Jenny Sharpe, *Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss*. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020. xii + 199 pp. (Paper US\$34.95)

Much of what makes the Caribbean what it is today—namely, the stories of abduction and loss that resulted from the slave trade—exists in a plane of ephemerality and erasure that makes the effort of capturing it as necessary as it is impossible. Jenny Sharpe's *Immaterial Archives* tries to undo the impossibility by analyzing a select group of artistic and literary artifacts by artists and writers from various Caribbean islands to explore absence in the affirmative, that is, as a form of affective memory. She unpacks the book's guiding paradox in its opening lines: "The immaterial archives of this book do not exist in a library or other repository; in fact, they are not an archive at all" (p. 3). Rather, she studies how "affects, dreams, spirits, and visions" intervene in the written records, novels, poems, and art, not as silence but as disruption of "archival knowledge and their accompanying notions of 'the human'" (pp. 3–4).

The corpus of *Immaterial Archives* consists of literary and visual representations that use the recovery of silence as a structural device on the basis of which stories, poems, paintings, and installations are built. It includes an introduction and four chapters that focus on texts and art dedicated to the process of turning real or potential absence into presence. The first one, "Silence," is dedicated to M. NourbeSe Philip's poem *Zong!* which uses the words from the proceedings of *Gregson v. Gilbert*, the lawsuit over insurance compensation for the slaves that had been thrown overboard the ship *Zong*. Philip's poem includes blank spaces, alliteration, imaginary lists, and invented names to make silence, anonymity and impunity felt, named, and contested. In the second chapter, "The Invisible," Sharpe focuses on Haitian artist Frantz Zéphirin's *The Slave Ship Brooks* (2007) and Haitian American Edouard Duval-Carrié's *La Vraie histoire des Ambaglos* (2003), as well as his installation *The Indigo Room or is Memory Water Soluble?* (2004). This chapter explores the way in which the ship as a symbol in the Atlantic slave trade is reenvisioned in Haitian art largely thanks to Vodou beliefs and local visual aesthetic codes. In Chapter 3, "Word Holes," Sharpe analyzes the novel *Louisiana* by Erna Brodber, in which an anthropologist manages to record fragments of the testimony of her informant after her death. And in the final chapter, "DreamStories," she describes a series of technological literary and visual experiments by Kamau Brathwaite in the context of his other writings, the mourning for his wife, her—and then his own—archival efforts in the early days of personal computers. While chapters tend to limit their focus on very few texts, the analyses themselves contextualize them and make connections with a larger network of related cultural artifacts, creating a thorough understanding of the creative strategies at work.

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Sharpe's methodology "proceeds by way of transactions, exchanges, and conversations, both real and imagined, between history writing and the creative arts" (p. 4). The main critical gesture in *Immaterial Archives* is teasing out the ways in which these cultural artifacts have been able to turn silence into literature, and death into image. While the texts Sharpe analyzes are elaborate creative efforts in prosopopoeia, her own approach is more candid in that she teases out textual intricacies in the objects she studies and contextualizes references by establishing cross-references, always letting the texts themselves lead the way. The most successful chapter is "The Invisible," which suggests that her method is particularly suitable to the analysis of visual culture.

I appreciate Jenny Sharpe's comparative approach. She makes connections across media and across geographies, putting into conversation thinkers and artists that would not normally be considered together. Most of her references are Anglophone or Haitian. It is worth noting, however, that several archives that she could have included remain unutilized; there is no reference, for instance, to the Spanish Caribbean. I grant that no book can do everything, and that linguistic abilities pose their own restrictions, but I did miss an explicit allusion to such limitations, especially in a book devoted to silences in the archive. That having been said, Jenny Sharpe is a sensitive reader who manages to lend provisional shape to an immaterial archive that is as elusive as it is essential.

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