and to engage with Chamoiseau himself in what became an extraordinarily rich and inspiring set of intertwined dialogues. As I reread Chamoiseau's work to prepare for the occasion, it occurred to me that even if it never quite comes into the foreground as a primary topic or concern, jazz comes to be invoked as a figure or aesthetic model for "un bond créatif dans *l'inconnu*" ("a creative leap into the *unknown*"; Chamoiseau, *Baudelaire jazz* 88) throughout his writing in a manner that is not unrelated to the way it functions in Ménil's earlier articles. So in my remarks I tried to trace the intermittent yet persistent allusions to jazz across a number of Chamoiseau's published works, approaching the topic somewhat in the style of the "poetic and musical meditations" of *Baudelaire jazz*, his 2022 collaboration with the saxophonist and scholar Raphaël Imbert, which boldly and anachronistically uses jazz as an analytical lens to consider the correspondences between Charles Baudelaire's work and African diasporic history and culture.

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The previous year, in an extended bilingual correspondence with the bassist William Parker, Chamoiseau suggests that jazz should be understood as the paradigmatic figure for the creativity with which African captives in the New World struggled for their "rehumanization." "The human societies created in the West Indies and the Americas are made of this stuff, a 'jazz spirit' [*un esprit-jazz*] so to speak," Chamoiseau writes, arguing that the jazz ensemble is an "illustration" of the particular mode of social interaction that has defined societies in the Americas in general, in an open-ended receptivity to the unforeseen:

> This creativity, this resistance, takes shape through means that are rather unexpected: through *individuation*, with no community system to lean on; through *polyrhythm*, which deconstructs all existing foundations, opening onto other possibilities; and finally through *improvisation*, which arises from the unique experience of each individual, and which each individual expresses in a confrontation with the unique experience of others.
>
> (Chamoiseau and Parker 34; trans. modified)

Even if the term *jazz* itself "reste à interroger" ("remains open to interrogation"; 35, 34; trans. modified), Chamoiseau continues, nonetheless the "jazz spirit" in this expansive sense remains a "mysterious and fertile soil" for the emergence of the creolization that has characterized the Americas (34). The insistence on jazz as a model for collectivity based on an unceasing dynamic between the individual and the group, in a manner that brings to mind Ralph Ellison's paradigmatic formulation, allows Chamoiseau to posit the "jazz spirit" as the "base potentielle d'une 'communion non totalitaire'" ("potential foundation of a 'nontotalitarian communion'"; *Le conteur* 186).[17]

Jazz also serves throughout Chamoiseau's work as a model for innovation, a commitment to pushing an artistic medium beyond its own limitations. As Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey have pointed out, the elements of jazz that are difficult to replicate in literature—evanescence, simultaneity, improvisation, polyphony (how might one represent on the page the effect of multiple voices speaking or singing at the same time?)—can be considered, rather than an absolute impasse, as a provocation to push against and even to transgress the putative limitations of the written text: "it is particularly unsurprising that a music which so frequently and characteristically aspires to the condition of speech, reflecting critically, it seems, upon the limits of the sayable, should have provoked and proved of enormous interest to practitioners of the art of the word—writers." In another letter to Parker, Chamoiseau writes, in a similar vein, that "I believe that music 'knows' what existed before anything was even speakable, before the very advent of languages; music constitutes a perception of reality that languages also possess, hidden within, and this is what writers also seek, desperately trying to retrieve, in their writing, something that exists beyond all alphabets, beyond language itself" (Chamoiseau and Parker 78). When Chamoiseau makes reference to jazz it is often in an effort to espouse this experimental imperative to unearth the unspoken or the beyond:

> Tout récit produit, pour nos imaginaires, un fragment de "réalité" habitable qui aide à nier, ou à mieux supporter, les imprévisibles du réel, et surtout: cet "en-dehors" impavide de l'esprit où se tient *l'impensable*. Aujourd'hui, tout grand créateur s'efforce avant toutes choses de fixer l'impensable (cette charogne sublime) sans voile et sans béquilles. . . . Dans la trompette de Miles Davis, dans les houles orchestrales de Coltrane, la narration surplombe toute idée de récit. Miles ne raconte pas: il "saisit" des configurations de forces, de sons, de sensations, le bruissement indicible d'une idée, la péripétie d'une miette de mélodie. . . . Le jazz n'est pas récit, il tisse sans fin la narration d'un grouillement de possible, de lignes de fuite sans horizon. Le jazz est la "saisie" toujours recommencée d'un état impensable du réel.
>
> (*Baudelaire jazz* 124–25)

> Every tale produces in our imaginaries a fragment of inhabitable "reality" that allows us to deny, or to better withstand, the unpredictabilities of the real, and above all that impassive "outside" of the mind where the *unthinkable* is held. Today every great creator strives before everything else to capture the unthinkable (that sublime carcass) without a veil and without crutches. . . . In the trumpet of Miles Davis, in the orchestral swells of Coltrane, narration

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> overruns any notion of the tale. Miles doesn't tell: he "seizes" configurations of forces, of sounds, of sensations, the inexpressible rustling of an idea, the stumbling upon a crumb of a melody. . . . Jazz is not a tale: it endlessly weaves the narration of a swarming of the possible, of lines of flight without horizon. Jazz is the always reinaugurated "seizing" of an unthinkable state of the real.

Although the theorist, poet, and novelist Edouard Glissant has at times described jazz rather differently as a "recomposition" of traces,[18] an art that would somehow be capable of healing the diasporic condition—suturing what Wilson Harris once called "the dislocation of a chain of miles" (26)—I find other parts of his work particularly useful in making sense of the ways that, for Chamoiseau, the tutelary intradiasporic invocation of jazz serves as the privileged figure for a "creative leap into the unknown" or an artistic method for conjuring the unthinkable or the beyond. In Glissant's indispensable theorization of what he calls the "poetics of Relation," the term *culture* itself does not define a fixed set of norms or practices, much less a shared essence (in other words, "the old idea of identity as root"), but instead points to an unending and infinitely complex global filiation in which "every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (*Poetics* 141, 11). In contemporary global society, Glissant argues, "identity is no longer just permanence; it is a capacity or variation, yes, a variable—either under control or wildly fluctuating" (141).

In exploring the intricacies of culture understood in this way, as an open-ended unfurling and pervasive cross-fertilization, Glissant suggests that difference can function as a "determining gap."[19] In one particularly dense passage, he writes, "La confluence massive et diffractée des cultures fait ainsi que tout écart (par rapport à une pré-norme suggérée ou imposé) est déterminant, mais aussi que toute détermination (de soi) est écart générateur" ("The massive and diffracted confluence of cultures thus makes every gap (from a suggested or imposed pre-norm) be determining but also makes every (self-)determination be a generative gap"; *Poétique* 168; *Poetics* 153; trans. modified). It is a useful critical vocabulary for making sense of the species of intradiasporic translation I have been attempting to think through here. The spaces between scenes—say, the distance from Harlem to Montmartre—are constitutive gaps that cannot be wished away. Any prospect of "interdependence," any positing of internationalism, must proceed by registering those "determining gaps" rather than by smoothing them out into a mass of "amalgamated indistinctions" (*Poetics* 143; trans. modified).

This is to say that internationalism can only be read through what Moten calls its "disrupted and disruptive locales" (116), like that unsuspected clearing in the forest where "Mood Indigo" becomes the anthem for a "prodigious beauty" that is particularly, inexorably Caribbean. As Glissant puts it elsewhere, "Dans la Relation, ce qui relie est d'abord cette suite des rapports entre les différences, à la rencontre les unes des autres. Les racines parcourantes (les rhizomes) des idées, des identités, des intuitions, relaient: s'y révèlent les lieux-communs dont nous devinons entre nous le partage" ("[I]n Relation what binds is first of all that suite of relations among differences as they encounter each other. The roots (rhizomes) that traverse ideas, identities, intuitions, are what bind: what are revealed in them are the common spaces where we divine what cleaves us"; *Philosophie* 72). To approach this point from another angle, it would be worth considering the relation between the generative disruption of intradiasporic translation—which is produced by the internal division of what is putatively shared ("lieux-communs")—and what Edward Said has described as the productive "dislocation" of certain instances of "travelling theory" (253), or what Roberto Schwarz has called the aesthetic "advantage" afforded by the reliance on "misplaced ideas" in literatures of the periphery (65).[20]

At the Princeton conference, the role of the allusions to jazz running through Chamoiseau's work—and the interrelations between music and literature more broadly—became one of the main currents of the collective dialogue that unspooled across our time together, along with issues including writerly process and collaboration, animality,

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political economy, migration, translation, and creolization. I was seated across from Chamoiseau at lunch, and we kept talking about jazz and about my proposition that francophone invocations of the music be understood as instances of *écarts déterminants* in Glissant's sense. Although he didn't object to my reading of the ways that, for Ménil and Paulette Nardal, jazz served as an aesthetic model that was explicitly intradiasporic (that is, associated for them with African American blackness in particular), I realized that—even when confronted with the ways his work makes reference to musicians such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane as emblematic—Chamoiseau was reluctant to associate jazz with any given diasporic locale. Although I find that the way jazz is mobilized in his writing is singular and exceptional, Chamoiseau seemed to want to position it as representative of a general diasporic phenomenon, a strategic mobilization of improvisation and polyrhythm that is characteristic of the "galaxie inépuisable" ("inexhaustible galaxy") of New World black music (*Baudelaire jazz* 81).[21]

The evening of the first day, there was a concert by the Guadeloupean saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart, followed by a conversation between the musician and the indefatigable Chamoiseau. The exchanges throughout the day were clearly still rippling through his head, and he kept coming back to points we'd been discussing earlier. It was during this closing dialogue that Chamoiseau offered his most thorough formulation of his position:

> J'ai mieux compris le jazz en comprenant la matrice dans laquelle tous ces phénomènes-là avaient surgi, cette espèce de diversité absolument incroyable qui allait faire que des captifs africains étaient tellement, d'une certain manière, tellement déshumanisés, tellement en rupture avec ce qu'ils avaient été, et ils avaient vécu dans la cale du bateau négrier un effondrement existentiel tellement profond qu'ils se sont retrouvés dans les Caraïbes, dans les Amériques, et se sont retrouvés à être les seuls à pouvoir mobiliser toutes les traces culturelles, tous les imaginaires, toutes les mélodies, toutes les mesures, toutes les rythmiques, qui circulaient dans cette rencontre de cultures et civilisations. Et je disais à notre ami Brent tout à l'heure qui parlait du jazz, je disais que je pense que le jazz n'est pas une musique noire, c'est une musique qui naît d'une circonstance nègre dans les Amériques. Et la circonstance nègre est que les captifs africains et leurs descendants étaient ce que Glissant appelle des "migrants nus," c'est-à-dire qu'ils ne sont pas venus avec des bibliothèques, des outils, des instruments de musique, ils sont venus complètement dépouillés de tout, ce qui fait qu'ils ont été les seuls à pouvoir mobiliser la totalité des ressources qui se sont retrouvés comme ça en inter-rétroaction dans les plantations, dans les Amériques, dans les Caraïbes. Et c'est ce qui a donné toute la vitalité des musiques de la Caraïbe—et qui a donné le jazz.
>
> (Chamoiseau and Schwarz-Bart)

> I came to understand jazz better by understanding the matrix in which all those sorts of phenomena emerged: that sort of absolutely incredible diversity that made it so that the African captives were, in a way, so dehumanized, so sundered from what they had been, and they had undergone an existential collapse so profound in the hold of the slave ship, that they found themselves in the Caribbean, in the Americas, and they found themselves to be the only ones who could mobilize all the cultural traces, all the imaginaries, all the melodies, all the measures, all the rhythms, that were circulating in that encounter of cultures and civilizations. And earlier I was saying to our friend Brent, who was talking about jazz, I was saying that I think that jazz is not a black music [*musique noire*]. It is a music born out of a *nègre* circumstance [*circonstance nègre*] in the Americas. And the *nègre* circumstance is that the African captives and their descendants were what Glissant calls "naked migrants"—that is, they did not come with libraries, with tools, with musical instruments, they came completely stripped of everything, and as a result they were the only ones able to mobilize the totality of resources that were found there, in inter-retroaction, on the plantations in the Americas, in the Caribbean. And this was what lent the musics of the Caribbean so much vitality—and what gave us jazz.

At lunch, Chamoiseau had cited Imbert's work to make his seemingly surprising point that "le jazz n'est pas une musique noire" ("jazz is not a black music").[22] I looked up the passage when I got home. In his captivating and unfortunately still untranslated 2014 book *Jazz supreme: Initiés, mystiques et*

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prophètes, a wide-ranging study of jazz and spirituality, Imbert suggests that coming to terms with the global influence of jazz means coming to terms with the ways the music has engendered "une conscience politique et spirituelle qui soutient la lutte et l'émancipation par ces moyens symboliques, allégoriques, souvent à l'insu de l'oppresseur" ("a political and spiritual consciousness supporting emancipation struggles through symbolic and allegorical means, often unknown to the oppressor"; 15). Observing the evolution of this consciousness "dans le cheminement d'une musique perpétuellement réinventée par les Noirs américains offre une alternative aux simples tentatives de récupération nationaliste ou ethnocentrée du jazz" ("in the advances of a music perpetually reinvented by Black Americans offers an alternative to simple attempts at nationalist or ethnocentric recuperations of jazz"). On the contrary, this consciousness has been a "moteur créatif" ("creative motor") for all the musical forms it has touched. Imbert adds:

> Plutôt que de parler de "musique noire," il faudrait parler alors d'une "circonstance noire" qui en permanence, sur la base empirique de la traite négrière, nourrit et féconde le vaste domaine de la musique populaire et savante américaine. Je montrerai en quoi cette "circonstance," ou cet "état d'esprit," surdétermine la création de la plupart des événements musicaux nés sur le sol américain—comme autant de témoignages du génie humain, sans aucune distinction de race, de religion, de classe. Le jazz est une totalité issue d'une circonstance singulière. Il répond à une "urgence créatrice," comme l'écrit si justement Coltrane.
>
> More than speaking of "black music," it would thus be necessary to speak of a "black circumstance" that, from the empirical foundation of the slave trade, permanently nourishes and fertilizes the vast domain of American popular and learned music. I will demonstrate how this "circumstance," or this "state of mind," overdetermines the creation of the majority of the musical events born on American soil—as in so many testimonies to human genius, without distinction of race, religion, or class. Jazz is a totality issued from a singular circumstance. It responds to a "creative urge," as Coltrane so aptly wrote.[23]

When I found this passage in Imbert's book, I realized that I had stumbled upon another, perhaps inadvertent, transposition. What are we to make of the discrepancy between Imbert's formulation and Chamoiseau's subtly diffracted citation of it—that is, between a *circonstance nègre* and a *circonstance noire*?[24] Or is this yet another instance of a determining gap—an idea spirited out of place and made to signify otherwise? Or is the blackness of a black circumstance precisely a matter of the ways any figure for racial commonality is always already internally divided—a "common space where we divine what cleaves us," as Glissant puts it?

Among the arresting and revelatory shards of language in the first section of numbered poems in M. NourbeSe Philip's "hauntological" book *Zong!* (201), in which the poet deliberately restricts herself to the "word store" of the 1783 Court of King's Bench report of *Gregson v. Gilbert* (191), patiently and intuitively ("certain words leap out at me, asking me to choose them" [195]) and furiously recombining the words of the report, first through the "mechanism of force" of grammar (193), putting words in new syntactical relationships through a manipulation of transitive verbs and prepositions, and then through the anagrammatic reshuffling of individual letters, "using the text of the legal report almost as a painter uses paint or a sculptor stone—the material with which I work being preselected and limited" (198), all in the daring conviction that the "story that can only be told by not telling" of the African captives murdered during the ill-fated transatlantic voyage of the slave ship the *Zong* in 1781 is somehow "locked in the text" of the report itself (191), that the captives' names and voices can somehow be wrung out of "the language of the only publicly extant document directly bearing on these events" (199) or, in other words, rung (made to sound) out of "the one public marker of the murder of those Africans on board the *Zong*, locating it in a specific time and place" (194), one of the recombined phrases that reappear and reshape themselves across multiple iterations is an enigmatic prepositional phrase:

> the throw in circumstance (5, 35)

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A beautiful work is a work of circumstance. And what is a circumstance? A setting; an environment; the surrounding conditions; the place where it happened; the given; a predisposition; how we found things when we got there. It suggests something stumbled upon by chance, a clearing in a forest, something predetermined by an empirical foundation outside your control. A work of circumstance is the product of its moment, of the particular conditions of its genesis: something occasional, contingent—one might call it epiphenomenal, then, or even indirect or tangential (as in the legal term *circumstantial evidence*). But a circumstance is also "determining," in Glissant's sense: it is a predicament, a tightrope, a precarious situation you're thrown into, and one that can throw you, that can unsettle you (*the unease and questioning provoked by their circumstances*), that can upend you, that can even entrap or violate you. (In the fatalistic phrasing of another recombination in the book's opening section: "negroes exist / for the throwing" [34].) To listen across the infinite distance from blackness to blackness, to take jazz as a model for poetics, for a literature of improvisation that is *developed in the hazards of the circumstances*, is not to anchor oneself in the solace of identity but instead to stand deliberately, self-consciously, on broken ground.

Brent Hayes Edwards

Notes

1. Here I follow M. B. Taleb-Khyar in translating *créolité* as "creoleness" (Bernabé et al.).

2. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

3. "Stellio, entre 1920 et 1950, fixait notre folklore et en cela exprimait non sans génie le passé et le présent du pays natal. Sa règle fondamentale aura été de reproduire avec tendresse et piété les chants nostalgiques d'une période dont la culmination aura été la vie de Saint-Pierre à la veille de l'éruption . . . le folklore n'est pas le point d'arrivée—le résultat du travail musical—mais le point de départ implicite pour une musique à inventer" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 256).

4. "Le jazz dont le ressort est l'improvisation. Non pas, en conséquence, modulation répétitive d'un folklore mémorisé (façon Stellio) mais langage sonore, à un moment livré à lui-même pour saisir dans les mailles d'un magique filet une nouveauté émotionnelle inconnue" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 257).

5. I elaborate this argument throughout my book *Epistrophies*, where I make the case that "part of what literature learns from music, and vice versa, is to push the native medium beyond itself, to find new expressive possibilities by exceeding or distending the seeming limits of expression" (253).

6. I am thinking of the infamous passage in Leiris's 1939 autobiography *Manhood* where he suggests that the roots of his decision to travel to Africa in 1931 as the secretary-archivist of the state-sponsored anthropological Mission Dakar-Djibouti lay in his fondness for jazz in the Paris of the 1920s: "In the period of great license that followed the hostilities, jazz was a sign of allegiance, an orgiastic tribute to the colors of the moment. It functioned magically, and its means of influence can be compared to a kind of possession. It was the element that gave these celebrations their true meaning, with communion by dance, latent or manifest exoticism, and drinks, the most effective means of bridging the gap that separates individuals from each other at any kind of gathering. Swept along by violent bursts of tropical energy, jazz still had enough of a 'dying civilization' about it, of humanity blindly submitting to The Machine, to express quite completely the state of mind of at least some of that generation: a more or less conscious demoralization born of the war, a naïve fascination with the comfort and the latest inventions of progress, a predilection for a contemporary setting whose insanity we nonetheless vaguely anticipated, an abandonment to the animal joy of experiencing the influence of a modern rhythm, an underlying aspiration to a new life in which more room would be made for the impassioned frankness we inarticulately longed for. In jazz, too, came the first appearance of Negroes, the manifestation and the myth of black Edens which were to lead me to Africa and, beyond Africa, to ethnography" (109). On this passage and on Leiris's own fascination with jazz (and his path from the nightclubs of Montmartre to an anthropological expedition in Africa), see Edwards, Introduction 6–7. On the exoticism of French responses to black performance in interwar Paris, see also Fry; Goddard; Martin and Roueff; Archer-Straw.

7. The most prominent instance of a francophone intellectual in Paris attesting to the influence of African American music in the interwar period itself may be Nardal's June 1930 article "Musique nègre: Antilles et Aframérique" ("Black Music: The Antilles and Aframerica"). Although Nardal cites one collection of sheet music—Victor Coridun's *Le carnaval de Sainte-Pierre*, a collection of forty-five "chansons creoles" ("creole songs")—she mainly juxtaposes Caribbean and African American music by considering not commercial recordings, as Ménil does, but contemporary live performance in the metropole, including the biguine ensembles performing at the popular Bal Nègre cabaret, on the one hand, and theatrical revues such as Louis Douglas's Black Flowers, which was enjoying a successful run at the Théâtre de la Porte Sainte-Martin (see Fry 70–74; Goddard 84), on the other. She also focuses primarily on black vernacular or what Ménil would call "folkloric" music, contrasting the Martinican biguine with African American blues and spirituals.

Nardal is especially interested in the ways these musics can be understood as modes of working through what might be termed the collective experience of dispossession, or the predicament of "stolen life." Comparing the "ensemble admirablement discipliné" ("admirably disciplined ensemble"; 183) of the Black Flowers revue

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to what she describes as the "manque de cohesion" ("lack of cohesion"; 184) in "certains spectacles antillais" ("certain Antillean shows"; 84), Nardal suggests that the primary differences between African American and Caribbean musics are a result of the two populations' respective "emotional and spiritual reactions to the nightmare of slavery." She writes: "Quand on a entendu et étudié les 'Spirituals' qui représentent la musique classique et religieuse des aframéricains, ce ne peut manquer de s'étonner de l'absence de toute musique traditionnelle chez les Antillais. Improvisations d'esclaves réfugiés dans la forêt après d'harassantes journées de travail, les 'Spirituals' expriment tous un intense sentiment religieux. Sous des paroles naïves où l'on retrouve des réminiscences de la Bible et des allusions aux actes les plus humbles de leur vie, revient toujours l'aspiration vers le ciel et la liberté. Après sa rude journée de travail, quand l'esclave épuisé ne trouvait même plus la force de manger, il ne pouvait qu'aspirer à la mort, comme au seul moyen d'acquérir la liberté. Pour lui le mot 'home' est synonyme de 'ciel,' lieu de repos et récompense des maux endurés sur la terre. Il est vrai que le sentiment religieux a été étouffé chez les esclaves antillais par les colons qui redoutaient l'effet de l'instruction religieuse donnée par les missionnaires. Mais il est certain que les esclaves américains furent encore plus cruellement traités que les Antillais et l'espèce d'ostracisme dont ils sont frappés jusqu'aujourd'hui a contribué à entretenir chez leurs descendants, sous la forme de Spirituals, certains façons de penser et de sentir" ("When one has heard and studied the 'spirituals,' which are the classical and religious music of the Aframericans, one cannot fail to be astonished by the absence of any traditional music among the Antilleans. As the improvisations of slaves taking refuge in the woods after exhausting days of work, the 'spirituals' all express an intense religious sentiment. Underlying their naive words, in which one finds reminiscences of the Bible and allusions to the humblest episodes of their lives, is always the aspiration toward heaven and freedom. After a tough day's work, when the exhausted slave couldn't even find the strength to eat, he could only hope for death as the sole way to obtain his freedom. For him the word 'home' was synonymous with 'heaven,' a place of rest and recompense for the wrongs endured on earth. It is true that religious feeling was extinguished among Antillean slaves by the colonists, who feared the effect of religious instruction delivered by the missionaries. But it is certain that American slaves were treated even more cruelly than Antillean ones, and the kind of ostracism inflicted on them up to the present day has contributed to maintaining, in the shape of spirituals, certain modes of thinking and feeling among their descendants"; 184–85). The passage is notable not only for Nardal's comparative impulse but also for her contention that one can trace the roots of a collective ethos ("certain modes of thinking and feeling") in what Mackey would describe as the experience of social othering (265)—"the kind of ostracism inflicted on them up to the present day." Even as Nardal positions Antillean and African American culture as rough equivalents through a discourse of race that can be shocking in its essentialist assumptions—"Chez les noirs américains, même joie de vivre que chez les Antillais, même fantaisie joyeuse, même sensualité de jeunes animaux en liberté" ("Among black Americans there is the same joie de vivre as among Antilleans, the same joyful fantasy, the same sensuality of young animals living in freedom"; 184)—her comparative analysis is a concerted attempt to come to terms with the "intervals" or "spaces between scenes" of performance within African diasporic culture (Moten 88), or, in other words, with the "relation between blackness and the politics and aesthetics of a certain claim on dispossession" (117).

8. "C'est sur une base première de folklore incorporé qu'une élaboration . . . s'opère pouvant aller jusqu'à la savant composition symphonique—usant, dans le parcours, de toutes les ressources techniques qui se trouvent à portée" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 256).

9. "C'était . . . une musique au second degré. Sur une matière sonore et sur des rythmes déjà en place, une élaboration secondaire se faisait, dans la cité industrielle moderne, pour exprimer l'actualité de la vie et non pas les exotismes passéistes de forêt primitive, de champs de canne et de coton qui n'auront leur place dans la composition musicale qu'à titre de fondement tenu à distance" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 255).

10. "Une esthétique est là, dans l'épaisseur d'influences culturelles accumulées (Afrique, Europe, Caraïbe, Amérique)—portées vivantes par la diaspora de couleur. Et il se trouve qu'elle correspondait aux efforts qui se faisaient jour parmi les étudiants coloniaux les plus conscients, à la recherche d'une esthétique nègre et métisse qui fût à leur mesure et à leur convenance" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 255).

11. "Il se trouvait que c'est Duke Ellington qui faisait advantage écho aux inquiétudes et aux interrogations suscitées par les circonstances" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 256).

12. On the relationship between "Creole Love Call" (credited to Ellington, Bubber Miley, and Rudy Jackson) and King Oliver's "Camp Meeting Blues," see Morgenstern; Teachout; and Zirpolo. Even if the song title suggests a different setting, it is worth recalling that King Oliver's primary ensemble in the 1920s was the Creole Jazz Band.

13. "Les oeuvres d'Ellington, à nos yeux fondatrices d'une créolité-de-valeur (une créolité exquise, complexe, déliée, vaste et ouverte)" (Ménil, "Sur un certain effet" 258). Ménil notes that he later recognized that Ellington's evocation of the "Creole" was itself a sort of rough translation, "mélange de réalisme et d'exotisme" (a "mix of realism and exoticism"). Near the end of the essay, he cites Ellington's 1965 album *Concert in the Virgin Islands*, inspired by a tour in St. Croix and St. Thomas, and the composer's comments as quoted in Dance's liner notes: "We spent several days in the Virgin Islands. We wrote some of the music while we were down there, and finished it shortly after we returned home. We found a certain flavor there, musically and otherwise, that is genuinely unique and completely independent. The people get into a comfortable groove, never aggressive—no theatrical-type animation is needed. I hope we have expressed some of these attitudes in our music." Ménil observes that in this suite Ellington, "se rapprochant de nous, il soulignera, tant par le rhythme que par la mélodie, les traits humains particuliers de la créolité aux îles de la Caraïbe—les nôtres approximativement: la nonchalance dans la vie, un pathétique sentimentaliste un peu gnangnan, un romantisme superficiel plus manière que héroïque, un cliché affectif de 'la douceur de vivre sous les palmes'—sur fond de balancement sonore de vagues sur le sable" ("approaching us, underlines as much through rhythm as through melody the particular human traits of creoleness in the islands of the Caribbean—our own, approximately: nonchalance in life, a slightly unctuous sentimentalist pathos, a superficial

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romanticism that is more mannered than heroic, an affective cliché of 'sweet living under the palm trees'—against the backdrop of the sound of waves rocking on the beach"; "Sur un certain effet" 258).

14. Ménil goes on to echo a line made famous in a piece by Suzanne Césaire in the previous issue, where she writes, "La poésie martiniquaise sera cannibale ou ne sera pas" ("Martinican poetry will be cannibal or it will not be"; "Misère" 50; "Poetic Destitution" 27). As Ménil rephrases it: "Constatant ce que vous êtes, comme par une savante projection géométrique, nous ferons profiler sur l'écran caraïbe ce que vous n'êtes exactement pas. La poésie martiniquaise sera virile. La poésie martiniquaise sera cannibale. Ou ne sera pas" ("Realizing what you are, as though by a knowing geometric projection, we will project on the screen of the Caribbean precisely what you are not. Martinican poetry will be virile. Martinican poetry will be cannibal. Or it will not be"; "Laissez" 27).

15. On decalage, see Edwards, *Practice* 13–15. Or as Moten puts it, "An irreducible utopics of The International is still to be desired, against all positivisms, against any vulgar reduction to the empirical encounter however post- or anti-imperial that encounter might be or appear to be, even if no one can locate it anywhere other than in its disrupted and disruptive locales" (116).

16. I am quoting what may be the single best-known elaboration of this conception of improvisation, the pianist Bill Evans's liner notes for Miles Davis's 1959 album *Kind of Blue*, which opens, "There is a Japanese visual art in which the artist is forced to be spontaneous. He must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere. The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting, but it is said that those who see will find something captured that escapes explanation. This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician" (345–46).

17. I am thinking of the well-known passage in Ellison's 1958 essay "The Charlie Christian Story": "There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity: as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition. Thus, because jazz finds its very life in an endless improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it—how often do we see even the most famous of jazz artists being devoured alive by their imitators, and, shamelessly, in the public spotlight?" (36).

18. For example, in the 1997 *Traité du Tout-Monde* (*Treatise on the Whole-World*), Glissant writes, "Those Africans transported to the Americas carried with them, over the Great Seas, the trace of their gods, of their customs, of their languages. Faced with the implacable disorder of the settler, they had the genius, arising from the suffering they endured, to make these traces fertile, creating—better than syntheses—outcomes that no-one expected. The Creole languages are traces, opening up across the seas of the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean. Jazz music is a trace that has been recomposed and spread all over the world. And all the different kinds of music of this Caribbean and the Americas" (10).

19. I have departed here from Betsy Wing's admirable translation of *Poetics of Relation*. In French this chapter of the book is titled "Les écarts déterminants" (Glissant, *Poétique* 155). Wing renders that title as "Distancing, Determining" (Glissant, *Poetics* 141), using the two gerunds in apposition to suggest the ways that divisions, splittings, or separations (*les écarts*) can determine or set the terms of cultural identity. What I want to emphasize here is that for Glissant one term modifies the other—that is, it is the "distancing," or the gap, that is "determining."

20. Although Schwarz's work has been associated with the term *misplaced ideas* in English because that is how his phrase is rendered in the English title of a collection of his most influential essays, his key analytic intervention might be better described as a highlighting of *displaced* ideas. (In Portuguese the title essay is "As ideias fora do lugar"—more literally, "Ideas out of Place.") Schwarz does not lament or criticize what he calls the "particular distortion" and "incongruity" (25), or even the "maladjustment" (34), of pivotal ideological categories of social and political modernity as they have been adopted into the Brazilian context. Instead of pathologizing these shifts as "backwardness" (34), Schwarz insists that we come to terms with them as traces of the ways that ideas as they are taken up elsewhere are always unavoidably "reconstructed on the basis of local contradictions" (39).

Whereas both Said (in making a case that Frantz Fanon's adoption of the theory of the subject-object relationship from Georg Lukács is not a mechanical application but instead a "crucial reworking and critique" [261]) and Schwarz (in analyzing the "incongruity" in the "adoption of European ideology in the context of Brazilian letters" [68]) approach this question across the divide between center and periphery—maintaining the formative distinction between metropole and colony, or between "a European model and a local setting" (Schwarz 46)—the task of considering the particular vicissitudes of transplantation within a diasporic orbit would mean considering how signs travel and are transmogrified when they are taken to be signs of shared belonging. (Although Stuart Hall has suggested in passing that diasporas can be usefully understood as "societies of 'misplaced ideas'" in Schwarz's sense, he too delimits his focus to "a diasporic relationship of dissemination in the centre/periphery, colony/metropole dialectic" [48], instead of taking up the question of intradiasporic translation.)

21. "Dans la plantation esclavagiste" ("On the slave plantation"), Chamoiseau writes, "la polyrythmie africaine investira toutes choses" ("African polyrhythm would come to invest all things"); he goes on to insist on the shared filiation of all the music that emerged in those societies, including not only jazz but also the blues, gospel, work songs, funeral marches, bèlè, gwoka, biguine, calypso, reggae, konpa, and salsa (*Baudelaire jazz* 81).

22. Although Chamoiseau doesn't cite the argument that jazz should not be considered a "black music" in his book *La matière de l'absence*, there he discusses Imbert's book and the "dimension spirituelle" ("spiritual dimension") in jazz (107).

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23. Imbert is referring to a remarkable letter that Coltrane wrote in June 1962 to the critic Don DeMicheal of *Down Beat* magazine, who had sent him a copy of the composer Aaron Copland's 1952 book *Music and Imagination*. Coltrane expressed his thanks for the gift, even if he did not consider everything Copland had to say to be applicable to jazz. While Copland is concerned with the composer who has difficulty "finding a positive philosophy or justification for his art," Coltrane writes that "the 'jazz' musician (You can have this term along with several others that have been foisted upon us.) does not have to worry about this problem at all. . . . It's built in us. The phrasing, the sound of the music attest this fact. We are naturally endowed with it. You can believe all of us would have perished long ago if this were not so. As to community, the whole face of the globe is our community. You see, it is really easy for us to create. We are born with this feeling that just comes out no matter what conditions exist" (qtd. in Simpkins 159). He continues, "It seems history shows (and it's the same way today) that the innovator is more often than not met with some degree of condemnation; usually according to the degree of his departure from the prevailing modes of expression or what have you. . . . Innovators always seek to revitalize, extend and reconstruct the status quo in their given fields, wherever it is needed. Quite often they are the rejects, outcasts, sub-citizens, etc. of the very societies to which they bring so much sustenance. Often they are people who endure great personal tragedy in their lives. Whatever the case, whether accepted or rejected, rich or poor, they are forever guided by that great and eternal constant—the creative urge" (160–61).

24. I consider the implications for translation of the complex history of French racial terms including *nègre* and *noir* in *The Practice of Diaspora* (25–38). See also Pierrot's article, as well as the preface Naudy and Pierrot wrote for their translation of *The Practice of Diaspora*, which discusses the complexities of translating the book into French.

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