Alejandra Bronfman, *Isles of Noise: Sonic Media in the Caribbean*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. i + 223 pp. (Paper US\$ 29.99)

Wireless and radio technologies developed in the Caribbean in the first half of the twentieth century—an era and region scarred by imperialism, militarization, and neocolonialism. Within that context, did broadcasting become an instrument of repression? Or did it instead open spaces for revolutionary politics and sociopolitical and cultural dissent? In this impressively researched study, Alejandra Bronfman addresses these questions by examining the emergence and expansion of broadcasting in Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and, to a lesser extent, the Dominican Republic. She argues that wireless and radio created “noises” that both reproduced and challenged the forces of empire, neocolonialism, and violence. These noises connected new technologies and larger political forces, influencing the uses of broadcasting, the messages transmitted via broadcasting technologies, and the way people received (or did not receive) messages.

Bronfman, a professor of history at the University of British Columbia, has previously explored radio and sound studies in *Media, Sound, and Culture in Latin America*, a volume that she and Andrew Grant Wood coedited in 2012. In *Isles of Noise*, however, broadcasting and the people of the Caribbean are the protagonists in the narrative. The book captures wires, radio noises, technologies, accents, language, and the Caribbean’s past, highlighting the pivotal role of broadcasting in the region’s society, culture, and politics.

Isles of Noise is theoretically grounded in sound studies. From the introduction (“Signal”) to the following six chapters, it foregrounds the technological elements that constitute broadcasting and the transmitter-channel-message-receiver model employed to analyze communication processes. The concept of noises holds these elements together. In communication theory, noises are elements that affect the transmission and reception of messages. In *Isles of Noise*, they are factors interconnected to radio and wireless technologies that literally and symbolically produced violence, pain, and repression for the people of the Caribbean. Yet noises also opened spaces for political and cultural dissent. Bronfman argues that some transgressed hegemonic ideals of culture as well as state suppression.

After the introduction, each chapter considers moments in the history of the Caribbean through the lens of broadcasting. “Circuits” explores the launching of wireless and radio in Haiti during the U.S. military occupation and the accompanying enactments of terror by the U.S. marines. “Receivers” looks at the commercial imperatives behind the establishment of radio in Cuba

and Jamaica, and the circulation of sounds from the Caribbean to the outside world. “Resistors” examines the elitist goal of using radio to educate the public and the citizens’ reliance on technology to enact political resistance in Haiti and Cuba. “Voice” focuses on the performances of Kreyol, folklore, plays, and accents in Haitian and Jamaican radio, which transmitted a sonic blackness. And “Ears” follows the use of radio to mobilize a revolutionary movement in Cuba. Of these noises, the discussion of the U.S. occupation in Haiti and the analysis of radio voices and accents that created sonic blackness are particularly relevant to grasping the importance of researching broadcasting when writing histories of the region.

Isles of Noise is a model for historians focusing on the Caribbean. While many U.S. cultural historians have embraced the analysis of broadcasting technologies and popular culture in their explorations of cultural trends in the United States, Caribbean and Latin American historians have generally balked at media technologies and cultural products in their writing. Bronfman’s book demonstrates how new archival materials combined with theories and scholarship outside the confines of history can shed new light on what has been written about the Caribbean. By introducing media technologies into the Caribbean’s history, Bronfman rewrites and reinterprets what we know about the region’s past.

Some parts of *Isles of Noise* could have benefitted from elaboration and clarification. For instance, Haiti, Cuba, and Jamaica play a prominent role in the book’s narrative, leaving the Dominican Republic as an aside. And although Bronfman’s engagement with the literature on sound studies is impressive, unpacking some of the terms for readers who may be unfamiliar with that literature would have been useful. Nonetheless, *Isles of Noise* is a thoroughly researched, highly original, and important contribution to Caribbean studies, American studies, and sound studies.

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