SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

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Les violons du marronnage: Music, Landscape, and Resistance in Daniel Maximin's Poetry

Thinkers such as Dénètem Touam Bona and Sylvie Chalaye have recently championed "marronnage," and the figure of the runaway slave, as a form of resistance pertinent in contemporary anticolonial and environmental critique. Under the regime of enslavement in the Caribbean, "marronnage" was a widespread form of rejection of the colonial system, as enslaved people fled the plantations in small or large groups and started new communities in different parts of the island based on adaptation rather than on environmental exploitation, to varying degrees of success. For Bona, moreover, "marronnage" extends beyond the literal practice of escape from the plantations, and the term is used as a metaphor or figure for resistance to dominative power structures, a refusal of extractivism, and a celebration of spontaneous and creative cultural métissage. "Marronnage" is "un veritable art de la fugue, un art de variation" ["a veritable art of fugue, an art of variation"] (Bona 42–43); it implies movement and escape, integration with the environment, bricolage, as well as the spontaneous and liberated expression of the body through dance and music. It is also perhaps newly resonant in light of the current environment crisis, because it is associated with integration rather than mastery over the ecological world. Bona's and Chalaye's analyses at the same time indicate how

ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 00.00 (2026), pp. 1–21
https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isag027

the culture of marronnage problematises straightforward visibility, noting that the regime of enslavement was based on visual surveillance, and marronnage was a practice that sought to evade the gaze. It involves the creative use of camouflage, the adoption and playful use of different cultural forms, and represents a culture that would exploit the creative use of sound over image. Although they foreground the spontaneous expression of the body, however, Bona and Chalaye do not analyse in detail the subversive use of sound in the culture of marronnage.

In the poetry of Daniel Maximin, the creative use of sound, expressed through musical instruments as well as in the expressiveness of ecology and geology, is crucial to the evocation of an aesthetics of freedom in the island space of his native Guadeloupe. Guadeloupe remains a French department, but Maximin reimagines the historical practice of marronnage as a figure for creative and sustainable freedom despite the political and economic dominance of the metropole. Marronnage is associated with poetic and musical activity based on movement, the spontaneous mingling of cultural forms of different origins, and attentiveness to ecological agency, all of which reject monolithic forms of national and cultural identity as well as the ongoing exploitation of the land for profit. Maximin has produced mostly novels and essays, including notably a reflection on the "geopoetics" of the Caribbean, *Les Fruits du cyclone* (2006), yet his poetry volume *L'Invention des désirades* (2000), though intermittently reflecting on the novels, most aptly explores musicality, ecology, and the use of diasporic musical forms in the islands of the French Caribbean. Pioneers of sound studies in the Caribbean such as Edwin Hill and Martin Munro have shown that innovative and subversive forms of expression through sound were an important tool for enslaved people challenging the visual economy of the plantation. In Maximin's poetry, this exploration of the multiple, vibrant forms of sonic expression is carried forward into the contemporary period, as the poems spontaneously juxtapose song and rhythm with elemental and occasionally bird sounds in a vigorous cacophony celebrating diverse forms of human and nonhuman expression. Maximin repeatedly refers to the hummingbird as a symbol of Caribbean culture, as it builds its nest through a patchwork gathering of materials as if to reflect the ingeniousness of "marronnage." His poetics is similarly made up of a patchwork juxtaposition of sounds taken spontaneously and haphazardly from the human and nonhuman world to create a richly textured soundscape reflecting integration within the ecosystem. This eclectic soundscape represents cultural and ecological diversity in a

gesture of resistance to the oppressive hegemony of French culture, as well as to environmental mismanagement. Maximin's work in this way offers a creative sonic response to the "double fracture" of colonial and environmental destruction diagnosed by Malcom Ferdinand in *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*. If Ferdinand's study examines the history of this collusion, Maximin sketches through his poetics an alternative mode of thinking, sensing, and representing our place in the ecological space of the Caribbean island.

Writers such as Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant are well known for using the figure of marronnage to express resistance not just to the regime of enslavement but to ongoing dominative forms of knowledge and culture. In an interview published in *Le Journal guadeloupéen* in 1980, for example, Césaire describes himself as "*un nègre marron*" ["*a runaway slave*"] to crystallise his continually rebellious stance, and he continues: "je refuse de baisser la tête devant qui que ce soit, je refuse les grands frères, je refuse les tontons, je refuse que l'on me montre la route" ["I refuse to bow my head before anyone, I refuse big brothers, I refuse uncles, I refuse anyone showing me the way"] (Césaire 253). The image of the marron" for Césaire suggests defiance, a resistance to established political structures, as well as freedom and mobility. This may sit uneasily with his long-standing, established position as Mayor of Fort-de-France and Deputy at the French National Assembly, but it also reflects his discomfort with existing political structures and France's ongoing inegalitarian politics in its overseas departments. His description of himself as a "nègre marron" represents his pursuit of an anti-establishment politics, even if he struggled both to adhere to and to carry out this kind of subversive political practice. Édouard Glissant uses the figure of marronnage more extensively, not only to commemorate the resistance movements of the enslaved but also to represent a certain form of intellectual and cultural work: "marronner, c'est prendre les chemins de traverse de la pensée, suivre des traces, sillonner dans tous les détours" ["to maroon is to take the road less travelled in thought, to follow traces, to wander down every detour"] (Glissant 204). "Marronnage" for Glissant again represents adaptation, spontaneity, and resistance to any attempt at mastery over the environment, and implies a form of living with the landscape as well as creativity and creative wandering. Thinking and writing as "marronnage" are also forms of resistance to the classificatory systems of colonial science that justifies environmental exploitation.

If Césaire and Glissant intermittently bring "marronnage" into their wider anticolonial poetics, more recently Dénètem Touam Bona's *Fugitif, où cours-tu?* makes marronnage a central figure in thinking both historical and contemporary forms of resistance to oppression. Bona's thinking provides a compelling theoretical complement to Maximin's poetry, and will be discussed briefly here before I turn to the resonance of sound in Caribbean culture and its role in performing cultural and ecopoetical marronnage in some of Maximin's poems. Bona cites Louis Sala-Molins's study of *Le Code noir ou le calvaire de Canaan* to demonstrate that "c'est en « marronnant » que les noirs ébranleront de la façon la plus efficace les bases de la société coloniale" ["it's by « marooning » that black people will most effectively disturb the foundations of colonial society"], and that marronnage would prefigure later slave revolts and liberation movements. The term comes from the Spanish "cimarron," which originates in Taïno, and first referred to domesticated animals which subsequently escaped and again became wild, taking to the forests. The term "cimarron at the same time reminds us that the enslavement from which the marrons were fleeing was a form of domestication akin to the ways in which animals were kept in captivity for use as a resource for their owners. Enslavement was in this way a form of animalization, the treatment of human beings as beasts, as Césaire also reminds us famously in his 1955 essay *Discours sur le colonialisme.* This animalization was institutionalized by the colonial regime of enslavement through the designation of enslaved people according to skin color, as if an animal by its pelt. Conversely, however, liberation by means of marronnage was at the same time an alternative form of "ensauvagement" ["making savage"], as the marrons would make of themselves woodland creatures, not domesticated livestock but untamed agents actively creating and adapting themselves to their environment.

On one level, then, marronnage was a refusal of colonial "civilization," but Bona goes so far as to imagine it as a different form of living in the world, characterised by creative integration in the environment. Bona's vision should be read as a figure for adaptation, reinvention, and bricolage rather than as a description of historical experiences of marronnage, which was evidently a highly complex set of practices, manifesting in different ways in different locations, with some examples associated not simply with freedom but with alternative forms of negotiation with the slave masters and even of servitude. Historians such as Richard Burton and Neil Roberts have analyzed varying forms of marronnage on different Caribbean islands, and their studies suggest that only some

practices successfully overturned colonial hierarchical structures, and this troubled endeavour to establish alternative social structures should not be excessively idealized. Nevertheless, for the present discussion of Caribbean island aesthetics, marronnage can be taken as a symbol or figure for a form of flight that seeks to escape the colonial gaze; it is a pursuit of invisibility and a challenge to the oppressive surveillance economy of the plantation. To remain protected from the masters, the marrons found ways to live under the cover of the forests and the swamps, to remain always on the move. Marronnage is associated with a form of camouflage and necessitates blending between human and environment, as Bona argues: "camoufler la communauté, la dérober aux regards, c'est étendre le couvert de la forêt, prolonger l'ombre des feuillages, appeler sur soi la brume des marais" ["to camouflage the community, hide it from view, expand the shelter of the forest, prolong the shade offered by foliage, call on the mist of the marshes"] (Bona 43).

It is therefore not surprising that listening and sound are privileged over the visual, and spontaneous, subversive, and inventive forms of expression are created out of this need to escape the hegemonic colonial gaze. Bona suggests the term "fugue" rather than "fuite" to describe this process, because he conceives marronnage not so much as an act of avoidance but as a continual creative variation, as in a musical fugue where the theme takes multiple different forms and repeatedly reforms itself. "Fuguer," then, means to "faire fuire le réel, y opérer des variations sans fin pour déjouer toute saisie" ["to make the real escape, to create endless variations to thwart any grasp"] (Bona 80). The musical motif of the "fugue" is merely the starting point, moreover, for an evocation of the multiple improvizational forms associated with the culture of marronnage, as we shall see in detail in Daniel Maximin's poetry. Music, rhythm, and dance are used in spontaneous expressions of resistance based on ruse and subterfuge, designed to invent new forms of revolt that evade the colonial drive to understand and master. Sylvie Chalaye, in her book *Corps marron* on marronnage and performance, has also theorized this recourse to the body and to new forms of expression through music and dance in a challenge to the slave owner's claim to own and control the body of the enslaved person.

The role of sound in this conception of the culture of marronnage is conveyed more explicitly in Daniel Maximin's *Les Fruits du cyclone: une géopoétique de la Caraïbe*, in which he explores in detail the ways in which the island landscape infuses Caribbean culture. His "geopoetics" is above all an exploration of the ways in

which Caribbean people are shaped by the local ecosystem, as hurricanes and cyclones, as well as plantation history, force an understanding of elemental power and the hubris of human claims to sovereignty. Maximin looks beneath the tourist's exoticizing vision of the archipelago to draw attention to the dynamic forces of resistance expressed by both the people and the local ecosystem, calling for decolonization by unsettling what Angela Last calls the "geographical imagination" of the colonizer. As Kathleen Gyssels observes, Maximin boldly figures storms and cyclones "comme catalyseurs de forces mentales et creatives inouïes" ["as catalysts for extraordinary creative and mental powers"] (254). This does not mean that humans are somehow naively at one with nature; rather, the unstable climate belittles colonial power while demanding a more humble understanding of the place of the human in the ecosystem. Maximin argues that the privileging of sound over the visual is crucial to this renewed understanding. Storytelling, for example, is a form mixing text and song, performance and sound play, drawing on dialects and unofficial languages to create a diverse and energized cultural expression. This diversity and spontaneity directly contests the monolithic metropolitan culture that subtends the colonial extractivist system. The oral culture of storytelling also, according to Édouard Glissant, allows space for spontaneity through the creation of different versions, and through the storyteller's incorporation of both imagination and idiom (331). This oral culture is also a fertile terrain for Caribbean multilingualism. Unconstrained by the formalities of the written form, orality can blend multiple spoken idioms, capturing the dynamic evolution of creole languages through speech. This evolution at the same time brings new forms of musicality, as the spoken word is used to play on sound and establish new patterns and rhythms. In addition to storytelling and oral culture, Maximin privileges diverse musical forms that combine different traditions, in a form of "métissage musical," made up of "airs, rythmes, danses de cour de l'Europe [qui] ont été ainsi refondus sous l'influence africaine" ["airs, rhythms, European court danses which have been rebuilt under African influence"] (36).

This spontaneous mixing is what leads Maximin to take the hummingbird as an example of a signifier for Caribbean culture. The hummingbird represents resistance, it makes its nest from bits and pieces taken here and there in a form of bricolage, but it also hides away, aware of its fragility against potential predators. Caribbean cultural practice is compared to behaviour of the hummingbird, as it "pratique l'art du masquage, du détour, du

déplacement" ["practices the art of masking, detour, and displacement"] (22). This affirmation of the art of camouflage feeds into Maximin's ensuing discussion of marronnage, which is for him defined by the rejection of the European modes of thought that founded the plantation system, though he notes that it was only on the larger islands that these new communities on the edges of the forest were able to become settled, whilst in smaller islands like Guadeloupe it has come to be associated with an ideal, visionary dream of freedom. Marronnage for Maximin would affirm a métis, relational identity freed from colonial influence, but if in Guadeloupe it could never become a concrete social and political revolution, it is instead associated with subversive tactics and bricolage: "il s'agit là encore de concilier l'eau et le feu, afin d'enraciner les enfants de la révolte et ceux de la soumission" ["it is a case once again of reconciling water and fire, in order to root together the children of revolt and those of submission"] (26). Maximin's poetics can similarly be construed to be a form that combines multiplicity with spontaneity, and resistance with fragility. This vibrant poetics is best performed in the poems of *L'Invention des désirades*, first published in 2000, reorganised and re-edited in 2009.

Before exploring Maximin's poetry, however, it is worth noting the ways in which sound has been theorized as central to anticolonial and antiracist resistance practices. Maximin's celebration of the vibrant use of both expressive human and environmental sounds in the culture of marronnage has a long history originating in the plantations, where enslaved people could use language, music, and rhythm to communicate in ways that exceeded the visual reach of the slave master. As Martin Munro has shown, this use of sound launched a direct challenge at the classification and organization of enslaved people by white colonial discourse: "classified, othered, dehumanised, condemned, folklorized by white visual power, the enslaved and their descendants have created sophisticated sonic worlds in which have persisted and thrived nonwhite cultures, ways of thinking and being and acting that resisted and escaped the all-seeing master's gaze" (15). Munro shows how, despite the policing of sound under colonial rule, dissent towards the regime of enslavement would be expressed through shouts, cries, laughter, as well as music and rhythms, as insistent disruptions. Munro notes also the privileging of the visual by white colonizers, who sought to map foreign territories as a means of asserting knowledge and claiming control, as is crystallised in his reading of the Jamaican poet Kei Miller's poetic volume *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Munro 11–12). Here,

the mapmaker's endeavour is interrupted by a Rastafarian, whose own voice together with his evocation of the sounds of the island reveal the limitations of the colonial gaze. Sounds can erupt spontaneously and may be unintelligible to the colonizer, and resistance cultures exploit that unintelligibility through the invention of unfamiliar rhythms, dialects, words, and nonverbal expressions.

This subversive potential of sound can be manifested in creative and telling ways through poetry, a form blended with music, where rhythm and other sound patterns are foregrounded and the relationship between sound and meaning is loosened and opened up. Aimé Césaire's poetry most famously constitutes an extraordinarily rich soundscape, comprised of unprecedented lexical diversity, neologism, nonverbal sounds, and complex, changing rhythms. Munro provides a succinct but revealing analysis of the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* as a journey through sounds, opening with the silence of the stultified crowd, moving through the poet's cheer "je dis hurrah!" ["I say hurrah!"]) in response to the cadaverisation of "la vieille négritude" ["old negritude], to the cracking and rumbling of the slave ship as the enslaved people stand up and revolt (Césaire 128). Edwin Hill also references Césaire's at times apocalyptic drumbeat in his study of *Black Soundscapes*, though he spends more time on Léon Gontran Damas's more uncertain rhythmical jolts and stumbles. Sound is exploited as a powerful and eclectic force for resistance throughout Césaire's poetry, however, perhaps particularly strikingly in "Mot," the opening poem of "Corps perdu" (Hill). "Mot" traces the poet's rejection of that most denigrating term for black people, beginning with a hiccups, spasms, and vibration, until the word itself explodes on the page, "sorti tout armé du hurlement" ["emerged fully armed from the howling"], and then accompanied by the cries of mothers, the wails of children, the firing of bullets of the sun, and the tearing of the very fabric of the night (Césaire 482. See also my reading of the poem in *Aimé Césaire: Inventor of Souls*). Césaire may have described himself as a "nègre marron," but this exploitation of sound is less explicitly bound up with marronnage than it is in Maximin's work, and is more frequently associated with cries of revolt than with a celebratory, creative new musicality. In Césaire's poem most explicitly devoted to marronnage, "Le verbe marronner," however, the creative use of sound is clearly fundamental to his conception of poetry. Challenging René Depestre's call for direct political engagement through poetry, Césaire's rhythmically varying lines summon music and drumbeat, celebrate the magic of poetic language associated with Brazilian "macumba," and draw on multilingual

references and nonverbal sounds to dramatize a poetics of métissage. Poetry is an expression of marronnage here because it is spontaneous, eclectic, and composite, relinquishing outworn poetic forms in favour of a bricolage of sounds emanating from different cultures and from the environment.

While Césaire's poetry is often an angry explosion of sounds of revolt, however, Maximin's tends to be more celebratory, taking on board the history of oppression in the Caribbean but performing a playful form of musical marronnage to capture a rich but lighthearted culture of musical and sonic resistance. Césaire's poems frequently, though far from schematically, trace a movement from descent to uprising, from suffering to revolt, but Maximin's aesthetic is rather an affirmation of diasporic musical and elemental forms celebrating the vibrancy of Caribbean life and culture in the present and future. Resistance here is expressed not so much through imagery of revolution, but through a different way of living in the world, represented by openness to all forms of expression in the human and nonhuman world. The title of *L'Invention des désirades* foregrounds this creativity through the focus on invention, as if the poet here no longer seeks to mine the depths of past suffering in order to proceed towards revolution, as Césaire did, but to imagine a new island aesthetic. The poet acknowledges the history of oppression and brutality, but "invention" is defiantly future-oriented, and the poems reimagine marronnage not so much as a precarious flight from oppression and fear but as a signifier of spontaneous, dissident creative practice. La Désirade is an island off the coast of Guadeloupe, usually referred to in the singular, but it in fact names three islands, two of which are uninhabited. Maximin's use of the plural both represents the acknowledgement that La Désirade is more than one place, and indicates the possibility of a multiplicity of forms, as if the island space can be reinvented in multiple different ways to contest the colonial cultural imposed on it. The poems are then divided into sections, entitled "îles," "ailes," and "nous," playing on "us and them" but undermining the opposition this implies by replacing "ils" with "îles" and "elles" with "ailes," foregrounding the geography of the archipelago as well as movement or flight. The final section is simply titled "Autres dérades," suggesting departure and wandering, while also echoing "désirades" to conflate the islands with this diaspora, as if his writing too takes the form of marronnage. Many of the poems across the volume refer to forms of music and song, combined with the sounds of the landscape and the elements, and

these sounds are all collected together in a bricolage that reflects Maximin's vision of cultural marronnage.

Several poems in *L'Invention des désirades* evoke particular musical forms, instruments or practices, all referenced fleetingly and juxtaposed with one another to create a composite mash-up. The sounds of musical instruments are juxtaposed with those of the environment in a lively polyphonic interchange that serves as a statement of dissent against both the imposition of French culture on the islands and simplistic, exoticized notions of local culture. "La Clé des sons" introduces and theorises this process explicitly, as if to provide the reader with the key to how to read this curious cacophony. The "clé" refers not only to the idea of a musical key but also to the "clave," the rhythmic pattern that undergirds compositions of Afro-Cuban music. The poem's epigraph is a line from René Ménil, which asserts, "*nous ramassions des injures pour en faire des diamants*" ["*we collected insults to make diamonds out of them*"], at once revealing the poem's dialogic form and foregrounding the creation of productive new forms out of the experience of oppression (Maximin 12). The poem then announces its commitment to community by opening with "nous," printed alone in a line and repeated at the beginning of each short stanza, and like the epigraph the poem takes us from an acceptance of past oppression to an affirmation of renewed creativity in the future. The "nous" of the opening lines are "orphelins nés muets" ["orphans born mute"], as if disinherited and speechless, also somehow weighed down by both the darkness and the heat of the sun, "écrasés d'ombre et de soleil" ["crushed by shadow and sun"]. As the poem progresses, however, this silencing is replaced by music. First, "nous" ["we"] becomes "nous tous" ["all of us"], and the percussive rhyming form inaugurates an outburst of creative sound. The "nous" to whom the poet refers are designated as "musiciens sans racines," as if these musicians perform a kind of musical marronnage, affirming cultural diversity against hegemonic colonial culture by deploying sounds and forms from different places. Blood connotes not so much an inherited identity as "la sève improvisée" ["improvised lifeblood"], as if vitality comes through spontaneous invention. An image of daylight then gives way to blues kaladja guajira," the former term referring to one of the rhythms of the gwo-ka, the Guadeloupean drum, in this case to evoke struggles in love, emphasizing again the complicity affirmed by the repetition of "nous." "Guajira" is a musical form based on punto cubano, a type of Cuban song, and these two forms juxtaposed with the blues make for a highly condensed composite ensemble. However, La Clé des sons"

is not just about musical mash-up: this hybridized form then brings about liberation: "nous avons recréé / la liberté / dans les violons du marronnage / et la partition des tambours" ["we have recreated / freedom / in the violins of marronnage / and the music of drums"]. This musical mixing is the very soundtrack of marronnage, with the violins performing that spontaneous, dynamic evasion of the hegemonic culture and the expression of cultural métissage. "Liberté" is given a line on its own, as if this is what the poem has been building towards, and is then repeated at the start of the last stanza. "Les violons du marronnage" aptly symbolizes this musical métissage, expressing resistance and heralding freedom. In the final stanza, freedom and harmony are combined in "clés musicales échappées au trousseau / bricolage de rythmes hérités de l'avenir" ["musical keys escaped from the bundle / bricolage of rhythms inherited from the future"]. Here, music is improvised, freed from its score, and this bricolage of rhythms even interrupts temporality by suggesting a process of inheritance from the future. The loose but rhythmical form of the poem at the same time mimics this liberated, improvisatory form, as if to perform the poet's own creative marronnage in defiance of cultural imagery imposed on Guadeloupe from the métropole.

If "La Clé des sons" forms a kind of introductory key to *L'Invention des désirades*, several other poems reflect on musical genres, instruments, and performers, in each case celebrating spontaneous creativity, the mixing of forms, and the power of music in asserting both freedom and communality. "Piano mitan" is dedicated to the Guadeloupean jazz pianist Alain Jean-Marie, and the title plays on the term "potomitan," a central post used in vodou ceremonies to draw in the spirits, though here it is the piano that provides this anchoring and connection with the earth. Unlike "La Clé des sons," which consists of five succinct stanzas of musical verse with a variable but distinct rhythm, "Piano mitan" hovers somewhere between verse and prose, and is made up mostly of long phrases spanning several lines, punctuated with a few shorter lines allowing certain images to stand out. This loose form captures the free improvisation of the jazz pianist, as Maximin allows images and sounds to flow on from one another in this profusive celebration of liberated musical creativity. The poem opens with a recognition of the pianist's embrace of diaspora, combined with his commitment to his homeland: "tu n'as jamais eu peur des tours ni des détours et tu reviens toujours récolter le natal" ["you have never been afraid of twists and turns and you always come back to harvest your native land"] (Maximin 36). The pianist has witnessed the volcanoes and

hurricanes of Guadeloupe and listened to all the musical forms of his compatriots, and he captures this immersion in the local land and culture in his music. In the absence of a firm sense of rootedness, this music learns the songs of the fruit that grow on the "arbres marronnés" ["marooned trees"], in an image suggesting that even the vegetation is there after a history of movement and replanting, and the sounds of the natural environment join together with human experience to "rythmer les espérances pour bercer les naufrages" ["to set the pace for hopes to lull shipwrecks"]. This music references the oppression of the past, the "trompette bouchée" ["clogged up trumpet"] that Césaire mentions in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, but its form is also the creation of a new future (Césaire 90). This future is once again composite, calling for "l'amour créole" ["creole love"] using the creole language ("*pa pléré doudou*" ["don't cry darling"]) as well as English ("*no tears* ni *sorrow*"), and overcoming past conflicts: "déjouer en fils prodigue les partitions des pères / tisser la liberté avec quatre continents sur le métier ["to outwit the musical scores of fathers as a prodigal son / weave freedom with four continents on the loom"] (Maximin 37). The pianist's use of diasporic forms is in this way one that "rassemble les dispersés" ["brings together those who are scattered"] and plays with a whole gamut of styles and traditions: "biguine, guajira, blues, danzon, milonga, léwoz et mazurka." He is also celebrated for his connection with dancers and other musicians, less as an accompaniment than as a companion, as Maximin again effusively lists the tones and affects the pianist expresses: "l'amour fané de chanteuses sans gardénia, avec des melodies bleues, belles à pleurer la perte de l'innocence et du sentimental" ["the faded love of singers with no gardenia, with blues melodies, beautiful in lamenting the loss of innocence and sentimentality"]. This "piano-mitan" expresses countless connections, relationships, influences, and traditions, to make out of this creative hotchpotch a new stabilizing anchoring point.

In "Stormy Weather," the well-known jazz song is a focus for the poet to combine sounds of the ecosystem and local music to shape a tempestuous affective experience. The title references the famous song, but also the climatic upheavals that provide the backdrop to the poet or the singer's experience of suffering and that combine with music and birdsong to people his solitude. This poem is entirely written in prose, though contains a few short lines or paragraphs that provide a sort of rhythm to the poet's expression of lament. The melancholy tone complements the creative energy of some of the other poems in the volume, as if to remind the reader

that the poet's soundscape has multiple tonalities and musical creativity is not only there to imagine a new future but also to give voice and shape to difficult experiences in the past and present. The poem opens with this juxtaposition of references to the environment, to music, and to affect:

> Tempêtes et Solitude, autour des minuits, pour moi, musiques, c'est la vie comme je l'aime, de blues et de léwoz et de misère pas douce, quand je pèse les maux avec le poids des sons, abattant la mesure entre désastre et connivence, dans la langue des oiseaux (Maximin 76).
>
> [Storms and solitude, around midnight, for me, music is life as I love it, blues and léwoz and bitter misery, when I weigh evils with the weight of sounds, striking a balance between disaster and complicity, in the language of birds.]

Here, the long prose sentence with many subclauses helps emphasize this multifaceted composition, in contrast perhaps with the more streamlined celebration of community and freedom in La Clé des sons." The poet also addresses a loved one, associating complicity with singing in accompaniment, while also juxtaposing references to cries suggestive of distress with the embrace of music: "souviens-toi d'une de mes sœurs égarée de voix: un soir la tempête de ses malheurs faisait un bruit si fort que, pour ne pas devenir sourde, elle s'est mise à chanter" ["Remember one of my sisters who lost her voice: one evening, the storm of her misfortunes made such a loud noise that, to avoid going deaf, she began to sing"] (Maximin 77). While the loss of voice suggests a stifled suffering, the storm, though threatening, triggers self-expression through song. Musicality emerges from this dialogue both between humans and with the forces of the natural world.

Stormy Weather" at the same time adopts the voice of the singer, probably that of Ethel Waters, who first recorded the song in Harlem in 1933. This "voix de négresse bleue" ["voice of the blue negress"] (Maximin 77) is also a victim of male brutality, and the second part of the poem explores and unravels the many tonalities of this voice, articulating and shaping its suffering through music. It is "ma voix de déchirure" ["my voice of heartbreak"], and also "ma voix de gorge raptée contre une rançon de couplets mal finis, de refrains sans début" ["my voice in my throat snatched away against a ransom of unfinished verses, of choruses without a beginning"],

suggesting both a breakdown in poetic form in response to suffering and potentially a looser structure spontaneously responding to experience. The multiple repetitions of the word "voix," coupled with a range of affects and sentiments, emphasizes its extraordinary flexibility and creativity, and the blurring of the poet's voice with that of the singer also dramatizes Maximin's dialogue with and learning from diverse musical styles. The voice itself, moreover, is multicultural, again borrowing from different traditions and languages, as in Bona's "fugue" that brings various forms into a new harmony:

> Appelle aussi ma voix siempreviva, celle avec laquelle aiguisent leurs armes puis les rentrent au fourreau pour ne pas se blesser l'espoir et le désespoir, *esperanza y desesperacion*, voix de flamenco nègre, de blues caraïbe et de soleil tissée, ma voix qui invite à danser ensemble la jouissance et la douleur (Maximin 77).
>
> [Call my voice siempreviva too, the one with which they sharpen their weapons and then sheathe them so as not to injure hope and despair, esperanza y desesperacion, the voice of black flamenco, Caribbean blues and woven sunshine, my voice that invites us to dance together in pleasure and pain.]

Maximin's own fluid form in this piece, made up of long sentences such as this, combining affects and influences in a rich, flowing composition, at the same time enacts this demonstration of musical flexibility and creativity.

Alongside these poems evoking musical instruments and styles, however, many of the other poems in *L'Invention des désirades* foreground above all the sounds of the ecological environment in an affirmation of creative dialogue that respects environmental agency. Musical marronnage is bound up with a patchwork listening to multiple forms of ecological expression, as if to give voice to environmental agency in defiance of the attempt to subjugate the landscape to colonial control. "Désirade" seeks to translate the expressive power of the island, captured through sound and imagery to which the poet listens attentively, respectful of its rhythms and its resistance to human control. Maximin notes that the word combines both dream or desire, with the idea of being exiled or lost, "en rade," so that the poem connotes both potentiality and uprootedness (Pestre de Almeida 124). The poem's epigraph is taken from Aimé Césaire's "Configurations," his last poem printed at the end of *Comme un*

malentendu de salut, in which the poet has definitively rejected the more masterful, demiurgic voice of his earliest poems in favor of a humbler tone of immersion, while nevertheless voicing a commitment to the power of poetry. The lines cited by Maximin on one level surrender the speaker's power over to the environment: "*cet espace griffonné de laves trop hâtives / Je le livre au temps*" ["*that space scribbled with hasty lava / I surrender it to time*"] (Maximin 20). With this relinquishment, he opens up to the expression of the energy of the universe, figured as geological uprising: "*dire d'un délire alliant l'univers tout entier / à la surrection d'un rocher*" ["*to speak of a delirium combining the entire universe / with the uprising of a rock*"]. Language is unchained as delirium here, and the movement of rocks speaks for larger, ongoing cosmic change. Language is not the property of humans; land and cosmos speak their rhythms while the poet's voice remains on the sidelines.

In Maximin's poem too, elemental and ecological phenomena are a repository of sound, with the poetic subject only announcing himself towards the end in the role of the listener. In the first stanza, the islands are figured as drops of desert scattered across the Caribbean sea like seeds of gold around the neck of America. Successive stanzas are formed around the concept of poetry's fidelity to the islands, with all their energies vibrating, and the poem capturing their sounds in all their force and disorder. The poet listens, for example, to the hummingbird, a figure representing creole folktales with the reference to "le colibri trois fois bel cœur" ["the hummingbird three times beautiful heart"] echoing Lafcadio Hearn's transcription of folktales, *Trois fois bel conte*. The hummingbird is less a character in a story here, however, than a beating heart, whose life force is like a drum, marking its rhythm against the fear, defeat, and shame described in Césaire and Ménil's "Introduction au folklore martiniquais." The hummingbird's fragile rhythm represents the landscape's defiance against its history: "le colibri féconde le paysage pour la mémoire du pays" ["the hummingbird fertilizes the landscape for the memory of the land"]. The hummingbird's fragility is a reminder of Maximin's tentativeness in proposing this resistant self-expression, which survives despite that ongoing threat of predation, or more broadly for Caribbean culture, oppression, and exploitation.

Désirade" continues with a reference to volcanic eruption as a sign of rebirth, associated here with Matouba, where Louis Delgrès, the leader of a major uprising by enslaved people, died by igniting an explosion when he and his people were surrounded by the French in 1802. This moment of defeat is commemorated, as it

triggers the development of the resistance culture of the marrons, "la renaissance des phénix marronneurs sur le soufre aboli" ["the rebirth of phoenix maroons on the abolished sulphur"] (Maximin 21). The sounds of elemental revolt continue in a long stanza, as "chaque cyclone déchaîne l'esclavage des ferrements" ["each cyclone unleashes the enslavement of irons"], and a series of lines structured around the anaphora of "le vent" evoke the destruction of human habitations and plantations. This formidable environmental agency is destructive but also potentially cathartic, as the storm gives way to calm, out of which the poet discerns the advent of freedom and justice. The poem closes with this sonically creative conjuring of potential change rustling in the landscape:

> alors
> fidèle pour ma part
> j'écoute ton silence: une embellie de confiance
> en lisant dans tes lucioles
> tout ce qu'il y a de ferveur dans une désirade
> ce qu'il y a de justice dans une mémoire bonne
> ce qu'il y a de fertile dans nos frissons
> de fontaines dans ta forêt
> de sentiers dans nos destinées (Maximin 22).
>
> [so
>
> faithful for my part
> I listen to your silence: a glimmer of confidence
> reading in your fireflies
> all the fervour in a desirade
> all the justice in a good memory
> all the fertility in our shivers
> the fountains in your forest
> the paths in our destinies.]

The repetition of the f" sound with fertile," "frissons," "fontaines," and "forêt" evokes a rustling across the landscape, linking water and woodland imagery, and suggesting creativity and rebirth through the reference to fertility. The consonance of "sentiers" and "destinées" also brings the words together to portray the image of a pathway to the future, suggestive once again of wandering and marronnage, listening and adapting to all the sounds of the ecosystem evoked through the poem.

Maximin's evocation of the sounds of the ecosystem is developed further in the series of short lyrical essays printed in "Autres dérades," at the end of *L'Invention des désirades*, which can be seen as a poetic background to the geopoetics of *Les Fruits du cyclone*. "Tombée du ciel" is a rich portrait of Guadeloupe, "île tombée du ciel, germée en désirades sur la mer des Antilles" ["an island fallen from the sky, germinated in desirades on the Caribbean Sea"] (Maximin 126). Here the island is a rich repository for all the senses, celebrated for its energy and vitality, which defy its history of oppression. The essay captures a vibrant living environment, with which human beings commune in an integrated dialogue, attentive to its rhythms and language. Music made by humans is no longer center stage here; instead, the poet traces the various forms of expression emanating from this geography humming with life, affirming the power of its ecosystem without making any claim to master, organize, or classify. The first section celebrates the poetry of its names, which convey something of the drama of the landscape: the mountain "la *Grande Découverte*," the headland "*la Grande Vigie*," the cliffs and beach of the "*Portes d'enfer*," and the volcano "*cousine-Soufrière*," juxtaposed with the names of other neighboring islands. Next the poet conjures the vibrant colors, a medley almost too intense for the small island space. Then the Atlantic Ocean is recalled as a site of shipwreck, whilst the Caribbean sea is a place of shelter, harboring nevertheless "fêtes et tempêtes," and the volcano la Soufrière throws out its flames and its sulphur, as if to join in the slave revolts of Louis Delgrès and Joseph Ignace. All these elements in the island's ecosystem are for Maximin expressions of freedom, "sa liberté sans codes, ni boussole ni chiens, jamais à l'étroit sur les *traces*" ["freedom without codes, compass or dogs, never closely following its *traces*] (Maximin 128). The compass and the dogs are references to the history of enslavement, which Maximin acknowledges but also casts off here with his affirmation of uncoded or unscripted freedom. The section ends with the sounds of the fireflies and insects, whose cacophony also articulates a kind of harmony between earth and cosmos: "les lucioles et les insectes de la nuit prennent chaque soir la relève pour baliser sa nuit, au crépuscule des cacophonies, bricolant pour les étoiles, les îles du ciel, des scintillements d'harmonie" ["fireflies and night insects take over every evening to light up the night, at dusk amid the cacophony, tinkering for the stars, the islands in the sky, the twinkling of harmony."]

Most importantly, the geography of the island is not a décor, but "un personnage central de son histoire" ["a central character in its

history"], and it is this landscape that carries and conveys the island's brutal history, speaking out beyond the silence and cries of its human inhabitants. Maximin blurs image and sound here to hear the defiance expressed by the land and the elements:

> Il y a des images qui savent se faire entendre: le cyclone qui hurle, le raz-de-marée en rafale, la plainte des ruines, les sirènes du port, et les falaises qui résistent aux assauts. Les chutes d'eau volcaniques tombées du feu pour attaquer la mer à repousser. Et la pluie nocturne battant les toits de tôle pour que les rêves au lit soient chauds. (Maximin 128–29)
>
> [There are images that speak for themselves: the howling cyclone, the gusting tidal wave, the lament of the ruins, the sirens of the harbour, and the cliffs that resist the onslaught. Volcanic waterfalls falling from the fire to attack the sea and push it back. And the night rain beating down on tin roofs so that dreams in bed are warm.]

Conversely, however, he cherishes the flowers without scent, the butterflies, the mangrove, and the rainbow, for "la couleur de leurs silences" ["the color of their silences"], as if these more delicate and peaceful elements in the landscape are expressive at the same time through their subtlety. All these forms carry "messages," traces of the island's history as well as expressions of resistance and testimonies to the limits of the colonial attempt at control. These forms are indeed nothing less than a language of their own, which Maximin once again associates with marronnage, a form of resistance that itself resists becoming a newly rigid program: "la résistance sans ressentiment, la beauté sans soumission, la fragilité sans peur, la mort fertile en racines, la dissidence marronne à l'abri de l'arbre-Résolu" ["resistance without resentment, beauty without submission, fragility without fear, death fertile in roots, maroon dissidence sheltered by the Resolute tree"]. This is also the resistance of "hommes-colibris, homme fruit-à-pain, femmes-flamboyants, femmes fruits-châtaignes" ["hummingbird men, breadfruit men, flaming women, chestnut women"], women and men integrated with local ecological life and in dialogue with its vibrant, continually improvised language. Maximin draws on Suzanne Césaire's vocabulary in her 1945 essay "Le Grand camouflage," where the plant-human exemplifies this ecologically ethical and sustainable mode of living, and where the "femmes-colibris, aux femmes-fleurs

tropicales, aux femmes à quatre races et aux douzaines de sang" (Suzanne Césaire 86) ["hummingbird-women, tropical flower-women, the women of four races and dozens of bloodlines" (Suzanne Césaire 40)] represent a shared human and ecological richness that is not seen by the tourist looking down on the picture postcard image from the aeroplane.

Finally, this attentiveness to the language of landscape and to its "dissidence marronne" lies at the heart of what Maximin conceives to be the role of poetry. Poetry is a form that listens, that captures music, song, and ecological rhythms, conveying them to people who might be less attentive. Its eclectic patterns dramatize what Dénètem Touam Bona saw as the creative variations of the fugue, which he also took to represent escape and rebuilding through spontaneous bricolage. Poetry can also for Maximin be seen as multimodal in its expression of other cultural forms and its address to multiple senses: "alors ses poètes à l'écoute secrète de sa parole, ses musiques, ses danses et leurs couleurs, les traduisent en doucine aux oreilles des êtres aveuglés par les sens trop propres, les bavardages ineptes et les idées salies" ["then its poets, secretly listening to its words, its music, its dances and their colors, translate them into whispers for the ears of beings blinded by overly refined senses, inane chatter and tainted ideas"] (Maximin 130). Poetry is privileged because of its musicality, its flexibility, its variable, potentially multi-modal form, and because it seeks to communicate this sensibility to people too blinded by ideology to understand the subtle rhythms and needs of the Caribbean culture and landscape. Poetry has a crucial role to play in listening, translating, expressing, and communicating a mode of living in the world that is at once more liberated and more respectful of our place in it.

In an essay also in "Autres dérades" entitled "Les Orphée noirs," Maximin celebrates more specifically generations of black poets, not for their affirmation of a specific black culture, but for their rootless embrace of the environment and their capturing of its rich and complex soundscape: "poètes de nulle part, d'ici et de toute part, *timoniers de la nuit*, c'est nous qui appartenons à la terre entire, lui confirment en écho les flamboyants, les balisiers, les banians, les bouleaux, les saules, les flaches et les thyrses et tous leurs fils et filles, leurs fruits en poésie" ["poets from nowhere, from here and everywhere, helmsmen of the night, we are the ones who belong to the whole earth, echoed by the flamboyants, the balisiers, the banyans, the birches, the willows, the flaches and the thyrses and all their sons and daughters, their fruits in poetry"] (Maximin 138). Poetry again is the product of an open-ended, diasporic

existence in the world, and it translates and expresses its echoes to encourage further a careful and respectful attentiveness. At the very end of the volume, moreover, Maximin describes being a poet as "chanter pour inspirer / écrire pour respirer" ["singing to inspire / writing to breathe"], reinforcing the use of song to communicate and inspire, whilst also linking expression with breath, building on a tradition of associating respiration and inspiration with liberation that reaches back to Césaire and Fanon. The rest of the poem commemorates a long list of deceased poets and finishes with the pronouncement that "la poésie tourne avec la Terre sans les bornes des Terriens" ["poetry rotates with the Earth without the limitations of earth-dwellers"] (Maximin 153). Poetry is ultimately the very expression of the idea of marronnage, representing an aesthetic that follows the movements of the earth without being constrained to a homeland, and accepts its fragility in the face of the elements. Its communication of different musical forms as well as ecological rhythms represents an affirmation of creativity, openness, and humility before the majestic expressive forces of the ecosystem.

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