Hanétha Vété-Congolo (ed.), *The Caribbean Oral Tradition: Literature, Performance, and Practice*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 201 pp. (Cloth US\$100.00)

The Caribbean Oral Tradition revisits key questions from a range of disciplinary perspectives. Beginning with Olufemi Vaughan's foreword, it constitutes a timely intervention in critical debates about orality, oral-scribal tensions, and most significantly the "clashing and grappling" of cultures, epistemologies, and philosophies in one of modernity's first "contact zones," the Caribbean.

Jean Godefroy Bidima's preface notes that interorality "is not only a concept *regulating* social relations and the history of the Caribbean, but also a constitutive matrix of Caribbean societies and the ways in which they present themselves and represent others" (p. x, his emphasis). It effectively situates each essay, highlighting its particular value within the book's multidisciplinary conversation.

Unequivocally centering the African contribution in the shaping of Caribbean orality, Hanétha Vété-Congolo's framing essay theorizes interorality as a philosophical, ethical, axiological, aesthetic, and political challenge to white oppression and the denial of the humanity of the enslaved. While not entirely new in the way it positions the oral tradition as a legitimate discursive tradition, the grounding of this argument in philosophy may be the most useful contribution to a dynamic field of study. She demonstrates how even such attempts at diminishing the enslaved paradoxically disprove the very claims of essential difference and a philosophy on which racism in the Caribbean was built.

Paget Henry's "Interorality and Caribbean Philosophy" reiterates Vété-Congolo's definition of interorality, locating this term within broader hybridization and creolization frameworks. He argues that because of the binary, prejudicial perspectives that European colonizers applied to all interactions and relationships with Africans, and by extension Afro-Caribbeans, there was no place or opportunity for interorality between these two groups. Instead, he locates the applicability of interorality in the interchange between Indo- and Afro-Caribbean philosophies, as is apparent in performance traditions such as Trinidad carnival.

"Crossing Spirits, Negotiating Cultures," by Solimar Otero, discusses Espiritismo, an Afro-Latina/o religion practiced throughout Latin America and the African diaspora. Focusing primarily on interculturalization, it considers how Cuban *misa* spirituals, through emphasis on the "in-between," and attention to interactivity, collaboration, and interchange, are a representative site of interorality and a performance of racial identity and the history of slavery.

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Otero argues that *misa* performances are generally rooted in the values of the community's belief systems and that the variation, ambiguity, and intercultural orientation "complicate notions of Cuban history and belonging, and challenge notions of 'an isolated and authentic Cuban nationalism'" (p. 100).

John Drabinski's essay, "Orality and the Slave Sublime," is a meditation on the role of orality in preserving and conveying slavery's traumatic resonances and the way "the cultural project of orality ... draws upon a haunted aesthetics" (p. 110). He brings together Édouard Glissant's *chaos-monde* and Paul Gilroy's articulation of the "slave sublime" to explore "how the slave sublime might be said to animate, even in its absence, the dynamic structure of orality and its particular form of chaos" (p. 111). Drabinski's argument is grounded in Frederick Douglass's memory of slave singing and W.E.B. Dubois's reflections on sorrow songs, sublimely transmitted in sound.

"Michael Birenbaum Quintero argues that the music and dance of Colombian Pacific Blacks is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the assertion that formerly enslaved Blacks do not construct or position their cultural practice in opposition to European culture. This is because that region of Colombia is an "autonomous territory" (p. 146), populated—until recently—by an isolated people who explicitly and deliberately chose self-definition, calling themselves "*libres*" (free people) thus disengaging themselves from both Africa and their past in enslavement.

Finally, Paul B. Miller's "Boukman in Books" uses recollections of the Bois Caïman ceremony and Dutty Boukman's role in the Haitian Revolution to address another age-old issue in Caribbean critical discourse—the oral-scribal dichotomy (*écriture/oralité*). Much of this essay is devoted to examining different, colonially derived and EuroAmerican-centric efforts to delegitimize orally derived versions of the Haitian Revolution. The Bois Caïman ceremony is represented in C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* and other sources as the last vodou ceremony and a kind of spiritual launching of the Revolution.

In the afterword, Lewis R. Gordon returns readers to the crucial postcolonial labor with which the essays are engaged and also to the question of why interorality as a concept and as a "*constitutive matrix* of Caribbean societies" (p. x, my emphasis) is important in continuing conversations about formerly colonized and enslaved peoples. Gordon devotes significant discussion to challenging the age-old tendency to privilege writing over orality and fittingly contemplates the paradox of using a written text to revisit this conversation about the false *écriture/oralité* dichotomy.

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