Transnational Trills in the Africana World

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Edited by

Cheryl Sterling

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Cheryl Sterling (as above)

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A NOTE FROM THE SERIES EDITOR

With the motto "the scholarship of now for the people of now", this series, *Studies in African Humanities*, offers cross-disciplinary elucidation of those issues germane to the well-being of the people of Africa and the African Diaspora. Works appearing in the Series cut across disciplines in the Humanities because of the interconnectivity of the different fields, as well as the inseparability of life's concerns. Linguistics, economic, culture, politics, gender, religion, and identity issues, to mention but a few, could adopt specific discipline-informed, investigative lenses, but, as human affairs, they are matters that cannot be dichotomized and compartmentalized. When viewed in the context of community and nation-state, their explication would require more than a singular disciplinary perspective. The books in this Series will give African voices to African issues in their various contexts, with deference to their backgrounds and complexities.

Augustine Agwuele
Series Editor

INTRODUCTION

THE AFRICANA MATRIX IDEOLOGY AS AESTHETICS

CHERYL STERLING

Transnational Trills in the Africana World is a multidisciplinary volume that encompasses essays focusing on current issues in the African and African Diaspora worlds. The volume's focus on music and the arts rises from the theme and presentations from the New York African Studies Association 41st conference, which took place jointly at The City College (CUNY) and Columbia University in 2016. When we conceived of the conference, it was obvious that a conference about music and the arts had to have aspects of performance. We asked a combination of groups to perform. First was Innov Gnawa, a group from Morocco who played traditional gnawa music, the group's combination of percussion, vocals, and dance shifted the energies in the room as the participants quickly realized this would not be an ordinary conference but a full participatory event, where they would connect beyond the written word. Next was a griot from Senegal, who supplemented his performance on the Kora and Xylophone with lessons about what it means to be a modern-day transnational storyteller in relating his personal history, going back through the ages as a member of a lineage of such performers. And then the Afro-pop performer, Banning Eyre, who both thrilled us with his guitar solo and his dissection of music from South Africa. The next day, we were privileged to have legendary jazz artists Randy Weston (R.I.P) and Rene McLean, in conversation with poet Rashida Ismaili Abu-Bakr, and multimedia artist, poet and storyteller, Kewulay Kamara. The conversation was one about the creative process, about the confluence of music and the word, the influences of African and African Diaspora cultures on their works, and the ways they follow in a line of continuity of makers of ART across the Africana world.

Just these two days alone, opened us to the diversity of Africana creativity, but that wasn't all that transpired. Scholars presented works on

a range of literature, aspects of visual culture, and musically inspired movements that demonstrates continuous transnational links, cultural dialogues and exchanges across the Africana world.[1] The works presented highlighted a long tradition of creativity, and the emergent, new forms and rhythms that worked in that border of globalization and resistance. The performances and presentations significantly placed artists and writers from across the transnational Africana world in an arc of creativity from the past to the present that demands the kind of attention and interrogation we see in this volume.

We are now in a time in which we take for granted the influences and reverberations of the globalized world on local events, cultural dialogues, political interventions and actions. What happens in the global stage has direct effect on national and local formulations of culture, society, politics, and self and leads to multiple dimensions in transnational studies. However, transnational discourses, communications, actions, and acts are usually studied from the way more dominant or globalized discourses or paradigms affect the national and local forms. Still, local, national, and transnational influences are caught in a complex set of action and reactions that belies a one-way vector. Just as people travel and carry their sense of identity and culture with them, and become influenced by the people, places and cultures they visit or inhabit, ideas travel and create a web of influence that mirrors the tentacular rhizomatic network that Edouard Glissant theorizes.[2]

However, there is an obvious premise within studies of transnational discourses that this is a new phenomenon, a sense that this terminology is describing an entirely different conceptual marker that speaks to a horizon way beyond our historical epochs or previous frames of references. I have written about how transnationalism appears to be an open signifier that may be linked to ideas of sameness and diversity; that it is an open area of study of contestations or commonalities over ideas, sites, situations, cultures and terrains. That a transnational approach can be purposely deployed in cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies and that it is easily a cognate for globalization, internationalism, and diaspora. That it fits neatly into studies of modernism and post-modernism, and is equated with greater technological development, internet access and navigability, instant messaging, and online systems that promote connectivity and communication. Yet too, it is embraced within different political trends,

[1] I use the terms Africana and African and African Diaspora interchangeably.
[2] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997).

whether it be neoliberalism, movements for political, economic, social, gender-based or environmental justice, or their converse.[3]

Even so it seems to me that it is the horizon and promise of transnationalism's link with technology that allows for a formulation of its newness. The technological developments and bridges within the last twenty to twenty-five years has reshaped our ability to see, be, and interact with the world. Everyone who has access to a computer and internet connection can easily converse with anyone else on the other side of the planet. If internet connectivity isn't a medium readily available, the ubiquity of the cell phone has broken down many global barriers. In my own personal experience, calling friends in West Africa was a near impossibility twenty-five years ago, unless we made a specific arrangement for a time to call, or they borrowed a phone or went to a public calling center. But through the oceanic divides, magma, mountains, and silt, the magic of broadband and satellites circling the globe, communication can be at will and instantaneous to any corner of the connected world. This means that a political happening in one locality can be accessed, analyzed, rejected or reformulated to suit another locality, instantaneously or as fast as the human brain permits. This is the same for music and the arts, but the spheres of influences, of confluence, of converse formulations that such creativity generates has always been part of their manifestations evident in the artistic and prosaic worlds.

Musicians, writers, and artists have always had profound influences that go beyond their immediate locus, once their artistry have traversed their geographic boundaries. Music and the arts, in general, cross linguistic barriers, cultural borders, social mores, and class divides. They provide pleasure, soothe ills, lead to introspection, allow for the forging of bonds, and propel intellectual inquiry and reflection based on their reception and their receivers. Speaking about music, in particular, George Lipsitz (1994)[4] points out the flexibility and ease in transposing popular music from the global to the local context, but the inverse must also be acknowledged in that all global musics were at one time local. The arts, whether through literature, visuals or performance, also generate such influences that move back and forth in the local/global world through the

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[3] Cheryl Sterling, "Editorial: The Word in the World: Transnationalism and African/African Diasporic Women's Writing," *WAGADU: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies*. Special Issue: *African and Diasporic Women's Literature: Transitions, Transformations and Transnationalism,* 18 (Winter 2017): 1, accessed July 8, 2017, http://webhost1.cortland.edu/wagadu/

[4] George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994).

responses they evoke and the creativity they inspire. When the creative fuses with particular issues, concerns, social, political and cultural fields, it impacts these personal, social, political, and cultural norms in any given space and place. Particularly with the Africana world as seen in this volume, it shows how oppressions and ideals of liberation are connected; how social, cultural, and political frameworks from all around the Africana world are in modes of constant interaction and influence over each other; and how the political is communicated in artistic forms that integrates aesthetics and ethics. Hence, this volume is called *Transnational Trills* to simultaneously evoke the vibrational quality of artistic engagement and the nature in which political discourse on a transnational level reverberates around the globe.

The way in which this text engages with artistic forms and production follow in the line of W.E.B. DuBois's conceptualization that all art is political, to map how creative works give voice to commonalities of struggle and collective movements for change. It contains articles that crosses subject areas such as nationalism, political identity, post-coloniality, health, education, orality, and cultural expressivity, which are all studied under the rubrics of music, literature and the arts. DuBois also famously said the problem of the 20th century is the colorline. Yet, for the 21st century, while we can easily say that the colorline is not eradicated, the transnational flow of information, of capital, of culture, of peoples, ideas, and things, generates new paradigms of engagement. DuBois, in many ways, represents one of the first Africana transnational thinkers, as a scholar who expanded his fields of intellectual inquiry, thought, theorizing, and creative work to African and African Diaspora peoples.

This volume takes a transnational approach because it allows for what one of the contributors, Kevin Hickey calls an "Afro-Global" diverse, communal, creative, cross-disciplinary field of inquiry. When transnational discourse fuses with studies of the creative vectors from Africa and its diaspora, we realize that it is indeed an old discourse. One that began with the founding of the "New World" and the unwilling transportation of subjects from African states or empires, to become objects and subjugated peoples in alien lands. This was no tale of mobility and migrancy that we see in discourses of the creation of contemporary diasporas, but the intent of this volume is rather to highlight how creative forms are in modes of constant interaction and influence over each other and affect social, cultural, and political frameworks from, within and around the Africana world. Hence, this volume firmly updates the discourse on transnational blackness as expressed through its focus on current musical and artistic forms in the Africana world. The dialectic and reflexive interrelation it

addresses lays the groundwork for pursuing a line of reasoning and theorizing on an aesthetic formulation of a shared creative complex in the Africana world.

This idea of a shared creative sensibility, a way of being, or a way of configuring artistic sensibilities is not at all new for African and African diaspora creatives, but just as a conceptualization of a creative complex has been affirmed, it has also been disputed. One of its foremost critics considers such ideations essentialist, writing that … "since black particularity is socially and historically constructed, plurality has become inescapable, the pursuit of any unifying dynamic or underlying structure of feeling in Black culture is utterly misplaced."[5] However, what I am proposing about this shared creative complex that I call an Africana matrix ideology is not about a "feeling," it is empirically observable in the creative vistas across the spheres within Africana (African descendent) peoples. In fact, V.Y. Mudimbe suggests that there is an "architectonic process" an underlying order to African artistic processes that allows us to suggest a more unified creative complex or aesthetical scaffold.[6] This is indeed a discussion of aesthetics and some of the earliest proponents of an aesthetic frame go back to the Harlem Renaissance, the Negritude Movement, and the Black Arts Movement. In light of the overt racism apparent in the epochs in which these theorists and artists wrote and produced, they conceived of such a complex in more raced based terms and focused on such criteria like the artists' depth of blackness and relationality to Africa in physical and conceptual terms, as if such were measurable and quantifiable, in how artists identified as Black and how they engaged with Black subjectivity. Implicitly, they suggested a unicity to creative voices and a *correct* way for such artists to express their art and themselves.[7] Yet, within these foundational voicings, two stand out and demand singular engagement in how they dialogue with and generate ways to think about the aesthetical expressivity of Africana artists, and they are Stephen Henderson and Imamu Amiri Baraka.

While Henderson is more concerned with generating an aesthetic criterion for poetry, Baraka extends his ideations to Art overall, but within

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[5] Paul Gilroy, "Jewels Brought from Bondage: Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity," in *Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. Andy Bennett, et. al., (New York: Routledge, 2006), 179-186.

[6] V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 155.

[7] See for instance Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Touchstone-Simon and Schuster, (1925) 1997); and Addison Gayle, ed., *The Black Aesthetic* (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1971).

their dynamic developments, they lay the groundwork for theorizing a matrix ideology. For Henderson, poetry derives from an imbrication of Black speech in forms of oratory, storytelling, poetry, verbal repartee, and Black music in its historical context from the spirituals to Blues and jazz, to more contemporary popular forms of musicality.[8] Yet for Henderson there is no ideal form, rather poetry is shaped through the performance modalities on which it is built, and so just like a jazz musician performs and improvises to create an entirely new composition, the performative, improvisational aspects of such poetry is reflected in shifts of tone, tonality, structure, and verse. In its textuality, such poetry becomes more of a "chart," with its shifting registers as opposed to a "score"[9] which has a carefully calibrated, teleological framework. Henderson further theorizes the Mascon, "a massive concentration of Black experiential energy,"[10] that affects the meaning in the creative expressions of Black peoples. More simply a shared codex of experience that transfers into phraseology and stylization, from which Black artists draw meaning and imbue it in their multiple artistic forms. What stands out for me is that even though Henderson is specifically addressing poetry, he sees no difference to the creation of music, and if these were his investigative topoi, I am sure he would extend such to the full literary and visual corpus.

Amiri Baraka stands out not because of his prescriptive agenda that curbs the nature of blackness and the production of Art, but because of his engagement with Blues and jazz aesthetics. Baraka speaks of the survival of the "African accent and syntactical structure," within the speech and musical structure of African Americans.[11] His sensory understanding of jazz music and performance names fundamental precepts that govern African musicology, in its percussive effect, as the base of such musical production is a rhythmic beat derived from any type of instrumentality, rather than a melody; its polyrhythms, multiple rhythms either working in syncopation or in harmony; its antiphonal quality, as the call and response can either be within a refrain, song verse, or between the audience and performer; its improvisational quality in its ability to riff, to go off on a

[8] Stephen Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry: Black Speech and Black Music as Poetic Reference* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1973), 30 -31. I use the term Black, to follow the line of reasoning of these critics. It is not to belie, or subsume, the African-derived sensibility and conceptual formulations I am theorizing under a racialized rubric.
[9] Ibid., 61.
[10] Ibid., 44.
[11] Amiri Baraka, "African Slaves/American Slaves: Their Music," in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 1991), 26.

new tangent, to rephrase the old and make it new, and to seamlessly mesh again with the rhythms; and it cannot be forgotten the storytelling component in the use of folk stories, riddles, myths, proverbs and such.[12]

The understanding that the music is also telling a story, links all these dynamics of transmission to those found in African oral traditions, for they are the same. African orality and performance culture are at the base of all of this, and while Baraka traces this type of architectonic continuity through the work songs, shouts, and field hollers of the enslaved, he is not suggesting a seamless transference or even a sameness, but a scaffolding or foundation from which Africana musics derive. For him, Africana expressivity is part of a dialectic process, transforming from its root incarnation, through the misunderstandings of European subjectivity and the metamorphosis it engenders, to create new forms that speak to Black life as in Blues and Jazz, and later Rhythm and Blues music.[13] And what we see today are radically new forms, like hip hop and neo-soul that guard a stylized, lived energy that marks them as part of an Africana continuity. Much is at stake in understanding that this is neither "an untouched pristine africanity" that Gilroy dubs and automatically dismisses,[14] nor a dismissal of the multiplicious, divergent manifestations of culture seen across the Afro-Global world, but an engagement with the underlying cultural contexts, sense knowledge, and experiential understanding within the proliferation of Africana plurality.

However, before exploring this Africana base, I would like to interpolate one other theoretician, ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt who speaks of an "oral-kinetic etude," "lessons in black musical styles, behavior, and social identity formation, she learned as a child."[15] Gaunt theorizes how games, chants, social dances, and the embodied practices of African Americans collectivizes and reveals their social memory. Although Gaunt's study is primarily about the body and embodiment, what I take from her analysis is the learned nature of a shared oral knowledge and the performance modalities under which it is transmitted, which work in tandem to shape social identity. Such types of socialization recognize the learned habitus in the interrelation of cultural induction and transmission that allows us to form a necessary link to Henderson's idea of the mascon, to understand

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[12] Amiri Baraka, "African Slaves/American Slaves: Their Music," in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader,* 27-29.
[13] Amiri Baraka, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Musics)," in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader,* 185-209.
[14] Ibid., 186.
[15] Kyra Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 186.

that the concentration and saturation in Black expressive and experiential codes to which he refers is a process of epistemological induction in shared beliefs and behaviors.

We have all been socialized in cultural norms. When I hear reggae music I get a special feeling. The music touches me in a way that few other musical styles do. It was the first music that I was culturalized into as child. I can recite, sing, and tell of the social contexts of an amazing lexicon of roots reggae artists. In growing up hearing the music every day, I was in a universe that not only shaped my cultural reality, but reflected back the cultural norms, social values, and the political structure around me. Curiously, I have the same response to the literature and visual culture across the Caribbean depending on the degree of localization; I didn't have to be formally trained to recognize the patterns, the symbolisms, the slippages into local patwahs, the imbrication of folk belief or lore, or even when the spiritual is used as metaphoric fodder. But the fact that I found resonance, relatability, similitude, and overlap in other Africana cultures is due to the fact that they too share the same undergirding logic and sense styles. Africana music styles tend to have the same architectonic features in their percussion, polyrhythm, antiphonal nature, storytelling capacity, and improvisational ability of the artists. Such features make obvious constitutional links to orature, kineticism, linguistic flexibility, and folk knowledge (past and present), wherein boundaries between spoken, written, performed, and visual art and culture seem artificial as all could/did occur in tandem, and anyone who grew up with Ms. Lou, Flip Wilson, Osibisa, or a griot, Sangoma, or other traditional priest could attest to that. What I am saying is that there are obvious, observable connections in the way that the creativity of Africana peoples flow. This codex, matrix ideology, derives from learned cultural practices that are multivalent, but are also particular to the logics of oral culture, musicality, and performance sourced within African expressive cultural traditions. This is not to suggest a seamless implantation of atrophied cultures. It is not. Rather it is a shared sense of expressive cultural dynamics and practices that are relational within Africana worldviews.

As I see it African oral culture is the key, and if we have to name it as such, its morphology or morphogenic matrix are the source of aesthetic codes under which we have been socialized. The continent's famed orality and its cultures ability to pass on history, genealogy, story, and its font of knowledge have been disputed, even though African peoples have thrived, built great civilizations, Empires, and lived ordinarily like so many others for millennia. We need not revisit that Africa is the birthplace of humanity, but we see in more modern-day offshoots of immemorial oral

wisdom like the Ifa corpus of the Yoruba, the Ewe-Fon system of Vudu, the codex of knowledge found in the Akan Adinkra symbols, the cultivation systems of the Gikuyu, or even in the herbal knowledge of the Sotho Inyanga, that ancient knowledge has indeed traversed through time and space. Liz Gunner suggests that African oral foundations should be viewed as "a mode of communicative action that has in the past been finely honed to fit a myriad of different social, ideological, and aesthetic needs in many different societies."[16] These attributions, however, are incomplete because oral systems have also been the way to pass down knowledge that structure political, social, cultural and belief systems, firmly attested to in the article in this volume titled, "Rewriting History in the Field of Orality," by Cheikh Ndiaye. For Abiola Irele, oral texts have an even more autogenic role and are "embodiments of language,"[17] as part of the fundamental building block that orders consciousness and communal will and desire through their construction and articulation. As Irele terms it, oral texts are "products of human awareness and maintain a profound complicity with the consciousness through which such an awareness is mediated."[18] It is not necessary to review the organic link between language and articulation of subjective and social norms, suffice it to say that orality (as language) shapes expressivity, cultures, and what becomes tradition for another age. What Irele affirms and has been stated by Ruth Finnegan, one of the pioneering scholars in investigating African oral literature, is that there is a false divide created between the oral and the written.[19] And the subheading to Cheikh Ndiaye's essay which questions: "Can the 'Spoken Word,' or 'Oral Text' be Literature?," lead us into the "politics of signification"[20] in its ironical inquiry as to the veracity of oral literature as literature, to tackle this omnipresent Western hubris that still considers written knowledge as real knowledge and orality as ephemeral and dismissed as *folk lore.*

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[16] Liz Gunner, "Africa and Orality," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, ed. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2007), 69.

[17] Abiola Irele, "Orality, Literacy and African Literature," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 77.

[18] Ibid., 77.

[19] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature* (London: Clarendon Press, 1970).

[20] See Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, et. al., (New York: Routledge, 1980), 128, where Hall suggest that that the politics of signification involve an inversion in perception, events may be thought of in a certain manner, then may be given another significance or reading.

This dismissal of oral cultures and their complexities operate implicitly, and maybe unconsciously, with theorists like Gilroy. More pointedly, Gilroy's concern has been between the division or "competition" between sound and vision as paradigms for Black culture;[21] that he doesn't connect these two creative rubrics with oral culture and its transmission may well be due to the fact that he is not versed in aspects of African cultures from the continent itself. Herein lies the problem with divorcing Africana cultures from African antecedents, as those who have not explored the ways that oral knowledge is configured and passed down on the continent, only see the fracturing of traditions across the Africa/diaspora temporal and spatial divide, and cannot possibly envision how such cultural resonances become parts of learned cultural modalities, conditioned responses, tastes, and aesthetic sensibilities. Instead of "an imaginary effect of an internal racial core essence,"[22] as categorized by Gilroy.

Within African cultural and performance dynamics, it is an accepted axiom that no division exists between the oral, musical, visual, and embodiment or the kinetic in light of Kyra Gaunt's theorization. Harold Scheub, the famed chronicler of oral tradition among the Xhosa, tells us that an oral performer uses "the materials of her culture much as a painter uses color,"[23] and within this aesthetic repertoire combines music, dance, bodily movement, metaphor, mythic and contemporary imagery, ritual, as well as ideas, contentions, and values from the society. Ruth Finnegan focuses more on the stylistic devises a performer uses such as music, tonality or shifts in vocalizations, ideophones, asides, repetitions, improvisations and variations, dramatizations, dance, as well as emotional manipulation, and antiphonal play with the audience to describe the aesthetic corpus from which oral performers pull.[24] What must be evident is that these social dynamics of performance overlap with how Baraka envisioned a Blues/jazz aesthetic and the oral-kinetic etude posited by Gaunt. Kofi Anyidoho best articulates the conceptual paradigm that govern performance modalities on the continent as "total art," where music, dance, storytelling, improvisation, and audience participation are all come together and overlap to create a social event.[25]

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[21] Paul Gilroy, "Exer(or)cising Power: Black Bodies in the Public Sphere," in *Dance in the City*, ed. Helen Martin (New York: St. Martin's Press), 23.
[22] Paul Gilroy, "Jewels Brought from Bondage," 186.
[23] Harold Scheub, "The Oral Artist's Script," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 97.
[24] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature,* 9-12.
[25] Kofi Anyidoho, "Poetry as Dramatic Performance: The Ghana Experience," Research in African Literatures 22, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 41-55.

I am painting a broad canvas here, but it is also commonly articulated by theorists of African literature like Irele and Gunner, to which I will add Isidore Okpweho[26] that modern writers find inspiration and sustenance for their creativity within their particular oral cultural contexts. Such is the topos of the third section of the volume titled, *Literature, the Arts, and Political Expression*, as it explores the links to orality and traditional cultural beliefs that demonstrate their continued relevance and responsivity to contemporary exegesis. Written literatures link with orature[27] is organic, but its relational development, the continued use of oral structures within a novel or poem is part of the imaginative deliberation by the authors. Authors bend language and incorporate the performative, stylistic pallet of oral literature into written texts, at times, adding in myth or traditional beliefs to create their own unique literary styles. The articles in exploring how authors as diverse as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nathaniel Mackey, and Kofi Awoonor bend the power of the written word in their interpolation of orature, speak to how they transform the stylistic structures within their writings but still within the interrelated repertoire found in our Africana matrix.

There are fourteen essays in total in *Transnational Trills* and they are structured around two broad themes: *Music and Politics* and, as stated above, *Literature, the Arts, and Political Expression*, in between is a section comprised of two essays that function like case studies in exploring the experientiality of music practices, in how music can be used in the realms of healing and education. The essays in this edited volume update the canonical knowledge about African/African diaspora artistic forms and how they operate within the transnational sphere. Hence, it is a volume that takes music and the arts out of their local contexts to highlight the ways in which they generate dialogues, movements, scholarship and action across the Africana world.

Joseph McLaren, in chapter one, "Rethinking the African Link: Nationalism and Ethnicity as Jazz Signifiers," imbricates the signifying and performative aspects of this Africana matrix in exploring how jazz musicians ideate Africa. This essay poses a rethinking of the African connection in jazz by considering the relationship between titles of compositions or recordings and nationalistic ethnic, or/ and racial sentiments. Titles that employ African signifiers, particularly using the name of nations, ethnic groups, or poetic images, are numerous like Jackie

[26] Isidore Okpewho, "Oral Literature and Modern African Literature," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 83-91.

[27] Orature here refers to the blending of the stylistics of oral literature and traditional beliefs on the written page.

McLean's "Appointment in Ghana," Sonny Rollins's "Airegin" (Nigeria spelled backwards), or Duke Ellington's "Togo Brava Suite" to name a few, demonstrate the use of African signifiers, and recode the African influences on jazz aesthetics that are apparent in its musical structures. In some ways, the article lays the groundwork for understanding the continued dialectic and reflexive interrelation that the African Diaspora has with an African identity. These signifiers are a reinforcement of the aspirational, ideological relation that arises out of diaspora longings for home, but also the cultural complexity and centrality of Africana performance dynamics that belies the notion of a totally fractured tradition.

In chapter two entitled, "(IM)Migrant Metaphors in a Postmodern Moment: Politics, Popular Musical Culture and National Re-invention in Postcolonial Nigeria," James Tar Tsaaior focuses on the contingencies of postcoloniality which define the Nigerian nation state. Tsaaior examines the musical expressivity of popular hip hop artists like Eedris Abdulkareem and Tony Tetuila, who he characterizes as "veritable avatars or heirs to a long tradition of oral poetic expression," to contextualize the ways they deployed this tradition to engage with modern structures of institutional power. (Im)migrant in this sense refers to the migration of the oral tradition from the past to the present, to generate and intersect with new idioms for the articulation of Nigeria's postcolonial condition. This essay essentially negotiates the vital interaction within the Africana matrix, from its past to present forms of popular musicality to engage with the imperative of national re/invention in Nigeria.

Garhe Osiebe similarly examines the overlap of popular musicality and protests in Nigeria, but focuses on the Occupy Nigeria protests in chapter three. The article titled, "Alternative Popular Music Reporting at the Occupy Nigeria 2012 Protests," also interrogates popular musicians like Eedris Abdulkareem, and extends to other artists like Afrosoul stylist Aduke, and rapper Tha Suspect. However, this is where the similarity to Tsaaior article ends. For Osiebe, argues that the Occupy movement coming from the West is not only derivative, but a consequence of opportunism and mediatization, rather than an organic, concrete series of protests that yielded lasting change. More indirectly, Osiebe questions the way transnational movements function in local contexts. The artists' role is somewhat more ambivalent in Osiebe's analysis, and his explication of their song lyrics underscores a latent question of context over content, as he considers their intervention in Occupy Nigeria rather opportunistic, even as they message to the people and recount their quotidian struggles in the music.

Chapter four reverses the geographical trajectory of diaspora longings to show how creativity from the diaspora is just as impactful within Africa today. In the chapter entitled, "Music, Politics and Citizenship: The Case of *Y'EN A MARRE/FED UP* movement in Senegal," Saliou Dione delves into how hip hop and rap music were catalyst for political transformation in the nation that spread beyond the borders of Senegal, to embolden a new Pan-African activist sensibility. Dione argues that Senegal's governmental transformation was born out of collective frustration and youth activism through the hip hop movement helped propel those changes. Hip hop music is built on the same foundational principles found in African musicology, its rhythmic structure, its use of polyrhythms governed by the DJ mixing and creating beats, the storytelling and antiphonal quality, in the way the rapper engages with the audience, and improvisation naturally occurs whether it is within the music or through the voice. That hip hop may now be considered one of most transnational musics is due to the ways in which youths from many countries use it as a vehicle for articulating their sense of fun, but moreover, their frustrations with the ruling structures of their nations. When music and politics combine as seen in this article, it allows for the exploration of how the collective consciousness raising that music catalyzes and energizes, transforms processes of pluralistic expression, philosophies, activist-based discourse formation, and collective action.

These articles collectively explore how music functions as a manifestation of and within political aspirations and behavior. Even though only Saliou Dione specifically refers to the concept of "artistic citizenship," each of these authors explore this paradigm in analyzing the arts as a form of social practice, and to use the terminology coined by David J. Elliot and his co-authors, "ethically guided citizenship," in seeking to effectuate change in the nation.[28] Such is evident in Gillian Maris Jones' article for chapter five, "'They Don't Care About Us:' An Examination of Cultural Citizenship and Political Activism among Afro-Brazilian Youth in Salvador, Bahia." In Brazil, music has always been a central modality used by Afro-Brazilians to protest their lack of equality in the nation. According to Jones, music and the struggle for citizenship rights have long gone hand in hand. This essay also investigates youth activism, but as a learned habitus in relation to Afro-Brazilian percussion groups and issues of Black identity. It argues that the definition of

[28] David J. Elliot, Marissa Silverman, Wayne Bowman, "Artistic Citizenship: Introduction, Aims and Overview," in *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility and Ethical Praxis*, ed. David Elliot, et. al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

citizenship in Brazil cannot be separated from its racial and socio-economic dynamics and that marginalized groups use music as a tool to assert their claims to such rights. The essay then focuses on how Afro-Brazilian performance modes are used in the FIFA Confederations Cup protests of 2013, to illustrate their purposeful role in the long quest for full citizenship rights.

Chapter six entitled, "Black Athena and the Play of Imagination," by Mechthild Nagel rounds out the series of articles for this section and refocuses on the centrality of the question of Africana aesthetics. However, Nagel's analysis begins within raciological discourses and performance, rather than the Africana matrix as predicated with the other essays. It argues that Jim Crow dance figures (performed by white Irish men) fits into the racist trope of Enlightenment's "Other," provided by Immanuel Kant's philosophical sedimentation of such "performance." It offers a counter context through reading Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, which the article argues, provides fuel for a new politico-aesthetic imagination of resistance in white supremacist psychic and institutional spaces. The chapter further explores performance signifiers like capoeira and Beyoncé's performance of "Formation," to question the enduring lessons of a transnational Black aesthetic for Black Lives Matter activists in the 21st Century.

The second section of the book centers on two Case Studies, with the subheading, "Experiential Practices in Healing and Education." These articles focus on the effective dimension of music practices, and their purposeful application in influencing behavior. It is not difficult to gage whether a song or musical piece evokes an emotional response in its auditor. Those responses are visible, but what does it mean for music to be specifically directed to healing practices and as an educational medium for disadvantaged youth. Chapter seven, "Healing Arts and the Art of Healing: A Holistic Perspective," by psychologist and musician, Hawthorne E. Smith, explores the intrinsic connections between healing and artistic expression particularly for victims of warfare (i.e. Sierra Leonean refugees). Through clinical vignettes, anecdotes, and research findings, Smith illustrates that artistic expression is an integral part of the healing process, and should be prioritized when developing treatment programs and clinical interventions. Janis Massa in chapter eight entitled, "With Education and Justice for All Through the Magic of Music," addresses the causes and consequences of failing public educational systems on Black and Latinx students and offers alternate possibilities to reverse such failures. Illuminated in the chapter are concrete experiences by the author and students that highlight the making of an educational crisis in a

segregated, urban, public school. In examining the systemic exclusion of students, the case study then analyzes the impact of music on literacy and learning development, to posit a method to reverse such exclusion.

The final section of *Transnational Trills*, "Literature, the Arts, and the Political Subject," addresses the unique creative styles of writers and artists. While the novel was a particularly Western form of creativity, it has not remained so, for Africana writers have transformed it by bending the power of the written word. What may be forgotten is that Africana writers and artists always worked within paradigms of "double jeopardy" in the simultaneous fracturing of the psyche and social-cultural reality that "westoxification" demanded.[29] John Marah's article, in chapter nine, "Views on Africa and Africans in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and, now, what will the Chinese say about Africa and Africans?" begins this section. It lays the groundwork in understanding that these creatives not only had to structure and recast an aesthetic canon, but had to subjectify themselves in Africana cultural norms in light of Euro-racism. Hence, Marah frames his inquiry in light of the historical and narrative context under which Black, African, Africana subjectivity was defined in narrow racialized terms. Similar to how Nagel begins her interrogation of Africana aesthetics with its inverse, the racism imbedded in Euro-normativity, Marah examines one of the seminal Western text that defines and still invokes a purported African "primitivity," *Heart of Darkness*. Marah argues that the novella is rooted in these age-old demeaning, Eurocentric attitudes towards African peoples that justified colonization. It further questions how such negative representations continue to inform the relationship between Europeans and Africans and Africans and the rest of the world in our contemporary transnational turn.

Cheikh Ndiaye's article, "Griots and *Kurels* in West Africa: Can the 'spoken word' or 'oral text' be literature?" in chapter ten, stands in contrast to a narrative such as *Heart of Darkness*, which articulates central tenets of Euro-normative thought that deemed Africans incapable of producing any level of epistemological or ontological coherence. Instead Ndiaye take us to the centrality of the oral narrative in ordering and disseminating African social, historical and cultural knowledge. This

[29] I borrow this term from Laudan Nooshin, who applies it to the promotion of a "West is best" ideology seen in the aspirational ideals to reproduce the lifestyles and values of the West in pre-revolution Iranians. However, I use it to signify the West imposing its values on others around the world. See Laudan Nooshin, "Subversion and Countersubversion: Power, Control, and Meaning in the New Iranian Pop Music," in *Music, Power, and Politics*, ed. Annie J. Randall (New York: Routledge, 2005), 234.

chapter's in-depth examination of the traditional Griot and the performer of religious poetry demonstrates how such "oral texts" contain historical facts, cultural codes, aesthetic features, narrative techniques, and meanings, and in their performance (of form and content) challenge the definition of literature.

Ngugi, writes about love!? Ngugi wa Thiongo's engagement with African cultural dynamics, more specifically Gikuyu myths, metaphors, and language to dismantle postcolonial fetters, has generated its own indexical field in the canon of African literature. In chapter eleven entitled, "Love and Malady in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*," Bilha Njaguna examines Ngugi's last novel in light of the political trajectory of his body of work and argues that even though the work lays the basis for re-membering and restructuring the postcolony, its difference is in the arc of the love story he presents. This article proposes that in *Wizard of the Crow* both male and female archetypes are mutually significant in envisioning the nation, and argues that through such pairing, Ngugi blends such archetypes to represent the tenuous moment of national reconciliation that is never realized. What is also noteworthy is the way Njaguna investigates Ngugi's intertwining a narrative of spiritual agency within the novel. For Ngugi, even with all his famed use of techniques from the oral repertoire, his blending of traditional spiritual beliefs into the narrative represents his incorporation of another vector of this tradition that cements the conceptual markers of the Africana matrix.

In chapter twelve, John "Kimo" Reder complicates the attributions of the Africana matrix in extending its fundamental orality to incorporate the aural and the edible in his article, "'Language is a Fruit the Skin of which is called Chatter:' Nathaniel Mackey's Diasporic Tales of *Diet-as-Dialect* and *Dialect-as-Drum*." The question becomes: how does one incorporate the receptivity of sound, what an auditor hears, and food as taste, the savor, tang and pleasure of eating in a narrative form? Reder argues that National Book Award winner, Nathaniel Mackey, often deploys the metaphors of words-as-food and music-as-food as a pair of totemic icons for what he calls an "Afro-planetary" diaspora, in his poetry and novels. As a result, Mackey's multi-volume epics contour a narratological terrain that incorporates such oral, aural and edible dimensions. It traverses various nodes of the Middle Passage by incorporating the Islamic hegira and Caribbean colonialism to bring together the transnational dimension of Black history. This article then foregrounds the oral, visual, and kinetic dimensionality of Mackey's work in his use of sustenance and its communicative power as recurring tropes through the acts of eating, speaking, and singing. Emphasizing the sonic dimension to the work,