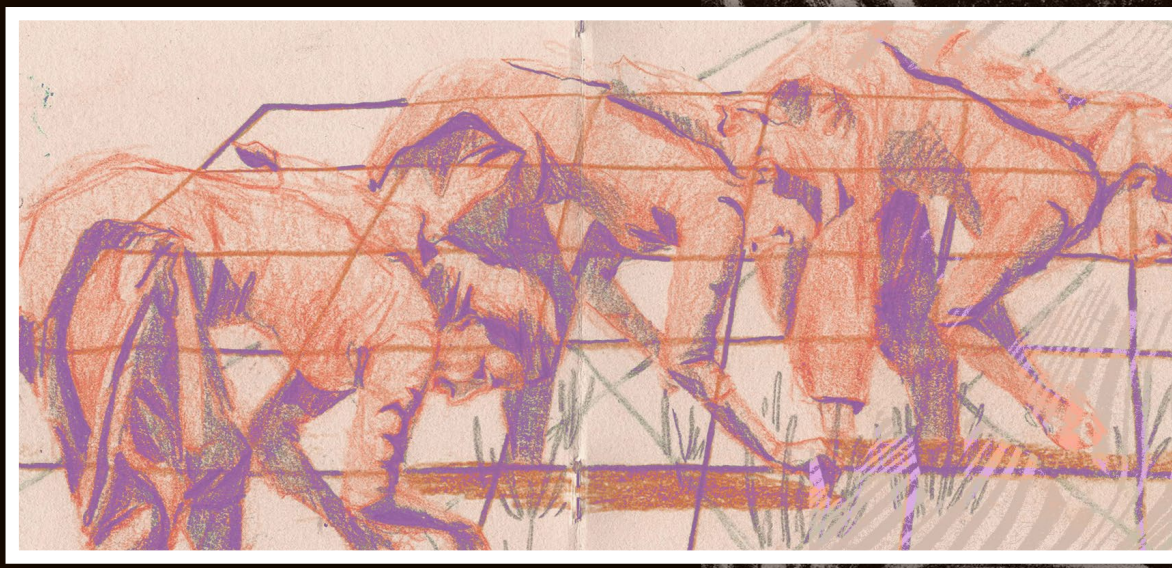
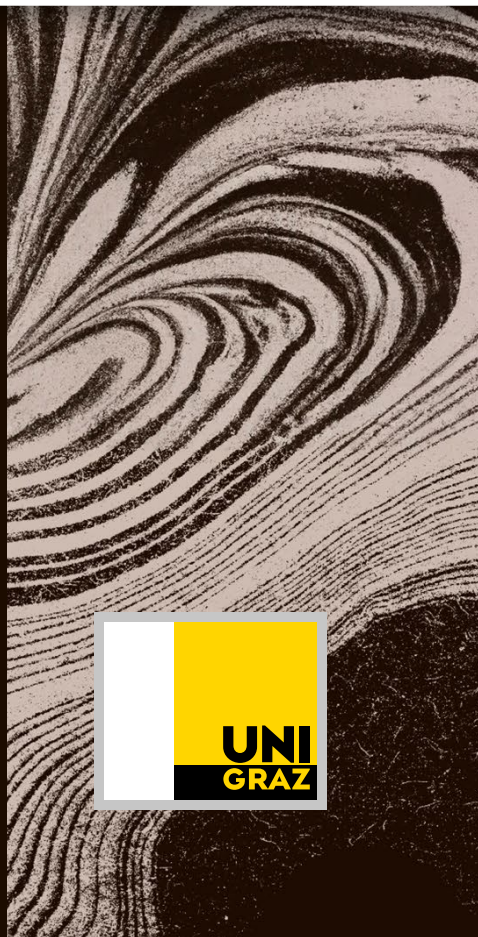
DIMITRI SMIRNOV



AUDITORY VIOLENCE

Literary Sounds in Postcolonial Prose Fiction



Graz University
Library Publishing

Dimitri Smirnov

Auditory Violence

GEWI AUSGEZEICHNET : ABSCHLUSSARBEITEN

Band 6

Herausgegeben von der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Graz

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Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung durch:
Geisteswissenschaftliche Fakultät der Universität Graz

Zitiervorschlag:
Dimitri Smirnov, Auditory Violence. Literary Sounds in Postcolonial Fiction. Graz 2022.

Graz University Library Publishing
Universitätsplatz 3a
8010 Graz
https://library-publishing.uni-graz.at
Grafische Grundkonzeption: Roman Klug, Presse und Kommunikation, Universität Graz

Coverbild: Ái-Như Võ; Graphik: Tobias Tinkhauser
Satz: Dimitri Smirnov
Typografie: Source Serif Pro und Roboto

ISBN 978-3-903374-22-5
DOI 10.25364/978-3-903374-22-5

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1 Introduction: The postcolonial sonic imagination

1.1 Literary sound studies and postcolonial literature

The present book addresses an objective formulated by Gustavus Stadler, but through the prism of literature: "[L]earning how to hear what power, history, culture, and difference sound like" (Stadler 2010: 10–11). Since the 20th century, sound has become an object of research as a ubiquitous social, cultural and, not least, political phenomenon – publications such as the *Social Text* issue edited by Stadler demonstrate that it is possible to "reassess and replenish political critique" (Stadler 2010: 10) through the study of sound. A variety of academic fields attest to this growing research interest in sound: Be it in history, anthropology, different strands of cultural studies, or other disciplines within the humanities, and slowly but surely literary studies are directing their attention to the research of sound and its political implications. There has in particular been a move beyond intermediality studies, which for the longest time has been the research area within literary studies with a privileged access to sound. But more and more, extra-musical sounds are moving center stage in the research of literature: This is especially the case with literary studies approaches that are informed by cultural studies and that consider texts in conjunction with sound culture (or, in the plural, different sound cultures). This trend is also connected to the rise in the last two decades of the interdisciplinary field of sound studies, which introduced a plethora of new research questions and methodologies in the examination of sonic phenomena. However, by looking at some of the most important publications from this field, it quickly becomes clear that the research scope still rarely ventures beyond Europe or the US. This lacuna is also addressed by this book, which chooses postcolonial prose fiction as the primary material for the case studies on sound and its political significance in literary texts.

The foundation for such an examination has already been set in recent years: One of the prime examples has been the work of Sylvia Mieszkowski and her suggestion for a 'literary sound studies', which is intended to "build a bridge between the interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies and literary criticism" (2014: 9), an interest which is also shared by the present book. In her monograph, Mieszkowski turns to "representations of sound, which can be heard only by 'the ear of the imagination'"[1] (2014: 9). The notion of 'imagination' is an important characteristic of

1 The source of the phrase "the ear of the imagination" within the quote is Schafer, Murray. "Open Ears." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. Oxford/New York: Berg, 2003. 36 [25–39].

literary texts and worth exploring further: Where sounds are not directly perceived, they can still be imagined. According to Britta Lange, this can even be considered as one of the advantages of cultural studies because, in the absence of sound, cultural studies can examine "an historischen wie gegenwärtigen Diskursen über und Beschreibungen von Sound deren produktiven Mehrwert und Überschuss", and because they can focus on "jene spezifischen Verfahren und Phantasien [...], mit denen Klang in Sprache, Schrift oder auch Bilder übersetzt wird" (Lange 2018: 116). These considerations directly apply to the research on sound within literary studies as it is pursued in this book, and imagination is one of the key aspects for this approach: A text presents its own imagining of sound and it relies on imaginative capabilities that can interpret linguistic entities as sounds during the process of reading. The imaginative presentation of sound in literary texts is also able to accentuate the political significance of the auditory dimension, while also generating new ideas about sound. This is of particular importance in colonial and postcolonial contexts: The sounds of postcolonial literatures range from blaring rifle fire in the midst of civil war to the screams of tortured prisoners, the noise of imperial machines such as trains, and much more. Yet the political connotations of sounds such as these have rarely been examined until now.

The overarching research questions raised in *Auditory Violence* can thus be formulated as follows: How – by which literary means – does postcolonial prose fiction generate meaning on a political level through the staging of sound? The corresponding hypothesis is that, within postcolonial literature (due to its historical background and other factors), sound has salient political features. Posed as such, however, the research question remains fairly unspecific and broad – after all, what constitutes the 'political' aspect within literary texts and of sound in particular? For this reason, the collection of studies presented here chooses an analytical category which helps to pinpoint the political significance of sounds in the chosen texts: Violence is a suitable category for this purpose, as it is broad enough to comprise a variety of political phenomena ranging from multifaceted manifestations of oppression, domination and subjugation to resistance, subversion, and others. On the other hand, it is possible to distinguish different forms of violence and consider them within a precise analysis of how literary sounds develop their political qualities. With this in mind, more specific research questions that will be answered over the course of this book include: How do literary sounds convey violence in texts of postcolonial literature? And, in view of the semiotic approach which complements the case studies, how do literary sounds become signs for violence in postcolonial texts? A response to these research questions includes an examination of the way sounds relate to different forms of violence in the chosen texts, and of the common

characteristics and differences between each text and how they approach violence and sound.

The research interest of *Auditory Violence* thus lies at the intersection of comparative literary studies, sound studies and postcolonial studies. The involvement of each of these fields entails a whole gamut of issues that need to be discussed ahead of the case studies that primarily provide an answer to the main research questions. From the perspective of literary studies, for example, it is important to understand what kind of concept of sound is constitutive within the analyses, and which literary characteristics need to be considered in the staging of sound. On a more general level, through the findings and insights of sound studies, *Auditory Violence* can address how sound is situated within culture, how it participates in cultural meaning-making and how it is connected to politics and the political. Emerging research areas such as literary sound studies help to think about these issues in conjunction with each other and are part of the discussion on the state of research. Lastly, postcolonial studies can provide context for assessing the role of violence and how sound is involved in the historical and political background of the texts within the corpus. The considerations from this field provide some initial indicators regarding the significance of sound in postcolonial literature in the following section, along with why it is of particular importance to pay attention to sound in connection to postcolonialism.

1.1.1 Postcolonialism, sound and violence

How is the dimension of sound relevant in a postcolonial context? What role did sound play in colonial and imperial projects in general and how can literary and cultural studies address the lasting effects of colonialism on sonic environments across the world? In order to answer these questions, one has to consider how sound has been approached within postcolonial studies in the past and what some of the current challenges are when dealing with sound from a postcolonial perspective. Recently, research within sound studies has provided valuable impulses for new approaches to postcoloniality and sound; this recent surge in interest in sound in postcolonial contexts is also reflected in the amount of ongoing research projects and planned publications addressing both of these topics. However, the lion's share of academic attention within sound studies has retained a Eurocentric (or 'Western-centric') bias. One possible explanation can be found in the status of (Western) modernity within sound studies as an important paradigm for the development of hearing and listening practices and practices of sound production in the 19th and 20th century. Within postcolonial studies, the term 'modernity' has been widely discussed, both as an important point of departure to historically situate colonialism

and also as a problematic concept in itself.[2] This chapter makes an argument not for dismissing the idea of modernity and its importance regarding sound altogether, but instead for taking up the insights and findings within sound studies in regard to the most important factors that contributed to sound culture(s)[3] while pointing to the blind spots that might have formed in past research. In doing so, the goal is not to affirm the universalistic claims and tendencies of modernity theories, but to acknowledge modernity's influence on how we think about sound and to show how Western modernity in particular impacted postcolonial sound cultures.

Postcoloniality's relation to sound

Right from the outset, postcolonial thinking centered on sound, even if it was not always explicitly addressed. One of the most prominent debates within postcolonial studies, for instance, has been the discussion about the conflict between languages: Indigenous, traditional languages, on the one hand, and colonial, imposed languages, on the other, and their antagonistic relationship to each other. This debate is far too extensive to be presented here in detail,[4] but the topic of language and the (sonic) conflict that it entails can be illustrated through the example of the creole language, as examined by one of the most eminent writers from the field, Édouard Glissant, in his *Discours antillais*.

Glissant reflects on the position of the slave under colonialism and writes that the slave is "en effet privé, comme pour l'évider entièrement, de la parole" and that all of their "jouissance est muette, c'est-à-dire déjouée, altérée, niée. Dans un tel contexte, l'expression est précaution, réticence, chuchotement, trames brin à brin dans la nuit nouées" (Glissant 1997 [1981]: 405). To Glissant, servitude becomes palpable through the idea of speech, not in a purely linguistic sense, but also in regard to the control over sound. Dispossession thus also refers to the loss of freedom to produce speech of one's own accord and being forced to remain silent. These considerations lead Glissant to the discussion of the creole language, in which he explicitly highlights the importance of sound in (dis-)communicative situations:

2 For a comprehensive discussion of the term 'modernity' and related concepts in conjunction with postcolonialism, cf. Bhambra 2007.

3 The concept of 'sound culture' will be discussed in detail in the methodology chapter of this book. For now, suffice it to provide the following brief definition by Hugh Chignell: "***The sound culture is the auditory environment […] located within its wider social and cultural context.*** […] In a sense the sound culture is the bigger picture, it requires us to step back and ask questions about the origins and nature of the soundscape; why does it sound as it does? What are the broader social and cultural influences on what we hear in our everyday lives?" (2009: 103; bold and italics in the original).

4 One of the most well-known examples is the argument between Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe about the use of the English language in the 1980s. Cf. Ngũgĩ 1994 [1986] and Achebe 2010 [1989].

> *Dès l'abord (c'est-à-dire, dès l'instant où le créole est forgé comme moyen terme entre l'esclave et le maître), le cri impose à l'esclave sa syntaxe particulière. Pour l'Antillais, le mot est d'abord son. Le bruit est parole. Le vacarme est discours. Il faut comprendre cela.*
>
> *Il semble qu'intention et tonalité se soient conjuguées pour l'homme déraciné, dans l'implacable univers muet du servage. C'est le volume du son qui signifie : la hauteur du son porte le signifié. Mise entre parenthèses du concept. On s'entend par sous-entendu bruité, dans lequel le maître, si habile par ailleurs à manier le « créole de base », se perdra. Le créole du béké jamais chahuté à voix éperdue. Puisqu'il est interdit de parler, on camouflera la parole sous la provocation paroxystique du cri. Nul n'irait traduire que ce cri si évident puisse signifier. On n'y supposera que l'appel de la bête. C'est ainsi que l'homme dépossédé organisera sa parole en la tramant dans l'apparent insignifié du bruit extrême. (Glissant 1997 [1981]: 406)*

Here Glissant describes how the creole language emerges from the confrontation between the slave and the slavemaster. He understands and illustrates this confrontation mostly in terms of sound: The slavemasters derive their power not least from their control over sound which, in turn, relies on their command of language. Glissant contrasts this dominant hegemonic position with that of the slave and the 'silent universe of servitude'. It is with regard to this opposition that the auditory dimension develops a specifically political meaning because, as Glissant states here, language is primarily a question of sound in the colonial context that he writes about. At the same time, the understanding of language as sound enables resistance and subversion: The deciding factors for creole communication are sonic attributes such as volume and pitch, which is why the concept of noise introduces a disruptive element in the linguistic generation of meaning. Glissant opposes the forceful imposition of meaning through the colonizer's use of language to the subaltern's refusal of signification: The appropriation of noise enables the slave to not participate in the slavemaster's discourse and to resist the colonial structuring of language.[5] Epitomized in the scream, the slave rejects the hegemonic order of sound through an increase in volume and intensity. According to Glissant, the apparent absence of meaning makes the subaltern's behavior appear on the surface as more akin to the communication between animals than between human beings (within the significatory system of the colonizer).

Glissant's assertion that language is fundamentally a sonic phenomenon is closely connected to another aspect which plays a crucial role in many traditions of postcolonial thought: the importance of orality (as opposed to written language). In

5 This thought is in line with Glissant's conceptualization of 'relation' and 'métissage' (or 'creolization'), cf., e.g., 1997 [1981]: 428–431.

light of his approach to language and sound as shown above, it is not surprising that Glissant describes orality as "l'assise du créole" (1997 [1981]: 404), the fundamental basis of Creole. Like the debate about the conflict between languages, the topic of orality and of oral literature is too extensive to be considered in-depth here.[6] As a brief example of the significance of orality and oral expression within postcolonialism, one can consider the important point made by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* in regard to the confrontation between the oral and the written in communities affected by colonialism: They assert that it is not just about "the domination of one language over another but of one form of communication over another, and specifically of writing over orality" (Ashcroft et al. 2010 [1989]: 80). For Ashcroft et al. the divide between oral and written forms of communication has profound implications which reveal the kind of conflict that takes place in colonial systems: "The 'intersection' of language which occurs in the literatures of formerly oral societies does not take place simply between two different languages but between two different ways of conceiving the practice and substance of language" (Ashcroft et al. 2010 [1989]: 80). Both the conflict of language(s) and orality are, thus, important pillars of postcolonial thought which are intrinsically linked to sound. Within postcolonialism, the auditory is both associated with oppression and with subversion, depending on how sound is used within a hegemonic structure: It can be used to subdue the subaltern and their forms of communication by overpowering them, but sound can also be modified to resist domination by generating noise that is not easily integrated into the colonial framework. In the form of orality, sound itself then becomes the object of oppression when it is confronted with what the colonizer constructs as its opposite: the written.

There are other approaches and texts within the postcolonial tradition that address topics similar to the ones brought up in connection with Glissant and that also

6 Cf., for example, Ashcroft et al.: "Post-colonial cultural studies have led to a general re-evaluation of the importance of orality and oral cultures and a recognition that the dominance of the written in the construction of ideas of civilization is itself a partial view of more complex cultural practices. […] In post-colonial societies, the dominance of writing in perpetuating European cultural assumptions and Eurocentric notions of civilizations […] led to an undervaluing of oral culture, and the assumption that orality was a precondition for post-colonial writing, which subsequently subsumed it. Both of these misperceptions are being rapidly redressed in post-colonial theory" (2007 [2000]: 136). Cf. also Nayar: "'Oral literatures' […] seems a contradiction in terms. However, such a term best captures the varied narrative modes of postcolonial literature, whose forms, sources, issues of authority, and audience draw upon oral traditions even as they produce 'books' in the European literary mode. Orality is thus the central indigenous mode in postcolonial *writing*. In these cases it is not a binary of orality *or* literacy but of orality *in* literacy" (2008: 222; italics in the original). Cf., furthermore, Talib 2002: 74–78.

appear to focus on aspects of sound: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for instance, famously raised the question about whether "the subaltern can speak".[7] Spivak's usage of the term 'speaking', however, is misleading in the context of sound and postcolonialism. Rather than explicitly addressing the audible use of language and oral forms of communication, Spivak uses it metaphorically to address (self-)representation in the context of subaltern studies and related issues. Likewise, the way Spivak applies other auditory terms like 'voice' underlines her intention of finding new approaches so as to properly write about the oppressed in a globalized world, for example when she writes about the "efforts to give the subaltern a voice in history" (Spivak 1999: 284).[8] Furthermore, as the opposite of 'speaking' and 'voice', 'silence' for Spivak is a symbol for the marginalized: The examples that she provides for the "silent, silenced center" are "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, Aboriginals, and the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (Spivak 1999: 269). While – in problematizing Western epistemological regimes and their (in-)ability to recognize the Other – Spivak raises important points about gender and epistemic violence (cf. 1999: 266–268) that are of relevance for this book, sound itself is not as pertinent for her as it is for Glissant. Nonetheless, her metaphorical references to sound effectively demonstrate how closely sound is associated with concepts of power in postcolonial studies.

The aural dimension has not only been examined with respect to language and the human voice in postcolonial studies. Apart from the themes and topics presented above, sound also entered the frame of postcolonialism in connection with technology and its imperialist implications: Even before Glissant, Frantz Fanon wrote an insightful text about a particular object of auditory technology – the radio. In "‹ Ici la voix de l'Algérie… ›", Fanon details the introduction of radio receivers in Algeria, describing how they changed their status from being a tool of colonialism and imperialism to being a symbol of the Algerian resistance. Fanon's text serves as an illustrative example of how important sound gradually became during and after colonialism.

Initially, until the middle of the 1940s, the radio served the French colonizers as a reminder of their civilization and helped them shield themselves from the native 'uncivilized' surroundings, according to Fanon (cf. 1975 [1959]: 53–54). Radio-Alger, the French radio program in Algeria, literally represented "la voix de la France en

7 This book refers to Spivak's revised version of her well-known essay, which is included in her book entitled *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. One of the major differences between this version and the previous one, published in the 1980s, is that she revisits and reconsiders her original conclusory remark that the subaltern cannot, in fact, speak (cf. Spivak 1999: 308).

8 Cf. also Sterne: "Voice has long been conflated with ideas of agency in political theory and some strands of feminist- and Marxist-influenced writing" (2012: 9).

Algérie" which was "quotidiennement pour le colon, une invitation à ne pas se métisser, à ne pas oublier le bon droit de sa culture" (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 54). With the radio, colonialism was implemented on an aural level, and Fanon seeks to illustrate the power of this technological innovation in terms of how sound had an impact not just on the self-perception of the colonizers, but also on the colonized: "Radio-Alger est perçue par l'Algérien [...] comme le monde colonial parlé" (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 56). Soon after the introduction of the radio, however, and when Algerian struggles for independence started to intensify, the medium gained a new meaning for the indigenous population: With print media exposed to strict controls on daily sales (cf. Fanon 1975 [1959]: 63–65) – not to mention the high rate of illiteracy which posed an obstacle to a broad distribution of newspapers and journals (cf. 65) – the radio offered an alternative means of obtaining information about recent developments in the Algerian War under the cover of anonymity and by way of audible communication in different languages (cf. 68).[9] These favorable circumstances paved the way to the appropriation of the radio in the service of the Algerian revolution and national independence: Fanon describes the transformation of the radio receiver from an oppressive weapon of colonialism to a means of resistance capable of interconnecting the Algerian insurgents to an incomparable extent (cf. 1975 [1959]: 67–68). No longer reliant on the (erroneous and deceptive) information by the French colonizers (cf. Fanon 1975 [1959]: 58), the Algerians could finally create their own news source that provided them with an alternative to (colonially) biased reporting about events in the war. The fact that this new source of information made use of technologies of sound (unlike any medium before it in Algeria) was decisive for the further development of the conflict between the colonial authority and the Algerian resistance. Namely, Fanon writes about a "guerre" and "bataille des ondes" (1975 [1959]: 69), a 'war' and a 'battle of the airwaves', that started after the appropriation of the radio by the Algerians – the terminology that Fanon

9 Additionally, echoing the argument made above about both the conflict of language(s) and the confrontation between the oral and the written, Fanon writes about how initially print media was closely associated with the colonial regime: "Dans les premiers mois de la Révolution, la grande majorité, [sic] des Algériens identifiait toute chose écrite dans la langue française à l'expression du pouvoir conquérant. La morphologie de l'écriture de l'*Express* ou de l'*Echo d'Alger*, [sic] était le signe de la présence française" (1975 [1959]: 65–66; italics in the original). It is also not surprising that, in the context of sound, Fanon also directly addresses the topic of the conflict between languages. According to him, the radio also makes the appropriation of the French language, the language of the colonizers, possible: "La diffusion en français des émissions de l'*Algérie combattante* va libérer la langue ennemie de ses significations historiques. [...] Utilisée par la *Voix des combattants*, transitant de façon prégnante le message de la Révolution, la langue française devient aussi un instrument de libération" (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 74–75; italics in the original). Cf. also his remarks on orality in Algeria (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 61).

chooses here also foreshadows the violent connotations that sound has in a postcolonial context. The description of this invisible, but very audible confrontation illustrates the high stakes involved in the listening practices within the anticolonial struggle:

> *Les services français technicisés à l'extrême et forts de l'expérience acquise à l'occasion de guerres modernes, rompus à la pratique de la « guerre des ondes », eurent tôt fait de repérer les longueurs d'onde du poste émetteur. Les programmes furent alors systématiquement brouillés et progressivement,* la Voix de l'Algérie combattante *devint inaudible. Une nouvelle forme de lutte était née. Des tracts conseillèrent aux Algériens de se tenir à l'écoute de façon permanente deux ou trois heures durant. Au cours d'une même émission, un deuxième poste, émettant sur une autre longueur d'onde, relayait le premier poste brouillé. L'auditeur était incorporé à la bataille des ondes, devinait la tactique de l'ennemi, et de façon presque physique, musculaire, déjouait la stratégie de l'adversaire. (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 69; italics in the original)*

Measures such as these taken by the French authorities, where they attempted to obstruct the transmission of programs, are only one aspect of the repressions targeting the use of the radio: A ban was also enforced on the sale of receivers (as well as the batteries used as a power source for some of the models, cf. Fanon 1975 [1959]: 68–69) and devices were confiscated during raids (cf. 82). Thus, the significance of the radio as a means of resistance was not only recognized by the Algerian rebels, but also by the French rulers.

Apart from the direct effects of the radio in Algeria that have been mentioned here, one can easily discern in many of Fanon's remarks how sound, on a more fundamental level, is connected to decolonization, not just in terms of a specific movement in Algeria, but also on a global scale and as an idea in itself. Not only does Fanon draw a parallel between the establishment of independent states in North Africa and in the Middle East and the creation of radio programs in these regions (cf. 1975 [1959]: 57), he also makes ample use of metaphors that stem from the field of sound and acoustics, for example, when he writes about the common Algerian who becomes "un *élément réverbérant* du vaste réseau de significations né du combat libérateur" (1975 [1959]: 80; italics added). This orientation toward sound phenomena in the text is hardly a coincidence since Fanon frequently uses the idea of sound to illustrate anticolonial tendencies. Sound itself seems to be emblematic of the movement of decolonization:

> *Cette voix, souvent absente, physiquement inaudible, que chacun sent monter en lui, fondée sur une perception intérieure qui est celle de la Patrie, se matérialise de façon non récusable. […] La modalité d'existence de cette voix rappelle à plus d'un titre celle*

> *de la Révolution : présente atmosphériquement, mais non objectivement, en morceaux détachés […]. (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 69–70)*

Fanon applies the concept of sound – a phenomenon which is intangible and difficult to localize or to isolate but, at the same time, impossible to ignore – to the situation of Algeria in the 1950s, a point in time when the country was still under colonial rule but pervaded through and through by an atmosphere of change. It is not just sound, but also the act of listening itself which is seen by Fanon as constitutive of an anticolonial spirit: "Acheter un poste, se mettre à genoux, la tête contre l'écran, […] c'est *ouïr* les premières paroles de la Nation. […] A l'écoute de la Révolution, l'Algérien existe avec elle, la fait exister" (Fanon 1975 [1959]: 78; italics in the original). In these remarks one can recognize Fanon's view of the centrality of sound not just for the Algerian War, but for decolonial thinking as a whole: The decentralized nature of sound ("non située géographiquement", Fanon 1975 [1959]: 66) in combination with the involvement and participation of the audience (cf. 71–72) turn the radio into a medium, the use of which greatly benefits the shared revolutionary goals under colonialism, according to Fanon.

Fanon's text represents one of the earliest attempts to explicitly bring together sound and colonialism and understand them in correlation. The important role he assigns to the radio during the Algerian War, and to sound in general (by presenting it in analogy to, and as a symbol of decolonial thought), points to an increased attention to the sonic dimension in the context of postcolonialism. Thus, in addition to the two topics of the conflict of language(s) and orality in postcolonial contexts, there also appears to be a heightened awareness of sound in a broader framework, be it in the form of the voice or the use of auditory technology.

Despite these early observations about sound in the tradition of postcolonial thinking, the topic has, for a long time, not garnered sufficient interest to prompt a systematic study of sonic phenomena and auditory perception within postcolonial studies. Likewise, and for an equally long time, sound studies have largely ignored broader global contexts in their research: "[D]espite the interdisciplinary breadth of sound studies, the field as a whole has remained deeply committed to Western intellectual lineages and histories" (Novak/Sakakeeny 2015: 7).

As has been the case with similar questions related to sound in academia, it was musicology – and more precisely ethnomusicology – that began to (re-)discover the sonic environment of regions that have a colonial background, together with the political and historical implications that these environments have.[10] It is within these fields that the current research on sound in postcolonial contexts can draw

10 For a comprehensive overview of the research within musicology that is influenced by postcolonialism, cf. the annotated bibliography by Bloechl 2016.

important impulses. In an edited volume with a focus on musicology entitled *Audible Empire,* published in 2016, Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan write in the introduction about what they understand by the 'audibility' of empire:

> *Empire's audible formation was constituted, in its loud and voluble origins, by cultures of sound making, hearing, and listening that are dizzying in their categorical diversities and spread. […]*
>
> *"Audible" empire affirms that empire constituted as much as it was constituted by sound. To open up the audibility of empire as a problematic is to call for a more capacious rethinking of the constitutive processes of empire as well as of modern sound and its study. (Radano/Olaniyan 2016: 13, 19)*

Like the approach that Fanon exemplified in his essay around 60 years before them, the editors of this volume are primarily interested in how colonialism and imperialism are expressed on an aural level, and how the dimension of sound, in turn, shapes the constitution of empire. Moreover, their stated goal is to "inquire into ways in which imperial structures help to modify and produce qualities of hearing" (Radano/Olaniyan 2016: 7). While the contributors to the mentioned volume do so mainly through the lens of (the research on and study of) music, it goes without saying that hearing in itself is not limited to the perception of music. However, the research that extends beyond musical sounds and focuses on other auditory phenomena in the field of postcolonialism and related areas is still rare (and even rarer in conjunction with literary studies). Slowly but surely, research questions are beginning to emerge that directly address this lacuna and depart from an explicitly musicologist scope, as the following quote from an entry in a recent handbook on sound demonstrates:

> *Wie wurde Sound vor welchem historischen Hintergrund und mit welchen gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Motiven produziert und wahrgenommen? Welche Rolle spielt die Produktion und Rezeption von Klang für die Etablierung oder Subversion von politischen,* etwa auch kolonialen Machtsystemen? *(Lange 2018: 15; italics added)*

It is thus mainly in the 21st century, after sound has been conceptualized as a cultural phenomenon and as a carrier of social and political meaning, that (extra-musical) auditory perception comes into focus again in connection to postcolonial studies. It is telling that, as of 2022, there is a growing number not just of recent publications on the relationship between sound and postcolonialism,[11] but also of

11 Cf., for example, the edited volume by Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes entitled *Remapping Sound Studies* (2019a) and another publication edited by Russell Skelchy and Jeremy Taylor, *Sonic Histories of Occupation* (2022).

research projects and conferences devoted to this topic. Far from calling this development an 'acoustic turn' (cf. Meyer 2008) within postcolonial studies, one can nonetheless see that sound and practices of hearing and listening are gaining traction in various disciplines in which colonialism and its effects are being researched.

Sounding the darker side of modernity

How can the fact be explained that sound studies have been so conspicuously neglectful in regard to colonialism and imperialism on a global scale? After all, Fanon already states in his essay about the radio that approaching sound within an anticolonial context changes not only the technologies of sound but even the perception of sound itself (cf. 1975 [1959]: 81). Sound culture at large is thus also influenced by colonial and imperial circumstances and movements that seek to counteract them; this relationship is currently not adequately reflected in the research literature.

One of the major constants in research on the history of sound and sound culture is the reference to 'modernity' and how it influenced listening habits and modes of sound production. Within modernity, the end of the 19th century occupies a special position in the discourse on sound, as the editors of a recent volume on the history of knowledge of sound and hearing also reiterate:

> *Gemäß der Annahme einer Pluralität der Wissensformen gehen wir auch von einer Pluralität des Wandels innerhalb der Moderne aus, bei der sich verschiedene Formen des Hör-Wissens in unterschiedlichen Verlaufsformen und Geschwindigkeiten entwickeln konnten. Ein bis zu einem gewissen Grad für alle Provinzen des Hör-Wissens einschneidender Wandel folgte allerdings aus der Entwicklung der Tonaufzeichnungs-, Übertragungs- und Wiedergabetechniken seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert. (Morat et al. 2017: 4–5)*

Industrialization and technologization, as pillars of (late) modernity, therefore, play an important role in the study of sound as a cultural, social and political phenomenon. The introduction of new auditory technology fundamentally changed the way sound was perceived.[12] At the same time, machines in all shapes and forms contributed to creating sounds that were louder than any other generated by humans before – not least in the form of weaponry and war technology.

12 Cf. also, for example, Schrage: "Mit der Entkopplung des Hörens vom nahen Wahrnehmungsumfeld traten auch die Eigenqualitäten auditiver Wahrnehmung besonders hervor, die schon Simmel herausgestellt hatte – Stimmungsvergemeinschaftung und Ausrichtung an alle. Die Technologien der Speicherung und Echtzeit-Verbreitung schufen neuartige Hörkontexte und -erfahrungen für ein zusehends größer werdendes Publikum: Es wurde nicht nur mehr, sondern eben auch anders gehört" (2011: 273).

While these changes in auditory perception and sound culture as a whole within modernity have been widely researched in European and Western contexts in the past two decades,[13] the global effects of the developments described above have not attracted an equal amount of attention. This is striking insofar as the history of modernity and sound is fundamentally entangled with the political and geographical expansion within the framework of imperialism and colonialism – from early on in modern history until the 20th century, sound was an important aspect of colonial projects and their perpetuation:

> *[I]n 1609 the sound of the bell became part of another story: the story of colonisation. It helped the most powerful nations in the world to overpower alien soundscapes, create order out of what they thought of as chaos, mark their territory and, in time, build empires. The bell was only one modest weapon among many for the colonisers. There were also drums, trumpets, pipes, horns – and, of course, guns. Armies and navies – and the deadly firepower they had – certainly did all the dirty work of conquest, yet the sounds of colonialism mattered too. The settlers' guns were not just deadly, they were extremely loud – frighteningly so for those who had never come across them. Like the bells and drums and trumpets, the noise that guns made helped to establish rule over people whose lands were seized. They also helped instil discipline among the new communities they forged. Indeed, […] it was sound that would often prove to be the best way of making the presence of a distant authority felt – and, very often, feared. (Hendy 2013: 159)*

Hendy addresses an array of different sound sources that were utilized in conquering and ruling colonies. While the sounds produced also had far-reaching political implications in their European places of origin – Alain Corbin's seminal study of bells in 19th century France (2001 [1994]) is just one of the examples that can be named here in connection to the quoted auditory phenomena[14] – in these new settings, they acquired new meanings that reproduced and reinforced colonial structures and dichotomies, for example, the opposition between 'civilization' and 'wildness' (cf. Hendy 2013: 161–162). The introduction of sound recording technology in colonial contexts merely continued this history of racism and othering (cf. Hoffmann 2018).

It quickly becomes clear why it is important to consider the sonic dimension of modernity beyond Europe: In order to fully account for the practices of producing and

13 There is a plenitude of studies that focus particularly on the relationship between modernity and sound. Suffice it to list here only Emily Ann Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity* (2004 [2002]) and Veit Erlmann's *Reason and Resonance* (2010).

14 For a short illustration of the significance of the bell under colonialism, on the other hand, with South Africa and Australia as examples, cf. M. Smith 2007: 56–57.

perceiving sound and how modernity and its components influenced these practices, one has to consider the effects that the developments within sound culture had on regions and people under colonialism. In this sense, one has to think of modernity and coloniality as prerequisites for each other, as conceptualized by Walter D. Mignolo and the collective *Modernity/Coloniality*, and apply this understanding to the academic study of sound as well:

> *Coloniality names the underlying logic of the foundation and unfolding of Western civilization from the Renaissance to today of which historical colonialisms have been a constitutive, although downplayed, dimension. […] "[M]odernity" is a complex narrative whose point of origination was Europe; a narrative that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, "coloniality." Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality. (Mignolo 2011: 2–3)*

This 'darker side' of modernity has also been a blind spot in sound studies, so to speak. It is necessary for sound studies and related fields to focus on this facet of modernity in order for them to fully comprehend the social, political and historical implications that technologization, industrialization and other processes within modernity had in the realm of sound culture on a global scale. Postcolonial studies, on the other hand, have to critically engage with how the concept of 'modernity' has been used in past research, if they want to productively apply the insights from sound studies.

While the definition of 'modernity' varies from academic field to academic field, the term itself can serve as a "useful heuristic", as Sterne puts it in connection with the history of sound reproduction (2003: 9), even if "*modernity* and its conjugates are also important categories to be analyzed and carefully taken apart within this history" (10; italics in the original). Modernity is thus to be understood as historically situated and contingent, as opposed to propositions that subscribe to a "developmental theory of modernity as 'modernization'" (Sterne, 2003: 9).[15] It is important to realize that modernity did not take its course on equal terms across the world,[16] which also greatly affected the ways of listening and producing sound. It is for reasons such as these that Radano/Olaniyan

> *seek to call attention to the discernible qualities of the heard […] that condition imperial structurations and that reveal themselves as part and parcel of the regimes of*

15 Following Sterne, "[*m*]*odernization* can too easily suggest a brittle kind of universalism, where the specific historical developments referenced by *modernity* are transmogrified into a set of historical stages through which all cultures must pass" (2003: 9; italics in the original).

16 For more on 'modernity' from a postcolonial perspective, cf. Ashcroft et al. 2007 [2000]: 130–132.

> *knowledge, understanding, and subjectivity key to the constitution of both belonging and unevenness in the making of the modern. (Radano/Olaniyan 2016: 7)*

In assessing the political significance of sound, the colonial heritage of modernity thus needs to be taken into account as well. Even seemingly neutral objects such as the radio receiver – itself a product of the developments in sound technology since the end of the 19th century – have to be considered against the background of their utilization in colonial regimes, as has already been demonstrated above with reference to Fanon's early essay (cf. also Fanon 1975 [1959] 77). Every technological innovation, especially after industrialization, that was regarded as groundbreaking and advantageous within the imperial 'centers' had ramifications for colonial regimes, and the same applies to matters connected with sound: "Europeans exported well-honed sound technologies [...] and the new commercial and capitalistic cultural values underwriting them to discipline the bodies of natives, principally to exploit their labor but also to tattoo authority on colonized bodies via their ears" (M. Smith 2007: 56). While, as Paul Gilroy has urged in the past for other contexts, this book cannot reconstruct "the primal history of modernity [...] from the slaves' point of view" (1993: 55) in relation to the status and impact of sound in colonial and postcolonial settings (due to the specific focus and scope of this study), it can provide a glimpse both of some of the common themes, and also of the differences in the engagement with aurality in postcolonialism and, more particularly, in the field of literary fiction.

Postcolonial aural sensitivity in literature

Up until now, the emphasis on Western modernity has also been reflected in the research on sound within the field of literary studies: Many publications take the same caesura around the turn of the 20th century as a starting point to analyze what role sound plays in literature. For example, Philipp Schweighauser's examination of noise in American literature starts with the year 1890 (as the title of his book indicates); in his introduction, he repeatedly refers to the "noises of modernity" which writers attempt to tame "through an act of intellectual imagination" (Schweighauser 2006: 1). In a more recent example, a volume entitled *Sounding Modernism*, the editors have chosen the same starting year as Schweighauser for the scope of the included articles and case studies (ranging from 1890 to 1950), explaining their choice with reference to the special sonic configuration of modernity (cf. Groth et al. 2017: 4). This list of examples could be continued almost indefinitely with other researchers and their publications, such as Sam Halliday's *Sonic Modernity* (2013).

Melba Cuddy-Keane, in a frequently referenced article, also writes about a fundamental change in the literary writing about sound that set in around the time of

the "advent of broadcasting" (2000: 71) and other innovations in the field of sound technology. Cuddy-Keane calls it a "new aural sensitivity" which is reflected in fiction and which is "coincident with the emergence of the gramophone and the wireless" (2000: 71). Such a new aural sensitivity can also be understood as a heightened attention to the auditory dimension and its social, cultural and political implications. In another article, Cuddy-Keane specifically addresses the role of modernity in this regard: "[M]odernity occasioned new experiences for the 'human sensorium,' stimulating both a new perceptual knowledge and a new apprehension of perception" (2005: 384). Similarly to the research within sound studies, Cuddy-Keane emphasizes that "technology has indeed *produced* our current understanding of sound" (2000: 70; italics in the original). Ultimately, she states that this new form of aurality, brought about by increasing industrialization and technologization, impacted the way of writing about sound: "New sensory experiences – many of them occasioned by technology and the modern city – and a growing interest in cognitive perception gave rise to a new aurality, which in turn made its mark upon narrative, in new inscriptions of sound" (Cuddy-Keane 2005: 383).

With these observations about the nexus between sound and literature in mind, *Auditory Violence* attends to the need for inquiries into aural sensitivity and its specific characteristics in literature outside of Europe and Western contexts. Against the background of the 'darker side of modernity', it is thus necessary to pose the question about how sound culture and postcolonial literature relate to each other. Just as sound studies have shown that technological innovations effectively changed the way of hearing and listening in European and Western regions, so too did sound technologies and practices related to sound have a lasting effect on the perception of sound in colonial and postcolonial contexts. The impact of this historical and political background becomes noticeable in the heightened attention to sonic phenomena in all of the texts in the corpus of this book: Anna, the protagonist and narrator of Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, expresses her melancholic state through her perception of various sounds. The Magistrate in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is troubled by the sonic environment that, ultimately, lets him realize his complicity with the Empire. Coetzee's other novel, *Life & Times of Michael K*, narrates the hazardous journey of a man who is particularly sensitive to sound, not least because of his own quiet nature. In Frankétienne's novel *Les affres d'un défi*, sounds provide a continuous point of orientation during the often confusing maelstrom of events. The main character Yedigei in Chingiz Aitmatov's novel experiences the traditional culture of his people through sound and critically observes the effects of sound technologies, such as the loudspeaker. While it is overambitious and too simplistic to speak of a uniform 'postcolonial way of listening' that does not take regional and cultural differences into account, all of the chosen texts

demonstrate a specific aural sensitivity. One aim of *Auditory Violence*, therefore, is to examine how the perception of sound against the shared background of colonialism is reflected in literature in the form of a postcolonial aural sensitivity, and how postcolonial literature, in turn, further expands this perception and generates new meaning which is attributed to sound. This focus is also inspired by the approach to sound within cultural studies:

> *Aus der immer wieder benannten Not – dem Quellenproblem von Studien, die sich mit historischen Klängen befassen […] – kann die Kulturwissenschaft eine Tugend machen, indem sie an historischen wie gegenwärtigen Diskursen über und Beschreibungen von Sound deren produktiven Mehrwert und Überschuss untersucht und jene spezifischen Verfahren und Phantasien fokussiert, mit denen Klang in Sprache, Schrift oder auch Bilder übersetzt wird. (Lange 2018: 116)*

This 'surplus' (of meaning) that Lange writes about is thus one of the chief concerns of the studies presented in the chapters to come. In order to analyze the surplus of meaning of sound, one needs to account for the particular characteristics of the medium in which sound is the subject; in the case of this book, by examining the specific literary ways of staging sound. When Lange calls this process a 'translation of sound', it needs to be understood as a performative and transformative kind of translation: A translation which is inspired by the sonic dimension, but which creates something new in the medium of language and print that is connected to sound.[17] In Aitmatov's *И дольше века длится день* [*I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*] (*The Day Lasts Longer Than a Hundred Years*), for instance, the perception and production of sound are metaphorized through a water imagery (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218) that makes it possible to interweave sound culture with another important theme within the text, environmental destruction. Sound and nature thus enter into a relationship which turns the auditory dimension into a domain that is not restricted anymore to just sound.

Another hypothesis is that the texts selected for the corpus and the case studies, taken from different linguistic and cultural contexts, have aspects in common that are related to sound due to the overlap in the historical and political background of postcolonial literature and because they are, in one way or another, informed by imperial structures. This shared background is what warrants analyzing the texts side by side, in order to acquire an idea about the postcolonial aural sensitivity.

17 This understanding of sound in literature also corresponds to how Morat et al. conceive of the 'literarisches Hör-Wissen' as consisting of three functions which do not merely reproduce the extra-literary 'Hör-Wissen': They pose the question of "welches Wissen über das Hören in literarischen Texten archiviert, reflektiert und konstruiert wird" (Morat et al. 2017: 13).

Comparative literary studies seem predestined to examine aural sensitivity in literature in conjunction with postcolonialism. Among the many articles on the relationship between comparative literature and postcolonial studies, one can refer to Young's "The Postcolonial Comparative":

> *The postcolonial comparative […] goes further than putting hitherto incomparable traditions together disjunctively. For […] the comparing takes place in the literature itself, through form and content, not just in subsequent critical acts of comparison. […] Postcolonial literature is inherently comparative, intrinsically more comparative than other literatures because it is defined by comparatism:* peau noire, masques blancs. *Postcolonial authors have always written comparative literature—a literature that did not have to wait for the frame of comparative literature to be in dialogue with other literatures. For postcolonial writers had no choice: that work was done by the violent, historical imposition of colonialism, which forced postcolonial society and its literature into comparison in the first place. Postcolonial literature therefore cannot be anything but comparative, since it is written from the position of always already having been put in comparison with other literatures. (Young 2013: 688; italics in the original)*[18]

To Young, the postcolonial condition is thus the *tertium comparationis* that serves as the linking element between different literatures and that makes a comparison between them possible. Moreover, as shown above, due to the process of modernity and its imperial condition, sound is inevitably connected to oppression and domination in postcolonialism. Through a comparative analysis, it will become clear how the staging of sound in postcolonial literature also acts as a screen to present conflicts which evolved against the background of colonialism and imperialism. These conflicts are in no way homogenous and they represent vastly different forms of oppression and resistance. They can be – to provide further examples from the corpus – of a symbolic nature, as in Chingiz Aitmatov's novel, where the train as a tool of imperialism is presented with a heavy emphasis on its sonic attributes. The imperial situation of countries in Central Asia is thus emblematized in the sounds of the railway. In the case of Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*, the human voice itself is the object of aggression, illustrated through the frequently encountered theme of dictatorships in postcolonial countries and against the background of the significance of the Vodou tradition in Haiti. In Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, the protagonist is a chorus girl and her life is inevitably tied to sound. Rhys also explores the politics of sound through different categories, such as gender, class and

18 For another article, which also serves as a fairly recent overview of the discussion about comparative literature and postcolonial studies, cf. Albrecht 2013. The edited volume by Haun Saussy (2006), furthermore, unites a variety of contributions about this and related topics.

race. Finally, on numerous occasions J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* both focus on the sonic environments of (civil) war, occupation and imperialist configurations of power. What all of these texts demonstrate is that they are sensitive to the power of sound and its political significance and impact in postcolonial contexts. Through close-readings and comparative analyses *Auditory Violence* shows how postcolonial literature stages sound based on an awareness of its role in the establishment and maintenance of domination, but also in its subversion.

The diversity with which the texts address different aspects of oppression requires critical instruments for the analysis of sounds and their meaning on a political level. This includes a unified terminology which enables the texts and the findings to be compared, but which is also still variable and adaptive enough to account for the different political phenomena associated with the staging of sound in the corpus. For the case studies, the concept of 'violence' has been chosen to serve as an analytical category for the examination of the texts and the significance of literary sounds within them. The concept itself is a prevalent one in postcolonial studies, and its application covers a broad range of political aspects. At the same time, and unlike other areas within literary studies and beyond, postcolonial studies have mostly ignored the special relationship between sound and violence.

Postcolonial literature and (the) violence (of sound)

In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Robert J. C. Young writes: "The trace of violence is the primary semiotic of the colonial apparatus, its means of communication" (2016 [2001]: 295). Indeed, violence plays an important role both in the history of postcolonialism and in postcolonial literature. While violence is ubiquitous in different kinds of literature (and, naturally, also in historical and political contexts outside of postcolonialism), it is telling that the term is included as a central topic in introductions to the field, such as Justin D. Edwards' *Postcolonial Literature*:

> *The project of colonialism was, more often than not, carried out through the force of violence. The conquest of a region, as well as the subsequent 'clearing' of the terrain and the imposition of a new law of the land, engendered a violence that was often brutal and uncompromising. […] To put this simply, the colonists' power over a colony is gained and maintained through violence.*
>
> *Colonial violence, then, sought to impose borders and boundaries. These included the new borders imposed on the native's land after the European power declared its ownership of the colony. But such borders were conceptual as well as physical. For they included an identificatory boundaries [sic] that divided the colonizer from the*

> *colonized. […] Such relations of power, we must recognize, included several forms of violence. […]*
>
> *[C]olonial violence must be situated in the broader frame of regulating and controlling the other. Thus, violence (and the threat of violence) plays a complex social role in the institutionalization of political, economic, legal, educational, social and cultural systems within colonies. (Edwards 2008: 62–64)*

Violence is thus an intrinsic part of the colonial system and it maintains its importance within the discourse even after decolonization. In the above quote, it can already be noticed that Edwards not only mentions physical violence but also other, more abstract forms, which are all pertinent to colonialism. This is due to the fact that the functioning and effects of colonialism do not solely consist of overt oppression and subjugation, but also include less apparent power structures and dynamics which still have a harmful and lasting impact.

A broad understanding of violence, such as the one demonstrated by Edwards, has a long tradition in postcolonial studies: In one of the founding texts of the field, Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*, the author distinguishes between two different kinds of violence. The colonizer's violence is, to a certain extent, also abstract: Its beginnings may have consisted of physical violence during the colonial conquest (cf., for example, Fanon 2002 [1961]: 43) but over time, it was also transformed into a "violence atmosphérique" (70), a form of violence "qui a présidé à l'arrangement du monde colonial, qui a rythmé inlassablement la destruction des formes sociales indigènes, démoli sans restrictions les systèmes de références de l'économie, les modes d'apparence, d'habillement" (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 44).[19] Here one encounters both the concept of violence as the manifestation of physical force, but also as a continuous state of oppression and inequality, long before Johan Galtung introduced the concept of 'structural violence' in his works (cf. Galtung 1969), which has, since then, become synonymous with a broad understanding of violence.

Violence is also constantly mentioned throughout another standard work of postcolonial studies, *The Empire Writes Back*. Ashcroft et al. show through numerous examples how pervasive violence is in postcolonial contexts and especially in literature that was written against this background: "By the transforming power of the imagination, what appears to have been irretrievably lost may be recuperated – indeed in the very energy involved in violent and destructive acts reside the seeds of

19 Fanon opposes this violence to a form of counter-violence used by the colonized, which is partly born out of the 'atmospheric violence' (cf., for example, Fanon 2002 [1961]: 61) and the goal of which is national independence (cf. 69). Within the history of violence research, Fanon's differentiation is similar to Sorel's conceptualization of violence, cf. Ciccariello-Maher 2010: 1402.

creativity" (Ashcroft et al. 2010 [1989]: 148–149). Thus, they show not only that violence is a recurring theme in postcolonial prose fiction[20] but also that violence is a force that motivates the writing and literary expression within these literatures.

Sound and the aural in postcolonial literature, however, have rarely been examined in connection with violence and power,[21] unlike other sensory concepts, like visuality and visual culture – the 'colonial gaze', for instance, has become a key term and is one of the main critical tools used to examine the sense of sight in postcolonial prose fiction.[22] While there are calls for a new research focus within postcolonial studies that takes mediality more into account (potentially opening up new perspectives on other sensory sensations; cf. Werkmeister 2016), it seems that, for now, the hegemony of vision (cf. Levin 1993) and the humanities' visual bias are alive and well within postcolonial literary studies.

Outside of postcolonial literature, the connection between sound and violence has been established multiple times. As early as 1977, in his insightful and comprehensive monograph *Bruits: Essai sur l'économie politique de la musique*, Jacques Attali reflects on the destructive and harmful potential of noise:

> *Dans sa réalité biologique, le bruit est un moyen de faire mal. Au-delà d'une limite, il devient une arme immatérielle de mort. L'oreille, transformateur de signaux sonores en impulsions électriques adressées au cerveau, peut être dégradée, et même détruite […]. Baisse des capacités intellectuelles, accélération respiratoire et cardiaque, hypertension, ralentissement digestif, névrose, altération de l'élocution rythment les conséquences d'une ambiance sonore excessive. (Attali 1977: 55)*

Attali draws attention not just to the biological vulnerability of the ear, but to how vulnerable people are in general because of their hearing organs and, in extreme cases, what kind of harmful effects sound can have even beyond auditory perception. More generally, he states that "*le bruit est violence :* il dérange. Faire du bruit, c'est rompre une transmission, débrancher, tuer. Il est simulacre de meurtre" (Attali 1977: 53; italics in the original). The disruptive nature of noise is what makes certain sounds seem violent in Attali's view. He also emphasizes that it is mainly

20 Cf. also the sheer amount of edited volumes, also in recent years, dedicated specifically to violence in postcolonial literatures; for example, BIGSAS-Workgroup "Tracks and Traces of Violence" 2017, Day 2008, Kalisa 2009, Milne 2007, Jean-François 2017.

21 Similar to the scholarly research on sound in postcolonial contexts outside of literary studies, intermedial studies with a focus on the relationship between literature and music have done pioneering work within the study of postcolonial literature and the political content of sound; cf., for example, Bushnell 2013, Huntington 2009, Blaschke 2005. As before, however, extra-musical sound and auditory perception are underrepresented in the research literature. Recent notable exceptions include Solheim 2017, Hoene 2016, Hill 2013.

22 For an overview of the research on visuality in postcolonial literature, cf. Rippl 2015: 131.

due to developments within industrial technology that noise became an "arme de mort" (Attali 1977: 55).

The equation of noise with violence is not unique to Attali, either. The edited volume by David Suisman and Susan Strasser, *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2010), offers a wide range of case studies which focus on the violent potential of sound, of which the blasting of music as a technique of torture during the interrogation of a detainee is just one of the more extreme examples (cf. Suisman 2010: 1–2). In the same year, Steve Goodman published *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, in which he discusses sound also as a 'weapon of death' throughout history and within different fields. Goodman focuses on "acoustic violence" (2010: xiv) and "acoustic weaponry" (xv), and by 'sonic warfare' he understands "the use of force, *both seductive and violent, abstract and physical,* via a range of acoustic machines (biotechnical, social, cultural, artistic, conceptual) to modulate the physical, affective, and libidinal dynamics of populations, of bodies, of crowds" (Goodman 2010: 10; italics in the original). The scope of Goodman's research also reflects the new conception of sound as a political phenomenon which is closely entwined with power and control.

Even more recently, books by Juliette Volcler and J. Martin Daughtry were published which likewise concentrate on the violent potential of sound and how it is utilized as a weapon in the 20th and 21st century. Volcler examines the violent applications of sound in a variety of contexts – exploring what she calls "répression acoustique" (2011: 8) and, more precisely, sound "en tant que phénomène physique, appliqué de manière offensive dans un contexte militaire, policier ou d'ordre public" (10). Daughtry, on the other hand, focuses on the Iraq war as a case study to illustrate the wide-ranging effects of sound and its different uses in war regions. In the monograph, Daughtry coins the term 'belliphonic', which is a portmanteau that refers to the aural dimension of wartime violence in its multifarious forms (cf. 2015: 3–4). In a different article, Daughtry attributes another term to wartime sounds: 'thanatosonics'. Also a portmanteau, thanatosonics makes a more explicit reference to death (through Thanatos, the Greek god of death), representing an "extreme fusion of violence and sound" (Daughtry 2014: 28).[23]

The special affinity between sound and violence has also begun to attract interest within literary studies. In an early edited volume about sound and violence in

23 Daughtry also shows that the violence of sound does not end after the acoustic phenomenon itself fades away – he maintains that, through traumatic experiences, "for those whose sensoria have been conditioned by exposure to violence, thanatosonic resonance can be detected in all sounds, from the roar of battle right down to the faintest whisper" (2014: 45). While it is generally said that the sense of smell triggers particularly vivid recollections of the past, Daughtry demonstrates through his study how hearing is also very prone to trigger memories, especially in conjunction with violent events, facilitating what he calls an "auditory haunting" (2014: 28).

the 20th century and its culture, Gess et al. summarize in their introduction many of the relevant factors regarding the connection between these two entities, commenting on the impact it has for the arts:

> *Das Gehör […] ist besonders anfällig für Gewalterfahrungen, denn das Ohr ist extrem sensibel, weitreichend und […] kaum verschließbar. Akustische Phänomene treffen den Hörer unmittelbar, da die Schallwellen den gesamten Körper, der selbst als Resonanzraum fungiert, aus allen Richtungen attackieren. […] Die Innovationen der technischen Akustik […] haben im 20. Jahrhundert eine neue Dimension der Intensität und Verfügbarkeit von Klängen in Raum und Zeit eröffnet, die die akustischen Gewalteinwirkungen auf das individuelle und soziale Leben vervielfachen […]. Sie tragen entscheidend dazu bei, Macht- und Gewaltverhältnisse neu zu definieren [sic] und revolutionieren die ästhetischen Mittel zur Darstellung von Gewalt. (Gess et al. 2005b: 7–8)*

In combination with the physiological conditions of hearing, Gess et al. also highlight the innovations within the technology of sound, and assert that these changes are of fundamental importance for the aural manifestation of violence and how it is aesthetically reflected in the 20th century. Their volume *Hörstürze: Akustik und Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert* (Gess et al. 2005a) confirms this hypothesis through various case studies of examples from history, media such as the radio, film, music, and literature.

Since then, within literary studies, sound has been increasingly linked to violence and other political phenomena and concepts closely related to it. In a recent handbook on literature and music, Uwe C. Steiner writes in his article about the literary history of knowledge of hearing that, in the 20th century, the works of authors such as Franz Kafka, Ernst Jünger and Bernhard Kellermann distinctly point to the emergence of "akustisch sich manifestierende Macht" (Steiner 2017: 188). Steiner also mentions the role of new technologies which enable sounds to conquer different spaces independent of their original sources (cf. 2017: 188–189), and he refers to cases of an "akustischer Ausnahmezustand" (189) which begin to influence the literary creative process, taking World War I as an example: "Im permanenten akustischen Alarmzustand des Weltkriegs mutiert das Hören mehr denn je zum technisch aufgerüsteten Horchen, unterstützt durch ein exponentiell sich vermehrendes Wissen um das Gehör" (Steiner 2017: 189).

More and more publications productively refer to this idea of sound as a political phenomenon in literary texts and, furthermore, to the fact that our ears have been more subject to auditory violence in the 20th century than ever before. New books such as Tyler Whitney's *Eardrums: Literary Modernism as Sonic Warfare* attest to this, and even within intermediality studies this link between violence and sound (or, in

this case, specifically music) has been examined, as in the research by Beate Schirrmacher (cf. Schirrmacher 2014, Schirrmacher 2018). Mention must also be made of Reika Hane's monograph *Gewalt des Schweigens* (2014), in which the marked absence of sound (or speech) is examined in terms of its violent potential, again in literary works of the 20th century.

Considering that postcolonial literature is also informed by the above-mentioned changes in sound culture, and that it roughly coincides with the new aural sensitivity taking effect in literature, as described by Cuddy-Keane, it is hardly surprising that there are countless instances in texts of postcolonial literature where sounds possess violent attributes – this can also partly be attributed to the fact that violence in itself plays such a central role in these literatures, as shown further above. As an important literary development in the 20th century, postcolonial literature is rich with literary sounds, and violence is an important theme in the creative reflection on sound in texts from this field. From a more general point of view, Jürgen Wertheimer writes that "Literatur und Bildende Kunst sind Laboratorien der Gewalt-Imagination" (2006: 19). A new approach to postcolonial literature subscribing to Wertheimer's claim thus needs to examine violence through the lens of sound culture in order to show the innovative ways in which these texts also convey violence through sound. Such an approach also demonstrates that the relationship between violence and sensory experiences is not restricted to the domain of vision in postcolonial literature.

If postcolonial prose fiction is understood as a 'laboratory for the imagination of violence', this also means that these texts go beyond the occurrences discussed above in the overview of the state of research, in which sound and violence are linked in real life. While the conditions of hearing and generating sound influence the texts, the latter do not rely on reproducing the violent aspects of sound outside of literature. This fundamental situation of literary texts and its methodological ramifications have also been addressed in the research on violence within literary studies:

> *Gewalt (in) der Literatur ist mithin* literarisierte *Gewalt, eine mit den spezifischen Mitteln der Literatur erzeugte, inszenierte und gestaltete Gewalt, die entsprechend auf die Verfahren ihrer Erzeugung und die Formen ihrer Erscheinung hin befragt werden muss. (Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 340; italics in the original)*

Following Siebenpfeiffer's remark about the specificity of violence in literature, the literary techniques and forms of how sound is presented in the texts are vital for being able to observe how violence is conveyed in relation to sound. Siebenpfeiffer also uses a specific terminology to point out that "literarische Gewalt [...] nicht auf Phänomene lebensweltlicher Gewalt reduzibel ist" (2013: 340): Terms like

'erzeugen' (to create, generate) and 'inszenieren' (to stage) already point to the important role of performativity in the literary treatment of violence. A conception of (literary) violence such as this one corresponds to what Susanne Knaller describes as a 'performative form' in literature and the arts (as opposed to representational terminologies):

> *Performativität meint [...] die Gleichzeitigkeit von Partizipation und Beobachtung, Referenz und Selbst-Reflexivität, Formierung und Handlung. Wirklichkeit in der performativen Form ist nicht der referentielle Inhalt, ein zu reproduzierendes Außerhalb oder ein noch nicht Sichtbares, sondern sie hat ihre Konsistenz nur innerhalb und durch diesen Prozess. (Knaller 2015: 62)*

The performative aspect of literature is not just of relevance in the context of violence; it also applies with regard to sounds in literary texts. The way sounds are presented in texts can deviate from one's usual hearing experiences, and through literary means, the violent potential of sound is expanded even more. For instance, Frankétienne uses a very figurative approach in his novel to provide sounds with attributes that they do not possess outside of literature in order to introduce new possibilities for these sounds to have a violent effect or be affected by violence themselves. Through stylistic and rhetorical choices such as this, sound in literature is able to reflect not only physical violence but also other forms of violence, and it is due to performativity that literary sounds can express violence in postcolonial texts at all. The concept chosen to account for the oscillation between reflection and performativity, between being influenced by and shaping sound culture, is called 'sonic imagination': The complex interplay of textuality and aurality is enabled by the sonic imagination and it is through this process that sound can be performatively related to violence in literature. One objective of *Auditory Violence* therefore is to observe what kind of sonic imagination becomes manifest in texts of postcolonial prose fiction and how it is imbued with violence.

1.1.2 The literary sonic imagination

On what basis does postcolonial prose fiction – and literature in general – convey sound? How can the process of staging sound in literary texts be described on a conceptual level and how does it go beyond merely representing sound in a mimetic sense? This book advances the notion of a literary 'sonic imagination' which refers to the capacity of fiction to create sound worlds by textual means and attribute multilayered meaning to sonic phenomena and processes. In order to be applicable in the case studies, the concept of sonic imagination needs to be considered and mod-

ified from the perspective of literary studies. In a general sense, the sonic imagination refers to the specific way sound is incorporated and framed within the selected works of postcolonial fiction.

The term 'sonic imagination' was first put forward by sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne in his introduction to the *Sound Studies Reader*. He writes that "sonic imagination places sound as a fundamentally human problem" (Sterne 2012: 5) and that it is "guided by an orienting curiosity, a figural practice that reaches into fields of sonic knowledge and practice, and blends them with other questions, problems, fields, spaces and histories" (6). Sterne writes about sonic imagination chiefly as the ability of scholars and researchers within sound studies (or 'sound students', as Sterne calls them, cf. 2012: 3) to "make sense of some part of the sonic world" (2012: 5). However, he addresses an important point regarding the interest in, and the study of sound in general, namely, that sound does not always have to be the primary material under investigation in order for the sonic imagination to be set in motion. Rather, the sonic imagination is concerned with sound on a meta-level, and thus has access to different disciplines, even if they do not focus directly on sound as an audible phenomenon (cf. Sterne 2012: 9). This is also the reason why Sterne calls the sonic imagination a "deliberately synaesthetic neologism—it is about sound but occupies an ambiguous position between sound culture and a space of contemplation outside it" (2012: 5). Through the reference to synesthesia, Sterne hints at the aspect of the 'image' within 'imagination' and thus combines the aural with the visual dimension, also explaining that the different senses have to be considered in conjunction with each other (as opposed to what he calls the 'audiovisual litany', cf. 2012: 9). With the help of the concept of sonic imagination, Sterne emphasizes that the research object is very clearly sound, but that there is also a critical distance to the direct perception of it.

The meta-level, on which sound is examined in fields such as (culture-oriented) sound studies, can be addressed through the idea of 'knowledge' – the primary focus of sound studies and related fields therefore is knowledge about sound. Sterne writes that "[s]ound students produce and transform knowledge about sound and in the process reflexively attend to the (cultural, political, environmental, aesthetic…) stakes of that knowledge production" (2012: 3–4). This kind of knowledge, however, is not of a purely fact-oriented nature, but a form of tacit, implicit knowledge, in the sense used by Andreas Reckwitz within the framework of practice theory – it "embraces ways of understanding, knowing how, ways of wanting and of feeling that are linked to each other within a practice" (2002: 253). This form

of knowledge can be examined in a variety of fields[24] and it is also active in the multifaceted interaction with sound (in practices of sound perception and sound production, for instance, but also in practices that address sound on a meta-level). Sterne refers to such a knowledge about sound as 'sonic knowledge' (cf. 2012: 6).[25] In recent years, the notion of a sonic knowledge has also been taken up, and developed further by the research network *Hör-Wissen im Wandel*: Morat et al. propose five different "Provinzen des Hör-Wissens" (2017: 6), which are different spheres in which sonic knowledge becomes manifest. Among them, there is also what they call "literarische[s] Hör-Wissen" (Morat et al. 2017: 13), sonic knowledge that is specifically connected to literature. The research objectives pertinent within this particular sphere of sonic knowledge include assessing "welches Wissen über das Hören in literarische Texten archiviert, reflektiert und konstruiert wird" (Morat et al. 2017: 13). While Morat et al. mainly refer to knowledge related to the act of hearing and listening (at least in their terminology), the broader term 'sonic knowledge' is connected to all aspects of sound and not just auditory perception.

Auditory Violence identifies the sonic imagination as the driving force behind the reflection and construction of knowledge about sound within literature. More precisely, the studies presented here examine how the sonic imagination is applied in postcolonial prose fiction in such a way as to be able to foreground a variety of political phenomena. Before this analysis can be done, however, it is necessary to determine on what basis literary texts make use of sonic knowledge, and how they make sound available through the sonic imagination. While the scholarly work by Sterne and Morat et al. is instructive in formulating the appropriate terms and concepts through which the connection between sound and literature can be approached, they do not go into detail about the distinctive features of the sonic imagination within literary fiction and how it differs from other occurrences of the sonic imagination. Wolfgang Iser's conceptualization of the literary imagination proves particularly useful in the context of theories of imagination within literary studies because it can complement the above research of sound studies. Moreover,

24 The connection between literature and knowledge, for instance, has been the object of a vast research area within literary studies for several years. Joseph Vogl's poetology of knowledge (cf., for instance, his edited volume *Poetologien des Wissens um 1800*, published 1999) is one notable example, cf. also Klausnitzer 2008, Hörisch 2007, Köppe 2011 and the edited series by Locatelli 2002–2011, as a few more examples.

25 On the connection between knowledge and sound, cf. also Steven Feld's concept of 'acoustemology'. In his own words, acoustemology "joins acoustics to epistemology to investigate sounding and listening as a knowing-in-action" (Feld 2015: 12), and it is rooted in an anthropology of sound (cf. 14) and relational ontology (cf. 13).

Iser's understanding of the image and the performative nature of fiction can be productively combined with the concept of the sonic imagination and its 'synaesthetic neologism' as proposed by Sterne (cf. 2012: 5).

In the following passage from *Der Akt des Lesens*, Iser addresses some of the central ideas discussed above – knowledge and the image (as the basic elements of the imagination) – and explains how the literary imagination differs from non-literary imagination in everyday life:

> *Das Bild ist die Erscheinungsweise des imaginären Gegenstandes. Dieser besitzt jedoch im Blick auf die Literatur eine Besonderheit, die ihn von jenen Gegenständen unterscheidet, deren bloße Abwesenheit im Bild vergegenwärtigt wird. […] Im lebensweltlichen Verhalten dient das Vorstellungsbild vornehmlich einer […] Vergegenwärtigung abwesender, aber doch existierender Gegenstände […]. Dem imaginären Gegenstand fiktionaler Texte aber fehlt die Qualität empirisch vorhandener Existenz. Hier wird nicht ein abwesender, ansonsten aber existierender Gegenstand vergegenwärtigt, sondern vielmehr ein solcher erzeugt, der nicht seinesgleichen hat. Nicht die Abwesenheit bildet den Anstoß zu seiner Hervorbringung; vielmehr ist seine Erscheinungsweise eher ein Zuwachs zu jenem vorhandenen Wissen, das auch für seine Hervorbringung eine Rolle spielt. (Iser 1994 [1976]: 228)*

For Iser the image serves as a concept to differentiate between the object of perception and that of imagination (cf. also Iser 1994 [1976]: 222) – thus the 'image' is also merely a metaphor (analogous to how one 'sees' with the 'mind's eye') and not to be confused with an actual visual phenomenon. In literature, the image is formed by the imagination while reading a text. However, the image is not simply the imprint of 'real objects' on the mind (cf. also Iser 1994 [1976]: 221) – the object of the imagination does not have an ('absent') empirical counterpart, and its meaning cannot be explained through the represented object (cf. Iser 1994 [1976]: 220). The same is true for what can tentatively be called 'sound images' or 'sonic images' in literature: In continuation of Sterne's reference to synesthesia in the context of the sonic imagination, the imagined sounds in literary texts relate to sound, but not necessarily through sonic means; literary sound images are, in this sense, also positioned "between sound culture and a space of contemplation outside it" (Sterne 2012: 5). There is a surplus of meaning for sound images when they are compared with audible sonic phenomena, and this surplus is generated by specifically literary means. Iser makes a similar point regarding the image in general. He emphasizes that the image provides a combination of data and information that is inaccessible in the empirical perception of a specific object – this property of images is what makes deviations and innovations in literary fiction possible (cf. Iser 1994 [1976]: 221–222).

Correspondingly, sonic knowledge can also be considered from the perspective of literary studies as presented by Iser: In the above quote, Iser underlines that, within literature, the imaginary object is not merely generated by existing knowledge, but that it also extends knowledge. If this statement is applied to sound – or sound images – in literature, the following can be said: Staging sounds in literary fiction does not merely reflect the existing sonic knowledge but, through the sonic imagination, these sounds develop their own meaning and extend – or go beyond – one's understanding of the auditory dimension. Sound images activate sonic knowledge while reading, enabling one to establish a connection between the text and sonic phenomena, but without being limited to reproducing this knowledge. This is the case, for instance, when different texts in the corpus stage sounds that do not seem to have a discernible source and that still ring out over entire landscapes, as can be frequently seen in the novels by Aitmatov and Frankétienne. Even more out of the ordinary is the fact that these mysterious sounds are voices that can be heard without any technological means of amplification.

A variety of elements in literary texts can activate sonic knowledge and create sonic images in the mind – this is not limited to imagining specific sounds, but can also involve, for example, imagining the sensation of sound, i.e., the act of listening to or hearing something.[26] The same applies to imagining how and by which means sounds are generated. The sonic imagination in literary fiction thus encompasses not just sound as such, but also processes and objects relating to the perception and production of sound. For example, when the narrator of Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* describes a moment "when you can hear time sliding past you, like water running" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 93), the literary sound is theoretically inconceivable (since time does not produce any sonic phenomenon by itself), but nonetheless creates a sonic image because it refers to the process of hearing. This sonic image is also enriched by the simile in the quote, which evokes the sound of flowing water and makes the passage of time more graspable. Literary sounds such as this are the source entities which set the sonic imagination in motion and which themselves form elements of a specific sonic imagination within a text. As the textual counterpart of sonic images, literary sounds are the main material and object of investigation in *Auditory Violence*. Through them, the sonic imagination of postcolonial prose fiction and the political implications of sound culture can be analyzed. A literary sound such as the one cited above cannot be properly understood by a term such as 'representation',

26 While it is an interesting phenomenon in itself, this process of imagination does not refer to what Don Ihde describes as 'auditory imagination' and what "may be called *inner speech*" (2007 [1976]: 210; italics in the original). The sonic imagination as described in this book also needs to be differentiated from what Garrett Stewart calls 'phonotext' and 'phonemic reading' (cf. 1990: 26–30).

which has overly mimetic connotations and does not account for the performativity of the sonic imagination:

> *Im wie auch immer gefassten Repräsentationsbegriff lässt sich ein Wille zum Sichtbar-Machen konstatieren, der auf Korrespondenzfantasien zwischen Bild und Abgebildetem ebenso zurückgeht wie auf den Wunsch nach einer Entzifferung und Enthüllung eines Realen […]. (Knaller 2008: 58–59)*

Literary sounds go beyond re-presenting 'actual' sounds in literature, corresponding to the creative potential of the sonic imagination. Instead of 'representing' sound, the literary terminology used is centered around the process of 'staging', which is also inspired by Iser's theoretical work.

1.2 Literary sound(s)

The notion of 'sound' in literature is in itself ambivalent. Various fields of literary studies, ranging from intermediality research to cognitive criticism, center their investigations around different concepts of sound. Moreover, the sonic imagination could encompass a variety of different phenomena connected to sound in literature. Before an examination of how sounds convey violence in postcolonial prose fiction can be done, it is necessary, therefore, to specify what particular kind of sounds are of relevance for the studies in this book.

Auditory Violence is not devoted to the concept of sound which most people intuitively think of. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following definition of 'sound':

> *The sensation produced in the organs of hearing when the surrounding air is set in vibration in such a way as to affect these; also, that which is or may be heard; the external object of audition, or the property of bodies by which this is produced. Hence also, pressure waves that differ from audible sound only in being of a lower or a higher frequency. ("sound, n.3.")*

In contrast to this definition, the present object of investigation does not necessarily have to be heard. The sounds investigated in the following chapters do not set air in vibration and, for the most part, are limited to being examined on the level of written or printed text. Selecting this kind of sound for the dissertation goes contrary to other related studies: More often than not, when sound is the focus of literary studies, it directly involves auditory perception and sensations, and understandably so, considering the usual definition of 'sound' – popular topics include performed genres of literature and their sound qualities, prosody and phonetic attributes of texts, audiobooks and other multimedial genres of literature. However, even the process of silently reading a text is said to have aural qualities: In *Reading Voices,* Garrett Stewart describes the result of "silent pronunciation" during the process of reading as the 'phonotext', a "silent sounding of a text" (1990: 28). It is clear therefore that claiming to examine 'sounds in literature' is not sufficient when delineating the specific object of investigation.

Preliminarily, it has to be noted that intermediality research – an important field in the examination of the connection between literature and sound – tends to foreground the relationship between literature and other art forms. As a result, extramusical sounds are often underrepresented in intermediality studies. There is, however, useful methodological input to be gained from intermediality studies, even if inter-art relations do not form the main focus of this study. Aural arts in the selected texts are considered as sounds among others, and the connection to other media is not to the fore in the case studies.

This chapter thus clarifies which notion of 'sound' in literature is pertinent for the present study. It also provides an overview of the state of research for similar approaches to sound within literary studies. By examining and discussing a variety of different terminologies that focus on the type of sounds relevant for this study, the chapter aims at outlining the textual elements that are central to the analysis of the corpus and developing a working concept for the definition of literary sounds on a precise methodological basis.

1.2.1 Sound in literary studies

As a point of departure, and in order to provide an initial description of the notion of 'sound' which is essential here, one can refer to Herbert Grabes' article on characters and people in literary texts. Sound as the object of investigation in this dissertation is located at the same level as the elements that Grabes analyzes in his article, and this book's understanding of 'sound' derives by analogy from his idea of literary characters:

> *We gain knowledge of literary characters through literary works—this seems fairly clear. On the other hand, such characters really become figured-forth only in the imagination of the reader or viewer. Since the imagining takes place during the so-called "reception" of a work, the elements or factors necessary for the figuration of a literary character are the text, the imagination of the recipient, and the interaction of the two in the process of reading or listening.*
>
> *[…] We know that for the reader written texts—here, literary texts—are on the level of perception only material constructs of a particular type which allow themselves to be understood by interpreting a certain linguistic structure as meaningful within a given system of signs. To say that there are literary characters "in" a text can mean no more than that there are signs in it signifying human beings, signs that can motivate the imagining of figures existing beyond the text. (Grabes 2004: 222)*

Grabes emphasizes the interrelationship of the text and the imagination of the reader. Similarly, in the case of literary sounds, the text can be said to activate the sonic imagination, as it has been detailed above. Like the characters Grabes writes about, the sounds in question also exist only by virtue of interpreting linguistic signs in a text: As has been noted at the beginning, *Auditory Violence* does not examine sounds that can actually be heard. Rather, it is about sounds that are the result of a transformation similar to what Grabes describes, a process that turns signs or features of a literary text into sounds in the imagination. These sounds are not 'real' in the sense that they do not of themselves have auditory attributes because they ultimately consist of printed letters on a page; they are not 'actual' sounds, but can still

be identified as entities that refer to sound by directing the attention to a particular form of sensory experience. For the analysis of the political significance of sound culture within postcolonial literature, the cognitive process of transforming linguistic signs into imagined sounds is not as important as the textual phenomena associated with the auditory dimension. Due to this focus, the examination of literary sounds in the corpus does not consider the extent to which a text actually succeeds in making one think of a particular sound. Instead, it foregrounds the textual, linguistic and narrative means and strategies that set the process of the sonic imagination in motion.

Literary sound studies, the medialization and mediation of sounds

While the staging of sounds in literary texts has been analyzed in a variety of academic works,[27] a unifying framework or a specific field of research which would bring such studies together has not yet been fully established. Attempts to coin a terminology and introduce subdisciplines dedicated to this topic within literary studies have not prevailed in the past, despite the growth of sound studies in recent years and even despite the assertion of an 'acoustic turn' (cf. Meyer 2008) in academia. 'Literary sound studies' (cf. Mieszkowski 2014) and 'literary acoustics' (cf. Schweighauser 2015) represent two attempts to define such a potential research field. Other publications within literary studies do not mention a separate area of research and use divergent terminologies in the examination of sound.

In her monograph *Resonant Alterities*, Sylvia Mieszkowski focuses on the representation of sound in texts by Vernon Lee, Algernon Blackwood, J.G. Ballard, Don DeLillo and other works of non-realist fiction. Here, she introduces what she calls 'literary sound studies', the object of which is to "analyse sounds and processes of hearing, which have been medialised by (written) words" (Mieszkowski 2014: 24). Mieszkowski's description of literary sound studies corresponds to what Grabes emphasizes in his approach to literary characters. Mieszkowski also focuses on phenomena that are solely present in the text itself and which may rely on the reader's imagination in order to be perceived as sounds. The term she uses in this context to illustrate the relationship between sounds and the linguistic signs is 'medialization', which puts additional emphasis on the transfer of sounds into the medium of literature. By itself, 'medialization' remains fairly unspecific from a methodological point of view. At another point in her publication, Mieszkowski simply uses 'representation (in language)' in order to contrast actual sounds with the type of sounds she investigates (cf. 2014: 9).

27 Often cited and pioneering studies, besides the ones discussed in this chapter, include Picker 2003, B. Smith 1999 and Folkerth 2002.

The 'medialization of sound', one of the concepts which also applies to this book's object of investigation, closely resembles another relevant term used to refer to the same textual phenomena: the 'mediation of sound'. Melba Cuddy-Keane makes use of the concept in a slightly older text which is still often referenced in analyses of sound in literature: She writes about the processes of "mediating sound through a visually oriented discourse" and "mediating sound through language" (Cuddy-Keane 2000: 70). The mediation of sound, therefore, also refers to the process of making aural sensations available by non-aural means, by linguistic signs which rely on visuality rather than on aurality. Very recent publications also make use of the term, e.g. 'sonic mediation' in the subtitle of a volume edited by Julian Murphet, Helen Groth and Penelope Hone entitled *Sounding Modernism* (2017).

Representation, translation and ekphrasis

Cuddy-Keane's articles also mention the other notion found in Mieszkowski's publication, the 'representation of sound', which, albeit also terminologically vague, is another important designation related to the object of investigation in this book. At first, Cuddy-Keane just refers to the "representation of sound in literature" and to the "linguistic representation of sound" (Cuddy-Keane 2000: 70). In a later text, she writes of "narrative representations of sound" (Cuddy-Keane 2005: 382), reflecting the focus on narratological aspects in her analyses.

Among various authors and researchers who apply the concepts put forward by Cuddy-Keane – Mieszkowski being one of them (cf. 2014: 26–28), as well as Groth et al. in their introduction to the above-mentioned volume (2017) – Tom Vandevelde also frequently takes up the notion of the 'representation of sound' in his doctoral thesis on soundscape in modernist literature. In his thesis, Vandevelde expands on various notions which he introduced in his contribution to the edited volume by Murphet, Groth and Hone (cf. Vandevelde 2017) and makes reference, for example, to the "representation of sound in narrative" (Vandevelde 2015: 17). Adding 'in narrative' to the phrase helps Vandevelde to specify, on the one hand, that his analysis focuses on fictional narrative texts, and, on the other hand, to call attention to what kind of sounds are foregrounded in his thesis: Similar to Mieszkowski, Vandevelde proposes to "study the sounds as they are represented and function in narrative texts, rather than the oral or vocal qualities of texts" (2015: 15). He also emphasizes that the characteristic of literary sounds is that they come to the reader "through vision, through words on a page, through the shapes of the letters that form those words" (Vandevelde 2015: 27–28).

Vandevelde introduces yet another notion in the context of staging sounds in literary texts, namely, the process of 'translation': "Like a painting or sculpture trying to evoke movement, or a composer's attempt to conjure up a visual scene, the representation of sound through written language involves a transition, a translation from one medium to another" (Vandevelde 2015: 28). However, Vandevelde seems to refer to the 'translation' of sounds for illustrative purposes rather than for substantiated methodological reasons – he does not use 'translation' after this particular reference in the thesis and it appears to be interchangeable with his usage of 'transition'. Here, the two terms designate the process of sounds being transposed to linguistic signs. Moreover, Vandevelde does not define his understanding of 'medium' in this context and it is not entirely clear whether sound can be considered a medium equivalent to written language or literature. There are other studies that also apply the notion of 'translation' to sound in literature (in the context of music and texts, cf. Schober 2010, Minors 2013) but it seems that the analytical potential of the term still remains relatively unexplored.

Another sporadically utilized term for the transfer of sounds into written language is 'ekphrasis'. Traditionally, 'ekphrasis' implies a transition from visual to verbal representation (cf. Heffernan 2015: 38), and it is usually used more frequently in other areas of literary studies than in the field discussed here. Despite the attempts to broaden the scope of the term, 'ekphrasis' is only rarely encountered in the context of staging sound in fiction – Paul François, for example, tries to operationalize ekphrastic descriptions of sound, 'ekphraseis sonores', by analogy to the prevalent use of the term:

> *De la même façon que, selon la définition des rhétoriciens antiques, l'ekphrasis doit mettre sous les yeux, donner au lecteur l'impression de voir, de la même façon, certains récits de batailles, pourrait-on dire, « mettent dans l'oreille » un événement, donnent l'impression d'entendre. (François 2017)*

As convenient as such an analogous definition of the ekphrasis of sounds may be, the present book does not take up the term because it could potentially be misleading: 'Ekphrasis' is usually associated with intermedial, inter-art relations, and ekphrasis research largely focuses on the connection between works of art (especially within visual arts and literature).[28] The use of 'ekphrasis' could imply that the object of investigation consists of musical sounds, and while these sounds are not excluded as such from consideration within the case studies, they do not form the chief concern of the dissertation.

28 There have been various studies that suggested utilizing 'ekphrasis' in fields other than literary studies, e.g. musicology (cf. Bruhn 2000) and film studies (cf. Pethő 2010), but the application to extramusical literary sounds is still rare.

While the 'translation' and 'ekphrasis' of sounds are impractical as methodological terms, both point to a specific process of staging sound in literature. Both notions imply that the sounds in question are not characterized by auditory attributes and that they operate through another medium or semiotic system – in the present case, (written) language.

Verbalization and textualization of sounds

There have been other studies that chose more descriptive terminologies to characterize literary sounds capable of further outlining the object of investigation of this book, despite not being as concise as the ones discussed so far. First, the 'verbalization' of sound also corresponds to the kind of sounds that are of relevance for the case studies in the main part: Cuddy-Keane writes of "the process of verbalization" and that one "verbalize[s] [sound]" in fiction (2000: 70). The verbalized aspect of literary sounds is a crucial specification of the present object of investigation since the sounds in question are conveyed, among other things, through words.[29]

Second, the 'textualization' of sound, is the term chosen by Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld in the first chapter of their edited *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012a). The handbook does not feature a methodological discussion of sounds in literature, but the editors include a reference to the recent research in literary studies that focuses on sound, citing 'textualization' as a common point of interest for different studies: "Literary studies examine the ways that literary writers textualize sound, hearing, and listening, express the sounds of their times, imbue sound with meaning, and evoke noise" (Pinch/Bijsterveld 2012b: 9). Brigitte Cazelles applies a similar term in her study of early French literature and its soundscapes: She states that the goal of her study is an "exploration of textually-transcribed sounds" (Cazelles 2005: 15). Thus, particular emphasis is placed on the text-component of these sounds, again highlighting that they are read rather than heard. Pinch/Bijsterveld also emphasize that the staging of sound in literature entails a shift of the senses when it comes to perceiving sound: "Textualization of sound is [...] a transformation of one sensory experience into another" (2012b: 9). In fact, both the process of verbalization and that of textualization imply a transfer from audible sounds to readable words that evoke aural sensations. These two more descriptive terms effectively

29 Other studies frequently use similar designations for literary sounds, emphasizing their verbal property. Toni Bernhart, for instance, refers in his study of the auditory dimension in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to "verbalisiertes Hören" (2008: 52), 'verbalized hearing' or 'listening', and also to "explizite Verbalisierung des Hörens" (66), 'explicit verbalization of hearing'. Bernhart focuses on the act of hearing and listening in particular, but in his analysis he also considers the sounds themselves that can be heard in the novel (cf. 2008: 52–53 and 60–62).

correspond to the core of the 'translation' and 'ekphrasis' of sound, namely, the verbal and textual staging of sound.

Literary acoustics and staging sounds

While the presented terms provide an initial understanding of what kind of literary sounds are to be examined in *Auditory Violence*, they do have problematic implications. One of the main concerns is that both 'verbalization' and 'textualization' might suggest the primacy of 'real', 'actual' sounds over literary ones, which would result in an 'originary' status of audible sounds by comparison with verbalized, textualized sounds. 'Verbalization' and 'textualization' seem to imply a process of transferring a sound into a text, reducing literary sounds to a derivative repetition of 'source sounds' and ignoring the specifically literary ways of staging sounds. Philipp Schweighauser argues that there are similar problems with terms such as the 'representation' of sound: According to him, "inquiries into the relationships between literature and the soundscape should not be restricted to issues of representation" because literary texts "go beyond an attempt to represent the soundscapes of their time and place" (Schweighauser 2015: 476). As a consequence, in his definition of 'literary acoustics', he relies on the concept of the 'staging' of sound in literature:

> Literary acoustics is the systematic study of the literary production of sound and noise in two distinct but related senses of 'production': It studies both the staging of acoustic worlds within the confines of literary texts and the communicational, cultural functions that literary texts assume as a result of that staging. *(Schweighauser 2015: 483; italics in the original)*

The idea of 'staging' sound within literary texts corresponds to the performative understanding of the literary sonic imagination and is the most crucial term for the presentation of sound in the chosen texts of the corpus of *Auditory Violence*. Furthermore, 'literary acoustics' remains the only attempt that is dedicated to the research of sound, besides Mieszkowski's suggestion of a 'literary sound studies' as a new field within literary studies. Other academic works mainly focus on innovating and refining the terminological basis for the analysis of literary sounds, whereas Schweighauser and Mieszkowski make suggestions that could unite different approaches to the examination of sounds in literature. Both 'literary sound studies' and 'literary acoustics' can serve to determine the area of research for various investigations that follow the common goal of exploring the connection between literary texts and sounds. However, 'literary acoustics' is slightly misleading because

'acoustics' still evokes the study of physically occurring sound, in contrast to 'literary sound studies' which directly refers to the cultural-studies-oriented field of sound studies.

While 'staging' helps to further differentiate between 'actual' and literary sounds, the term is also methodologically ambivalent, and, in isolation, does not provide further information about the particular characteristics of 'written' sounds, despite seeing increased usage in recent years in the context of writing about sound.[30] With his publications, Schweighauser certainly incentivizes further research on sounds in literature, but it is still difficult to derive a systematic methodological framework from his texts that would facilitate analyses of prose fiction.[31]

Developing a framework for the systematic analysis of literary sounds would undoubtedly require a separate book specifically dedicated to this task. However, it is at least possible to contribute to a terminological and methodological specification of the object of investigation in order to further a preliminary definition of literary sounds which serves as a working concept for the case studies.

1.2.2 Intermediality and the modality of media

Showcasing her approach to literary sound studies, Mieszkowski states that her focus in her monograph is on "'silent' narrative texts" (2014: 9). Like many other researchers, she starts out by showing how her study sets itself apart from other analyses of sound in literature, emphasizing on several occasions that literary sound studies "do not primarily deal with 'actual', audible or measurable sounds" (Mieszkowski 2014: 23). Similarly, Vandevelde affirms that "the sounds we find represented in narrative texts [...] do not, in fact, sound" (2015: 27). Until this point, the chapter has also heavily relied on definitions *ex negativo*: It appears to be easier to point out what kind of sounds are not being examined than to accurately describe what constitutes literary sounds in the sense of this book. Is it possible, then, to outline the area of investigation in more specific terms? In other words, how can 'silent' sounds in literary texts be characterized methodologically? The response to

30 Cf., e.g., an edited volume by Karin Bijsterveld, *Soundscapes of the Urban Past* (2013), which refers to the term in its subtitle (*Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*) and also in various instances in its articles, for example, when some of the authors write about the "staging of sound in text" (Bijsterveld et al. 2013: 34).

31 In an earlier publication by Schweighauser, where he initially introduced the concept of 'literary acoustics', 'noise' is the guiding notion for his investigation of sound in literature: "[L]iterary texts from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century continue to be sites of both the cultural production and the representation of noise, and it is this convergence that a history of literary acoustics addresses" (Schweighauser 2006: 19). As one can see, he does not yet dismiss the term 'representation' as he does in the cited handbook article.

this question also concretizes previously introduced terms such as the 'medialization', 'textualization', 'verbalization' or the 'staging' of sound in literature.

Referring back to what Grabes calls the 'figuring-forth' of literary characters (cf. 2004: 222), it can likewise be asked how literary sounds become figured-forth in texts. It goes without saying that the reference to other entities and phenomena that are not directly present in physical or material form in a text is one of language's fundamental properties, its symbolic nature, that is reliant on linguistic signs. However, how can the connection between textual, linguistic signs and sounds – sonic phenomena and aural sensations – be established in the first place? Intermediality studies is an excellent basis for addressing these fundamental issues because the research in this field often explores the relationship between literature and media relying on other sensory perceptions and sensations than visuality. The following discussion temporarily sets aside the fact that sound is, in fact, not a medium in a narrow sense, as literature is. Even in those cases when the terminology deals strictly with the relation between different art forms such as literature and music, equivalent terms can be introduced or existing ones reformulated in a way that fits the object of investigation.

Intermedial reference and covert intermediality

Literary sounds as they have been presented here so far, on the most basic level, can be categorized, adhering to Werner Wolf's terminology, as one of two forms of intracompositional intermediality, namely, intermedial reference:

> *As opposed to plurimediality, the second form of intracompositional intermediality,* intermedial reference*, does not give the impression of the medial hybridity of the signifiers nor of the heterogeneity of the semiotic systems used but rather of medial and semiotic homogeneity. The reason for this is that intermedial reference exclusively operates on the basis of the signifiers of the dominant referring 'source' medium. (Wolf 2015: 464; italics in the original)*

Wolf's definition of intermedial reference can be directly applied to the kind of literary sounds this chapter has described up until now: The imagined sounds within the texts are not based on semiotic heterogeneity, that is, they are contained in the printed text without necessarily attaining acoustic properties of their own that would make it possible to physically hear them. Literary sounds suggest medial and semiotic homogeneity because they are conveyed through the linguistic signifiers of the literary text, which is the dominant 'source' medium referring to aural sensations. The "target medium", Wolf writes, "is actually only 'present' as a concept rather than 'physically'" (2015: 464), which corresponds to an understanding of lit-

erary sounds as presented by analogy to Grabes' description of characters not actually being 'in' a text, but rather that "there are signs in it signifying human beings, signs that can motivate the imagining of figures existing beyond the text" (Grabes 2004: 222). Literary sounds, likewise, are not physically, or acoustically, 'in' the text, they stay 'silent', initially being perceived visually through the text and becoming figured-forth through the sonic imagination.

Intermedial reference can also be described as establishing what Wolf earlier calls 'covert intermediality':

> *As opposed to direct or overt intermediality,* ***'covert'*** *or* ***indirect intermediality*** *can be defined as the participation of (at least) two conventionally distinct media in the signification of an artefact in which, however, only* ***one*** *of the media appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers and hence may be called the dominant medium, while another one (the non-dominant medium) is indirectly present 'within' the first medium. Consequently, this other medium is not present in the form of its characteristic signifiers but, at least minimally, as an idea, as a signified. (Wolf 1999: 41; bold in the original)*

This definition also helps to gain a better understanding of what kind of literary sounds *Auditory Violence* is concerned with: It focuses on cases where a literary text operates through its 'typical' signifiers – linguistic signs – to establish a connection to the aural dimension. Sounds are merely signified in these instances, they do not participate in the signification of the text through their usual auditory qualities.[32]

Modalities of media and intermodal reference

In light of the fact that sound cannot be considered a medium in the same sense as literature, the applicability of the above terms and concepts from intermediality studies is limited if they are not further specified in accordance with the present object of investigation. Lars Elleström's examination of the sensorial and perceptual preconditions of intermediality in the introductory chapter to his edited volume *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (2010a) offers an additional typology that helps to clarify on what basis there can be a reference to sounds by linguistic and visual means.[33]

32 In the terms used by Irina Rajewsky, who also bases her differentiation on Wolf (cf. Rajewsky 2002: 5), literature appears in these particular instances as the "kontaktnehmendes Medium" (Rajewsky 2002: 200), as the medium that establishes contact to another, without the other medium necessarily being materially present.

33 I would like to thank Beate Schirrmacher for directing my attention to Elleström's article. Schirrmacher's monograph about music in Günter Grass' prose fiction includes a thorough discussion of Wolf's and Elleström's fundamental concepts within intermediality studies, cf. Schirrmacher 2012: 22–39.

Elleström maintains that all media can be classified in respect to four modalities, the first two of which are especially relevant in the current context: Material modality and sensorial modality. Elleström's modality categories specify how a medium addresses its audience, and the material and sensorial properties are two of the basic aspects determining how media are perceived. The material modality can be defined "as the latent corporeal interface of the medium" (Elleström 2010b: 17), whereas the sensorial modality refers to the "physical and mental acts of perceiving the present interface of the medium through the sense faculties" (17). Elleström also identifies corresponding 'modes' for each modality: Modes are the "variants of the modalities", the "*latent* properties of media" (Elleström 2010b: 16; italics in the original). The two mentioned modalities are particularly useful in connection with this book's object of investigation because they can help to describe the intersection of sound and literary texts in more precise terms.

In regard to the sensorial modality, Elleström speaks of five main modes, which correspond to each of the five senses (cf. 2010b: 17). Hearing sounds and reading texts thus make use of different modes within the sensorial modality. For the material modality, Elleström makes out three different main modes: "[H]uman bodies, other materiality of a demarcated character [...] and material manifestations of a less clearly demarcated character" (2010b: 17). According to Elleström, the latter mode includes sound waves, while flat surfaces – as in the case of literary texts – belong to the second mode (cf. 2010b: 17).

While acoustic phenomena and aural sensations are not understood as media in the context of intermediality studies, the auditory dimension is very much a constitutive aspect of modal properties in Elleström's sense. Taking into account the discussed intricacies of, and differences between modal qualities, the terminology from intermediality research can be reformulated in order to identify the 'silent' reference to sound in literary texts in more adequate terms: Instead of intermedial reference and covert intermediality, this book deals rather with 'intermodal' reference and covert 'intermodality'. Elleström himself even proposes new terms that resemble the two suggested here: 'intermodal relations in media' (2010b: 37). He intends 'intermodal relations in media' to be used in connection with intermediality, but the adjective 'intermodal' also fits the properties of texts referring to sounds.

Naturally, literature as a whole cannot be limited to a single mode within each of the four modalities proposed by Elleström,[34] and, due to the symbolic nature of

34 Cf. Elleström 2010b: "Multimodality in a more qualified sense must [...] mean that a medium includes many modes within the same modality. However, all media are at least slightly multimodal as far as the spatiotemporal and the semiotic modalities are concerned, whereas some media are multimodal on the level of all four modalities. It can thus be argued that multimodality is very much

linguistic signs, literary texts always establish some form of (imagined) connection with phenomena that are modally different from the text itself. However, if the methodological framework focuses strictly on sound references in literary texts, it is possible to contrast the literary references themselves with the sounds that are imagined while reading. The goal is, therefore, not to establish a normative, comprehensive concept of literature that determines its various modes, but to delineate references to sound as precisely as possible by illustrating the modal difference between written texts and sound.

By analogy to Wolf's definitions, the monomodal reference to sound in literary texts can be termed 'intermodal reference', or, in other words: Intermodal references to sound do not give the impression of the modal hybridity of the signifiers, nor of the heterogeneity of the material or sensorial modality, but rather of modal homogeneity.

In providing the basis for the definition of literary sounds, it is important to take into account the two different modalities cited above: First, the material modality of texts and sounds differs in that the materiality of written, printed texts is of a demarcated character (a flat surface), whereas the materiality of sound waves is of a less clearly demarcated character. Second, the sensorial modality of texts and sounds is different because texts are initially perceived visually (at least within the approach of this book), while sounds are perceived auditorily. Thus, texts and sounds do not make use of the same modes of sensory perception.

Elleström's systematic analysis of the modalities of media and the different modal configurations in intermedial relations can thus be used to establish criteria that serve to identify the textual phenomena to be examined in this dissertation. By combining his terminology with Wolf's conceptualization of intracompositional intermediality, *Auditory Violence* makes the model of the modalities of media applicable for the analysis of literary sounds.

1.2.3 Defining literary sounds

The terminological modifications of the concepts from intermediality studies suggested above also make it possible to provide a methodological basis for the other terms currently used in similar research, as they were discussed for the current state of research.

about really observing and emphasizing the very common and perfectly normal multimodal characteristics of media" (37).

Modes of literary sounds

Returning to the term of 'staging', which is used by Schweighauser, among others, staging sounds in literature can thus be also described with reference to a text's modal properties. In his usage of the term, Schweighauser emphasizes that in an act of incorporating literary sounds in texts, "something new is brought to the fore" (2015: 484). The creation of literary sounds in this instance is accomplished solely by textual means. Looking further into the process of 'staging' in the work of Iser, whose theoretical considerations serve as the basis for Schweighauser's conception, it corresponds to the representation of something that is actually not there: "[R]epresentation is first and foremost an act of performance, bringing forth in the mode of staging something that in itself is not given" (Iser 1993: 248). Iser's remark about the term 'staging' can be also applied to the description of intermodal references: Neither the mode of un-demarcated materiality (in this case, sound waves) nor the sensorial mode of hearing is actually active in the reference to sound in the text; rather, sounds are evoked through the typical modes of printed words on a page: The mode of the demarcated materiality of the flat surface and the sensorial mode of seeing stage other modes within the material and sensorial modality, without actually crossing the modal borders of materiality or the senses when presenting sounds in a text.

The 'textualization' of sounds also becomes more accurate if it is considered from the perspective of the modality of media. The term itself already indicates that the modes of literary texts are dominant in the reference to sound as opposed to modes that are more associated with sound as such.

Similarly, it is informative to think of the 'medialization' and 'mediation' of sounds in literature as the process of substituting the material and sensorial modes that are typical for actual sounds with the modal properties of textual representation.[35] 'Verbalization', on the other hand, will not be used in the case studies because the present object of investigation is broader than this particular term might suggest: Intermodal references to sound do not need to be verbal in the sense that the reference has to be established through words in the text – there are other textual devices that can establish the reference to the auditory dimension, such as, but not limited to, certain forms of punctuations. Furthermore, in order to define the 'verbalization' of sound more closely, it would be necessary to include Elleström's fourth category of modality, semiotic modality (cf. 2010b: 21–23). For the chosen

35 Elleström himself uses the term 'mediation' in certain cases of intermedial relations, but he suggests using 'transformation' in those cases "when the *mediation* brings about more or less radical changes" (2010b: 33). One of his examples for such a radical mediation is the transformation of a photograph into visual text, or ekphrasis (cf. 2010b: 34).

object of investigation, it suffices to consider the material and sensorial modality, and the verbal reference to sounds also falls under the suggested concept of 'intermodal reference'.

A tentative definition of literary sounds

With the terminological refinements of this chapter in mind, it is possible to establish a preliminary definition and working concept of literary sounds. The case studies use the term 'literary sounds' in analogy to Grabes' use of 'literary characters', in the sense of linguistic signs being interpreted as phenomena that are not materially or physically present in the text itself. The concept of literary sounds can be made more comprehensible through the term 'intermodal reference', a combination of Wolf's and Elleström's terminologies that indicates monomodal references in literary texts to sound, both on a material and a sensorial level. Thus, sounds are 'represented' in literary texts in the sense in which Iser uses the notion and in the way Schweighauser applies it to 'literary acoustics': Sounds are staged through literary means to create something new – literary sounds are not purely references to 'actual', existing sounds, but rather references to the auditory dimension, references that make one imagine aural sensations, without the need to evoke certain sounds exactly as they are perceived outside of literature. Literary sounds are medialized, mediated or textualized sounds that replace the usual modal properties of sounds with those of texts, containing them in the medium of visually perceived literature. The seeming contradiction inherent in the term 'literary sound' itself reveals the scope of the research objective: 'Literary', in the sense of 'written', and 'sound' point to the contrast between the modal properties of the text and of sonic phenomena, a contrast which becomes manifest in the process of expressing the aural by visual means.

For illustrative purposes, take the following example from one of Vladimir Nabokov's earlier works written in Russian (*Приглашение на казнь* [*Priglashenie na kazn'*]; *Invitation to a Beheading* in the English translation), a passage which is sonorous in every regard: "Там, тамошние холмы, томление прудов, тамтатам далекого оркестра" [Tam, tamoshnie kholmy, tomlenie prudov, tamtamtam dalekogo orkestra] (Nabokov 1990 [1935–1936]: 400). The English translation of the sentence reads as follows: "That green turfy tamarack park, the languor of its ponds, the tum-tum-tum of a distant band" (Nabokov 2010 [1935–1936]: 7). Through this sentence, it is possible to concisely demonstrate what kind of sounds are part of this book's object of investigation, according to the definition of literary sounds given above.

There is a variety of textual phenomena that are related to sound, but not all of which are relevant to the same extent for the case studies in the main part of this book. The original passage in Russian is not just characterized by the alliteration of the letter 't', but also by the repetition of the syllable "tam", which generates a consonance throughout the sentence, giving it a special phonetic quality. "Tam" is repeated several times, through the following words and phrases: "Tam" ("there"), "tamoshnie kholmy" ("the hills there"), "tomlenie prudov" ("the languor of the ponds"; the syllable "tom" is pronounced "tam" because it is unstressed), and finally "tamtamtam" ("the tum-tum-tum"), an onomatopoetic description of the distant band. The sentence undeniably possesses various distinctive sound qualities, but only the reference to the band at the end fits the definition of a literary sound as presented in this chapter: The sound produced by the band is presented through an onomatopoetic expression, i.e., a textual device which is initially perceived visually, which also substitutes a descriptive account of the sound of the band in this case. The other textual devices mentioned in this passage do not stage specific aural sensations within the novel: The alliteration, for example, does not refer to a sonic phenomenon which has different modal attributes than the text itself and is thus not an intermodal reference.

However, the other literary devices used in this passage would be of equal importance in the examination of literary sounds because, due to how the text is structured, they are still connected to how sound is staged in a passage such as this. Consequently, it would be important to address the alliteration and the repetition of the syllable "tam" in this case and how they relate to the staging of the sound of the band: The alliteration is continued through the onomatopoetic presentation of the band, and the overall alliteration of the passage thus reinforces the sound qualities that are staged towards the end of the sentence.

The corpus of the case studies is filled with literary sounds such as the above; these include sonic phenomena produced by trains and other vehicles, the noise of weapons, music created by instruments or broadcasted through loudspeakers, the cries of animals, the voice of human beings and its diverse usages (speaking, screaming, singing, to name a few examples), and many others.

The emphasis on (intermodal) 'reference' in the definition of literary sounds, however, needs to be adjusted to a certain extent. By itself, the term could imply that literary sounds merely 'refer' to other, 'real' sounds. If one takes the fundamental aspect of performativity into account, the elements of literary texts cannot be simply explained through how they establish references to phenomena outside of literature. Knaller notes the following in regard to referentiality:

> *Im Gegensatz zu Repräsentation stellt der* performative Modus *sich dem Beobachtungsparadox und der Tatsache, dass jede Form eine Form in einem Medium sowie Ergebnis eines Handelns (und nicht nur von Referenz) ist. In pragmatischen Situationen bedeutet das eine Koinzidenz von Handeln und Beschreibung des Aktes, in Kunst und Literatur die Koinzidenz von semiotischem Prozess und reflexiver Referenz auf diesen Prozess als Form. […] Referentialität wird damit nicht obsolet, Realität kein amorphes Material zur freien Disposition, sondern die Gleichzeitigkeit von Beschreibung und Konstitution des Beschriebenen ergänzt logisch-semantische Wahrheitsbedingungen durch Handlungsbedingungen […]. (Knaller 2015: 61–62)*

These remarks about referentiality and performativity can also be applied to literary sounds: Literary sounds do establish a reference to sound – i.e., they can be recognized as closely related to sound rather than other phenomena with which one is familiar outside of literature – but they are much more than simple descriptions of sound. In the process of writing about sound something new is created, even if it is still unmistakably connected to sound culture at large.[36]

In the context of intermediality studies, the issues concerning referentiality and performativity become all the more virulent. Uwe Wirth also argues in regard to intermediality that performativity needs to be considered as a central moment: "Jede mediale Verkörperung ist von spezifischen Inszenierungsbedingungen abhängig. Die Wechselwirkung zwischen den Verkörperungsbedingungen und den Inszenierungsbedingungen etabliert das, was man als performative Dimension bezeichnen könnte" (Wirth 2007: 255).[37] Wirth's observation also holds true for intermodal references such as literary sounds: Even if the connection to sound is established while reading a text, literary sounds develop a dynamic of their own that cannot be satisfyingly explained by calling them 'references' to sound, as if 'real' sound is the originary phenomenon which is simply mimicked in literature. Literary sounds are produced according to their own 'Inszenierungsbedingungen' (i.e., the literary techniques and devices of staging sound), and these need to be taken into account when analyzing literary sounds and their significance within a text, which also includes the analysis of how literary sounds relate to other textual elements and how they are part of the greater structure of a text.[38]

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36 For an approach which tries to further consolidate the performative and referential properties of literary texts, cf. Bucher 2004: 16–17.

37 By 'Verkörperungsbedingungen', Wirth means the specific medial conditions of a work of art: "[E]ine an der Medientheorie geschulte Poetologie [betont], dass jede mediale Verkörperung ihren je eigenen ästhetischen Wert besitzt" (2007: 255).

38 Sybille Krämer stresses a point similar to Wirth's in regard to language and performativity when she writes that "[s]o wie es keine Sprache ohne Medien gibt, so gibt es auch keine sprachliche Form, die nicht immer Form-in-einem-Medium ist" (2002: 332). The linguistic basis of literary texts does not exist in a vacuum and the way sound is presented linguistically, within the literary medium, has a

Sound and sound culture outside of literature inevitably play a role in every text when sound is its central subject, but literary sounds are not directly derived from them. Once again, Iser's work can help to illuminate this particular aspect:

> *Wenn das Textspiel als Transformation seiner Referenzwelten verläuft, dann entsteht etwas, das aus diesen nicht ableitbar ist. Folglich kann keine der Referenzwelten Gegenstand der Darstellung sein, so daß sich der Text nicht in der Repräsentation vorgegebener Gegenständlichkeit erschöpft. Das heißt zunächst: es gibt keine Repräsentation ohne Performanz, die in jedem Fall anderen Ursprungs ist als das zu Repräsentierende. (Iser 1991: 481)*

This book adopts Iser's understanding of performance, or performativity, in the sense that literary sounds surpass the mere 'representation' of sound, even if they are defined as intermodal references. Despite their referentiality, literary sounds possess a surplus of meaning which is created performatively – this process is also what enables the fusion of sound and violence in literary texts: They can make certain sounds which may not usually be considered violent appear as violent. Even the absence of sound can be a source of violence in literary texts, as can be seen in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*, where the protagonist's silence develops a shattering intensity and has such a deafening effect on others that it becomes similar to the loudest sounds within the novel (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 140). This 'sonorous silence' is just one example of the literary sounds that are unlike any sonic experience outside of literature.

It is for the theoretical reasons mentioned above that terminologies such as Wirth's usage of 'Inszenierung' in the context of intermediality can help to assess the performative nature of literary sounds. 'Inszenieren', or 'staging', can refer to adapting a play for the theater, but it can also accentuate the performativity of literature when used as Iser uses it. He reformulates the idea of literary representation based on the difference which is created in 'aesthetic semblance' (Iser 1993: 245). Iser moves away from an understanding of representation oriented towards originarity, stating that "literature is not an explanation of origins; it is a staging of the constant deferment of explanation, which makes the origin explode into its multifariousness" (1993: 245). This multifariousness, which runs counter to the notion of an 'origin', leads Iser to reconsider representation:

> *Representation arises out of and thus entails the removal of difference, whose irremovability transforms representation into a performative act of staging something.*

fundamental impact on its meaning: "Das Medium ist zwar nicht die Botschaft, doch die Botschaft ist die Spur des Mediums" (Krämer 2002: 332).

> *This staging is almost infinitely variable, for in contrast to explanations, no single staging could ever remove difference and so explain origin. (Iser 1993: 245)*

Iser uses the term 'staging' to illustrate how literary expression works and how texts establish meaning. Through this term, Iser is able to highlight that "representation is first and foremost an act of performance, bringing forth in the mode of staging something that in itself is not given" (1993: 248). It is for the same reason that a researcher like Schweighauser prefers this terminology in his studies of 'literary acoustics': Also basing his reasoning on Iser, he favors the German term 'Darstellung' over 'Repräsentation', precisely because it "does not suggest that literary texts re-present already existing entities" (Schweighauser 2015: 484). The performative surplus that is highlighted through the 'staging' of sound is also manifest in Coetzee's other novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, in which the narrator gives an account of a sound – the screams of tortured prisoners – that he claims not to hear (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The sound thus appears to be there and not there at the same time, oscillating between presence and absence, and highlighting the narrator's willful ignorance in the face of injustice.

In relation to sound, the performative quality of literary texts is precisely what defines the 'sonic imagination'. Applying the theoretical considerations above, it can be reiterated that the sonic imagination 'stages' sound rather than 'representing' it. The idea of the literary sonic imagination thus follows Iser's theory of representation and moves away from a 'mimetic' terminology in favor of an understanding of literary expression based on performativity. In this sense, the definition of literary sounds as 'intermodal references' belies their performative qualities – speaking with Iser, there is always an irremovable difference between literary sounds and sound outside of literature, thereby interrupting their referentiality. 'Reference' is strictly limited to the gap between the different modalities of text and sound, as described above; and even then, it is more an operationalized concept than an ontological determination to distinguish this particular form of sound in literature – which is very much interwoven with the sonic imagination and different knowledges about sound – from other sound concepts within literary studies. Thus, the definition of literary sounds as intermodal references serves pragmatic purposes in order to be able to precisely determine the object of investigation and for it to be applicable to the chosen texts of the corpus. This approach makes it possible to delineate the material which is examined in the case studies, but it should neither be understood as an all-encompassing definition of sound in literature, nor should the use of the term 'intermodal reference' imply that referentiality takes precedence over performativity in the text analyses. This is also a deciding factor in how literary sounds convey violence: Sounds in texts do not just 'refer' to violent sounds;

rather, the violence of literary sounds is actively generated through how they are presented – for example, depending on which textual and narrative strategies and devices are used to stage sound. The performative dimension of literary sounds makes it possible to convey violence through them: It is the intricate web of the literary staging process that provides these literary sounds with a violent property. One of the methodological tools to study this process consists of a semiotic analysis of the literary sounds and their connection to violence.

A semiotic approach to violence and sounds in literature

The approach described here is also faced with the task of finding an appropriate means to determine the performative relationship between sounds and violence in literature. Since there are many different forms of violence, it would not be enough to simply assert that literary sounds can convey violence. Such a reasoning would be too vague because the plural understanding of violence includes interpersonal (i.e., physical and psychological), structural and epistemic violence, which need to be specified case by case. Additionally, the manifold textual and narrative means used to stage literary sounds contribute to which form of violence is ultimately perceived. In order to be able to more precisely describe the relationship between literary sounds and violence in the chosen texts, the case studies also apply a semiotic approach within the analyses: By conceiving of literary sounds as signs in each text, it is possible to determine in what way they relate to violence – in this sense, literary sounds are analyzed as signs, insofar as they signify violence in the texts. This signification process still needs to be considered as performative: While there are instances in which sound possesses violent attributes outside of literature, a text creates a specific semiotic connection between sound and violence, and this connection cannot exist independently of how literary sounds are staged. For example, in the novels by Aitmatov and Coetzee, the literary sounds of themselves do not seem relate to violence, but taken together with the greater political structures in the texts, they illustrate a power dynamic between unequal forces and make structural violence apparent. By examining literary sounds through close-readings, the case studies can distinguish between different ways that literary sounds signify violence and which of the various forms of violence is signified. It also makes a difference, for instance, whether a homodiegetic narrator uses internal focalization to make an intermodal reference to sound, or whether a heterodiegetic narrator is used in combination with zero focalization. In the case studies, such differences play a role in not only determining the kind of literary sounds in a text, but also how the semiotic relation to violence is constituted. The semiotic configuration is thus analyzed with respect to the following elements: The intermodal reference to sound and how it is

established through textual and narrative means (forming the 'literary sound'), the form of violence which is evoked in the text, and the semiotic relation between these two poles.

The semiotic approach in the analyses takes its cues from different theories and disciplines. While literary studies are undoubtedly at the center of *Auditory Violence*, the semiotic analysis is inspired by cultural semiotics and by strands of sound studies which choose semiotics as a framework to analyze auditory phenomena. Such a semiotic approach is compatible with a performative understanding of literature, especially when it is blended with the research perspective of cultural studies. Roland Posner illustrates cultural semiotics through the following example:

> *Einem Detektiv wird eine Folge von Fußabdrücken im Schnee als signifikatives Zeichen für Geschlecht, Gewicht, Bewegungsgeschwindigkeit und Stimmungslage des Individuums dienen, das sie hinterlassen hat, und damit als Text, den er entsprechend seinen Regeln lesen kann; andere Personen dagegen sehen in den gleichen Formen nur zufällige Bodenunebenheiten und sind oft gar nicht in der Lage, sie als Fußabdrücke zu identifizieren.*
>
> *Diese Beispiele zeigen, daß Fußspuren Anlaß für einen Signifikationsprozeß sein können, selbst wenn dies gar nicht beabsichtigt ist. (Posner 1991: 46–47)*

If Posner's quote is applied to the context of this book, the following can be said: It takes a critical examination of the connection between literary sounds and violence to determine their semiotic relation – it is not about 'uncovering' a hidden meaning of the literary sounds. The semiotic relation is also a product of the examination itself, and the sign-character of literary sounds is thus contingent on a critical perspective. For media such as literature, Krämer argues that there is always a surplus that resists (semiotic) predetermination:

> *In den stummen Prozeduren, der »lautlosen« Materialität der Medien, in denen unsere Sprachlichkeit sich vollzieht, ist eine Eigensinnigkeit am Werk, die nicht nach dem Modell vereinbarter Zeichenbedeutungen, sondern nach dem Vorbild der unbeabsichtigten Spur zu denken ist. (Krämer 2002: 332)*

The staging of sound in a medium that fundamentally relies on language introduces a performative momentum, and the property of specific literary sounds as signs for violence is generated in the process of the text's intermodal reference to sound. The semiotic analysis aims to show how language in its different literary forms is involved in this kind of signification.

While this book does not develop a comprehensive semiotics of literary sounds, it does consider stimulating impulses from sound semiotics to account for the far-reaching political and social implications of sonic phenomena. In this, the study

follows various calls from sound studies to reevaluate the dimension of sound within culture, with a focus on how literature reflects and expands the significance of sound. Not all literary sounds can be considered as signs for violence in prose fiction, but since violence has been an important political connotation of sound since the 20th century, and particularly so in postcolonial literature, the semiotic approach provides the framework for an in-depth analysis of the literary sonic imagination and its political aspects. The different forms of violence that literary sounds can convey are defined and presented in the first chapter of the following section on the theory and methodology of *Auditory Violence*, whereas the various literary aspects of how sound is staged in texts are discussed in the second chapter – this includes narratological parameters as well as stylistic and other features that are relevant for the text analysis in the case studies, along with the theoretical basis for the semiotic examination.

2 Violence and sound in literature: A theoretical outline

2.1. Violence as a political category

The political significance of sounds in literature encompasses a wide variety of diffuse processes and phenomena. In postcolonial prose fiction, literary sounds are as varied as the political effects and legacies of colonial projects, involving different manifestations of domination. Sounds in postcolonial fiction can be connected to the direct use of force, the infliction of physical harm, and they can highlight the psychological consequences of oppression; sounds can also be staged to attract attention to systemic forms of inequality and the structural conditions of marginalization and discrimination. Sound thus needs to be analyzed alongside the establishment and maintenance of power structures in the texts that have been chosen for analysis. It is crucial to develop an appropriate terminological basis that makes it possible to address these manifold elements that make up and sustain political order.

'Violence' serves as the primary analytical category to illustrate the political implications of literary sounds in the chosen works of postcolonial fiction. It is applied in the case studies as a heuristic term to grasp the political impact and connotations that sound has in the texts. The advantage of applying the concept of violence to the examination of literary sounds lies in the fact that it can be used to describe very different political phenomena and still maintain terminological uniformity. While views on what constitutes violence can greatly differ and typically involve extensive theoretical considerations, the term is operationalized in this book by referring to multiple conceptions of violence in order to account for the many ways that sound and politics are entwined in postcolonial texts. *Auditory Violence* thus adopts a broad understanding of violence which distinguishes between different forms of violence (or, as Peter Imbusch writes, between different "Anwendungsebenen", 2002: 37). A plural understanding of violence is also of particular relevance in the context of literary studies: "Dass sich an Literatur sinnvoll die Frage stellen lässt, welche Phänomene überhaupt als ›Gewalt‹ erkennbar werden, ist Ausdruck für den grundsätzlich eigenständigen diskursiven Konstruktionscharakter von ›Gewalt‹" (Geier 2013: 263). The analysis of 'violence' in literary texts in general is thus inevitably tied to a discussion of different concepts of violence. Such a constructivist view of violence also entails an understanding of violence which can no longer be limited to its physical manifestation, with which, intuitively, most people associate the term.

At the same time, there is a risk that the extended application of the term 'violence' becomes too vague or imprecise. For this reason, this chapter will present

the different concepts of violence that are relevant for the case studies, thus developing an applicable terminology and showing a range of political phenomena that pertain to colonial and postcolonial contexts and that can be evoked through sounds in literature. This book maintains that which phenomena are perceived as violent is not an arbitrary matter, which thus makes it necessary to establish working definitions of different forms of violence and to outline what constitutes violent practices, events and conditions. However, the forms of violence described here rarely occur in isolation from each other. Political order becomes manifest through the concurrent existence of these forms of violence which, in most cases, rely on and complement each other.

While violence is the main analytical category for the semiotic examination of the political significance of literary sounds, the case studies also refer to the other concepts and categories in order to show the far-reaching extent of the violence that is associated with sound in the texts. This chapter will briefly discuss the differentiation between violence and power, because power is one such important political concept, and violence can rarely be analyzed independently of it. The chapter will close by situating violence as an object of research within literary studies and identifying the theoretical and methodological implications that come with it and that guide the analyses in the main part of *Auditory Violence*.

2.1.1 Forms and concepts of violence

An initial distinction between different forms of violence can be derived from Slavoj Žižek's book *Violence*. Žižek distinguishes between what he calls 'subjective' and 'objective violence': For him, subjective violence is "directly visible" and "performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (2009b: 1). As examples, he lists "acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict" (Žižek 2009b: 1). This is the kind of violence that one generally is most familiar with when the word itself is used: Usually, it involves an act of physical violence and its effects are easily noticeable (for example, in the form of bodily injuries). Objective violence, on the other hand, is less obvious. It is the "background which generates [...] outbursts" (Žižek 2009b: 1) of subjective violence and it is "invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent" (Žižek 2009b: 2). It can be said, then, that objective violence is inherent to most, if not all, social structures and it forms the very basis of political order. Žižek also names 'systemic violence' as a subtype of objective violence and describes it as "the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (Žižek 2009b: 1). Thus, to determine objective violence requires a critical examination of

the fundamental political conditions that structure everyday life, as opposed to single occurrences of violent actions.

Each of the following forms and concepts of violence falls into one of Žižek's categories, but they elaborate more precise criteria which can help to determine what constitutes a violent action or situation.

Interpersonal violence

Interpersonal violence is the most common phenomenon associated with the term 'violence'. The term is taken from Vorobej (cf. 2016: 1–62), who applies it not just to physical violence, but also to psychological violence (cf. 39–47), and it refers to violence which occurs directly between people. This particular form of violence is also the subject of most of the conventional definitions of violence in dictionaries; the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* states the following as one of the definitions: "The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc." ("violence, n."). *Merriam-Webster* retains the reference to the effects and aims of violence in its definition: "[T]he use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy" ("violence"). In both cases, physical force is central to the understanding of violence and the consequences are clearly visible in the form of (physical) injuries and damages. Another, more general term for the effect of violence can be found in 'harm', which is also the first fundamental dimension of violence in Vorobej's HAVIN criteria (forming one of five core issues of violence, together with agency, victimhood, instrumentality and normativity, cf. 2016: 4).

It has long been accepted that harm is not limited to physical processes and that it can also be caused psychologically. Imbusch writes that psychological violence "stützt sich auf Worte, Gebärden, Bilder, Symbole oder den Entzug von Lebensnotwendigkeiten, um Menschen durch Einschüchterung und Angst oder spezifische 'Belohnungen' gefügig zu machen" (Imbusch 2002: 38). In this case, a perpetrator makes use of violence without even physically touching their victim, instead relying on verbal abuse and other destructive means that do not leave (immediate) traces on the body. Psychological violence can thus be used to threaten, manipulate or humiliate others, and it does not rely on bodily injuries. However, psychological harm can also be inflicted through physical means (cf. Vorobej 2016: 40) and lead to long-lasting traumata for victims of violence.

Physical and psychological violence are subsumed under the concept of interpersonal violence to denote manifest uses of force which inflict harm and which involve discernible roles of perpetrator and victim. Such a traditional understanding of violence, which adheres to models of direct cause and effect (cf. Imbusch

2002: 37), needs to be supplemented with other concepts of violence which also consider more fundamental forms of how harm can be caused and how suffering is generated on a wider scale.

Structural violence

Besides interpersonal violence, there is a form of violence which is less easy to pinpoint because its source cannot always be traced back to individual persons, and its effects are of a broader nature when compared to interpersonal violence. Such so-called 'structural violence' is inherent in the very basis of a social order and refers to a general political configuration of power structures rather than a specific violent action. Johan Galtung, who introduced the notion in the 1960s, describes structural violence as follows:

> *There may not be any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances. […] Violence with a clear subject-object-relation is manifest because it is visible as action. […] Violence without this relation is structural, built into structure. (Galtung 1969: 171)*

In contrast to interpersonal violence, the primary characteristic of structural violence is not physical or psychological harm but rather inequality, which Galtung also calls "the general formula behind structural violence […], above all in the distribution of power" (1969: 175). While physical and psychological violence can be its consequences, structural violence as such addresses the political circumstances which contribute to the experience of harm and suffering. The concept emphasizes the systemic existence of violence instead of the exertion of violence by individual agents; for this reason, Galtung also calls it 'indirect violence', as opposed to 'direct violence', which corresponds to the above description of interpersonal violence (cf. 1969: 170). The maintenance of structural violence still relies on human actions, and despite it being an abstract concept, its effects are felt in a very concrete way by the people affected. However, the political phenomena that make up structural violence are too diffuse to be considered in isolation from each other – they form hierarchical, repressive structures that transcend single actions. In the same spirit, an unequal distribution of power between two individuals does not automatically represent structural violence – it can merely be symptomatic of a systemic form of violence, but not all hierarchical structures are violent in the sense of Galtung's concept. This is underlined by the fact that Galtung uses 'social injustice' synonymously with structural violence (cf. 1969: 171), thus the concept requires the identification of the socially unjust conditions prior to the examination and evaluation of the interaction between individuals.

The notion of structural violence is controversial, not just because of the evident extension of the idea of violence, but also due to Galtung's theoretical basis, which focuses on 'actual' and 'potential realizations' of human beings (cf. 1969: 168–172).[39] However, it is often agreed that the concept has heuristic value for describing and examining forms of oppression and exploitation: "[N]icht in erster Linie weil soziale Verhältnisse skandalisiert wurden, indem man sie als Gewaltverhältnisse bezeichnete, sondern weil sie mit einem Begriff fassbar und somit auch systemisch und systematisch analysierbar wurden" (Christ/Gudehus 2013: 3). The understanding of inequality – the central category of structural violence – is highly variable and needs to be defined case by case. But an approach which takes this social factor into account ensures that other ways in which harm is caused, apart from the direct use of force, are recognized and situated within a larger political context.

The focus on structural violence enables a critical perspective which can determine different criteria representing the basis for oppression. Structural violence can be based on social categories such as race, gender and class, but political systems as such can also be characterized by varying degrees of structural violence. Authoritarian regimes and dictatorships, for example, establish relatively overt forms of structural violence in order to secure their survival, openly curtailing the freedoms and rights of their citizens. In the context of colonial rule and its aftermath in particular, structural violence is constitutive for understanding how imperial domination was upheld beyond the use of brute force (cf. Kalman 2010: 1–2). Even before Galtung introduced the notion of structural violence, 'violence' was used to describe the colonial situation as a whole as early as 1961, when Frantz Fanon's seminal work *Les damnés de la terre* was published: In this text, Fanon writes about "[l]a violence qui a présidé à l'arrangement du monde colonial, qui a rythmé inlassablement la destruction des formes sociales indigènes, démoli sans restrictions les systèmes de références de l'économie, les modes d'apparence, d'habillement" (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 44). Violence, in this instance, cannot be limited to physical manifestations of force and harm, but is also applied to the general disruptive reorganization of the colonial world, which unsettles the social fabric and the ways of life of the indigenous population. The description of this process corresponds to the concept of structural violence: The extent of the political measures and their negative effects cannot be assessed on the basis of direct causality and isolated interactions, due to the intricate nature of colonial subjugation, which reaches well beyond interpersonal violence.

The idea of structural violence thus enables a systematic approach which considers a variety of political processes and settings based on inequality and social

39 For a critical discussion of this aspect in Galtung's theory of violence, cf. Vorobej 2016: 63–69.

injustice, making the notion applicable to different manifestation of oppression and discrimination. Structural violence is often the basis for interpersonal violence, but its scope as an analytical concept goes far beyond the exertion of violence between individual persons.

Epistemic violence

Initially introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the term 'epistemic violence' also relates to a non-physical, indirect form of violence. As the name indicates, this kind of violence is connected to orders of knowledge and describes a harmful effect in the process of knowledge production. As one of the examples of epistemic violence, Spivak refers to "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (1999: 266). This process of othering establishes a hierarchical order which dismisses the self-articulation of certain groups and collectives, as is particularly characteristic of colonial systems. Spivak's use of the word 'obliteration' points to the intrusive and destructive nature of the imposition of an order of knowledge. At the same time, colonial orders of knowledge declare themselves to be universal: In examining epistemic violence and the history of imperialism, Spivak states that her goal is to "continue the account of how *one* explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one" (1999: 267; italics in the original). Thus, certain forms of self-conception are not simply replaced with others, but their epistemic potential is also negated by the colonizer.

Fanon writes about this aspect of the colonial situation in similar terms in *Les damnés de la terre*. He illustrates how epistemic regimes form a part of colonial domination:

> *Il ne suffit pas au colon de limiter physiquement, c'est-à-dire à l'aide de sa police et de sa gendarmerie, l'espace du colonisé. Comme pour illustrer le caractère totalitaire de l'exploitation coloniale, le colon fait du colonisé une sorte de quintessence du mal. […] L'indigène est déclaré imperméable à l'éthique, absence de valeurs, mais aussi négation des valeurs. (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 44)*

Fanon shows here that the epistemic dismissal of the colonized (in this case, in regard to their ethical values) is as important for colonial systems as other suppressive measures that may appear more tangible, such as physical confinement. These observations lead Fanon to highlight "[l]a violence avec laquelle s'est affirmée la suprématie des valeurs blanches" and "l'aggressivité qui a imprégné la confrontation victorieuse de ces valeurs avec les modes de vie ou de pensée des colonisés" (2002 [1961]: 46). It becomes clear here that, in order for the colonial hierarchy to

be maintained, the system of thought has to reflect the oppressive conditions of the political order. Fanon aptly affirms that this confrontation on the level of values (and other forms of knowledge) is also characterized by 'violence' and 'aggressiveness'.

Since Spivak, the term 'epistemic violence' has been taken up by various researchers and transferred to other contexts. Claudia Brunner summarizes the idea of epistemic violence for its application within peace and conflict studies as "jenen Beitrag zu gewaltförmigen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen, der im Wissen selbst, in seiner Genese, Ausformung, Organisation und Wirkmächtigkeit angelegt ist" (2016: 39). This definition corresponds to the cases described by Spivak and Fanon, in which epistemic violence occurs when a particular order of knowledge is forcefully established as the dominant one, and when an Other is not properly recognized. Another researcher, Kristie Dotson, presents a more specific understanding of epistemic violence:

> *Epistemic violence is a failure of an audience to communicatively reciprocate, either intentionally or unintentionally, in linguistic exchanges owning [sic] to pernicious ignorance. Pernicious ignorance is a reliable ignorance or a counterfactual incompetence that, in a given context, is harmful. (Dotson 2011: 242)*

Here, epistemic violence is characterized by a similar asymmetrical relation in which the participant of a social discourse is forced into a disadvantageous communicative position, highlighted by Dotson through the reference to 'ignorance' and its effects. She argues that epistemic violence is the result of practices of silencing (cf. Dotson 2011: 236–237), which is her main object of investigation and the central term that she chooses for processes of oppression. Dotson's definition provides a helpful tool for recognizing harmful linguistic exchanges and it is used complementarily with broader understandings of epistemic violence in this book. Thus, within the text analyses of the corpus, the notion of epistemic violence is applied to cases of marginalization and exclusion from representation and discourse, on the basis of linguistic means or otherwise (as is notably the case with processes of silencing).

2.1.2 Violence and power

The concepts and definitions of violence in the previous subchapter form the analytical basis for the assessment of the political meaning of literary sounds in the works selected for the corpus of this book. However, violence is closely related to other theoretical concepts and they are not always clearly separable from each other, especially within a broad understanding of violence. Most notably among such concepts, 'power' stands out as an important term within postcolonial studies

and beyond, with a plethora of research literature dedicated to its terminological and methodological specification in various fields, and it is an indispensable notion for different forms of violence and their conceptualization. Andrea Geier even goes as far as to write that, regarding examinations of violence within literary studies, "den Ausgangspunkt jeder Analyse die Frage bildet, in welcher Weise in einem literarischen Text Gewalt im Vergleich mit Macht konzeptualisiert wird" (2013: 265).

Approaching the difference and similarity between power and violence largely relies on the linguistic context. In the English language, the two terms are traditionally easy to separate:

> *Der Terminus 'power' bezeichnet dort zunächst neutral die Fähigkeit, etwas zu tun oder eine Wirkung zu erzielen oder Einfluss auszuüben, während 'violence' als problematische Ausübung physischer Stärke verstanden wird mit dem Ziel, eine Person oder Sache zu schädigen oder zu verletzen. (Imbusch 2002: 33)*

Imbusch contrasts this clear distinction in meaning with how 'Gewalt' and 'Macht' historically overlap in German (cf. 2002: 28–30), and he attributes this discrepancy to the fact that other languages, such as English, maintain the terminological differentiation between the Latin roots of 'vis' (and 'violentia') and 'potentia' (and 'potestas'), which is not the case with 'Gewalt' in German (cf. 2002: 29). However, this accurate differentiation between violence and power is considerably altered in the light of a broadening of the concept of violence, as has been demonstrated above. Certain forms of violence also reveal an affinity to ideas that are central to theories of power, which can help to further outline the more subtle occurrence of violence.

On a fundamental level, it can be said that violence is "als kalkuliertes Erzwingen [...] eine Form der Machtausübung und als solche ein sehr effektives Machtmittel, weil sie unmittelbar Gehorsam erzwingt und Widerstände überwindet" (Imbusch 2002: 32). From this perspective, power can be increased and maintained through the use of violence (or through the threat of violence). Contrary to this assumption, Hannah Arendt sees power and violence as irreconcilable counterparts. For her, power is "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (Arendt 1970: 44) and it is "inherent in the very existence of political communities" (52). Violence, on the other hand, is "distinguished by its instrumental character" (Arendt 1970: 46) and it can only serve to achieve short-term political goals, but not to attain power. Power is thus the product of a political system which does not rely on violence; within this model, violence only undermines the power that is generated through a smooth functioning of a system. This view is also rooted in the fact that Arendt distinguishes power from authority (cf. 1970: 45) and obedience (cf. 1970: 53). While

power and violence exclude each other on a theoretical level, they usually occur together under common political circumstances (cf. Arendt 1970: 46–47).

Arendt's conception of power and violence proves to be too narrow for the purpose of this book because it does not consider how these two phenomena can become entwined and how they reinforce each other. Especially in the case of literary texts, such a differentiation between power and violence cannot be easily maintained: In the chosen works, violence can have an instrumental function, but it is not limited to being a means, as it is with Arendt; it can also describe a specific political configuration of power relations.

The application of the term 'violence' in this book is compatible with Michel Foucault's understanding of power as he develops it in *Histoire de la sexualité*. One of his most important assertions about power is that it is intentional but not subjective:

> *[L]es relations de pouvoir sont à la fois intentionnelles et non subjectives. Si, de fait, elles sont intelligibles, ce n'est pas parce qu'elles seraient l'effet, en terme de causalité, d'une instance autre […], mais, c'est qu'elles sont, de part en part, traversées par un calcul : pas de pouvoir qui s'exerce sans une série de visées et d'objectifs. (Foucault 1976: 124–125)*

For Foucault, power cannot be traced back to single agents, the notion rather describes a political configuration within society the origins of which transcend the actions of individuals. This 'non-subjectivity of power' does not imply, however, that it is a neutral force: It creates contingent political orders because it is informed by a specific rationale (which is expressed through the 'intentionality of power'). A similar process is at play in the case of structural and epistemic violence: These forms of violence are inscribed into the very organization of society and cannot be reduced to harmful acts between people; they address the very conditions under which harm can occur.

At the same time, there is a marked difference between power in the sense of Foucault and the broad conception of violence. Foucault aims to counter an idea of power, which he calls "juridico-discursive" (1976: 109). One of the main characteristics of this model of power is its negative, restrictive nature, which mainly consists of the prohibitive ability to set limits (cf. Foucault 1976: 112–113). Contrary to this concept, Foucault emphasizes the productive aspect of power (cf. 1976: 119–120), turning power into an all-encompassing phenomenon which creates the structures that make knowledge possible in the first place. Violence, as it is understood in this book, on the other hand, already implies a qualitative assessment of power relations, due to its focus on harm, inequality and injustice. Structural violence is also productive in the sense that it establishes and maintains a political order, but it is primarily applied as a heuristic concept to describe different manifestations of

domination and oppression, as opposed to the broader scope of the Foucauldian notion of power. Each form of violence accounts for a different level on which the effects of power become tangible.

In conclusion, terms like 'power' form discourses in their own right, and for the sake of clarity, this book mainly relies on the term of 'violence' as the main analytical category. However, this is not to say that concepts such as power are entirely left out of the analyses in the case studies. Where necessary, they are included to further specify certain political phenomena. This approach is in line with how violence is examined within literary studies; Hania Siebenpfeiffer also addresses the connection between violence and power in respect to the study of literature:

> *Auch in der Literaturwissenschaft findet die kontrovers diskutierte Unterscheidung zwischen Gewalt und Macht respektive Herrschaft […] ihren Wiederhall, wobei Gewalt und Macht als entweder entgegengesetzt oder als ineinander übergängig bis identisch gefasst werden. […] Je nachdem, ob Gewalt als fremder, destruktiver Einbruch in oder als produktiver Teil von politischen, sozialen und kulturellen Ordnungen verstanden wird, entscheidet sich die oppositionelle oder partizipatorische Beziehung zwischen Gewalt, Macht und Herrschaft. Als produktive Größe ist Gewalt eine zentrale Ausdrucksbildung von Macht und von dieser weder strukturell noch funktional zu trennen; in Hinblick auf ihre Destruktivität erscheint Gewalt hingegen, verkürzt formuliert, entweder als ein der Herrschaft zur Verfügung stehendes Machtinstrument oder als eine gegen Macht- und Herrschaftsverhältnisse gerichtete Handlung. (Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 340)*

The understanding of violence as a productive force also corresponds to concepts such as structural violence. If viewed purely as a destructive force, violence becomes a concept of the kind Arendt has in mind, in the sense that violence and power are theoretically incompatible. For literary studies, Siebenpfeiffer goes on to stress that the relationship between violence and power needs to be assessed on a case-to-case basis:

> *Literarische Texte elaborieren wiederum alle Spielarten von Gewalt, Macht und Herrschaft, so dass aus literaturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive ihr Verhältnis in Bezug auf die thematische und ästhetische Dimension literarischer Gewalt für jeden Text individuell austariert werden muss. (Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 340)*

Thus, a preconceived distinction between violence and power is often impracticable when analyzing literary texts, and the application of 'violence' in the case studies of this book should be understood as having heuristic merit rather than being an ontological differentiation.

The relationship between violence and literature is an important topic in itself, independently of the notion of power. Because of the medium-specific requirements of literary texts, violence also needs to be addressed separately from the methodological perspective of literary studies.

2.1.3 Violence in literary studies

Violence has been an explicit research interest for several decades within literary studies,[40] uniting a variety of approaches to, and conceptualizations of violence in literature (cf. Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 344–345). Violence has always been an inherent part of literature;[41] the academic attention devoted to this phenomenon is, therefore, hardly surprising.[42] The understanding of 'violence', however, varies in literary studies, and very different forms of violence are being examined in literature – not all of them manifest on a physical level within the plot. Andrea Geier maintains that

> *keine gewalttätigen Handlungen beschrieben werden müssen, um von ›Gewalt‹ in literarischen Texten sprechen zu können. Bereits auf einer interpersonalen Ebene kann Gewalt ebenso ein fortdauerndes Gewaltverhältnis meinen, das sich aus einer asymmetrischen Macht-Konstellation entwickelt und sich etwa über angedrohte Gewalttätigkeit(en) konstituiert. Im Hinblick auf Gewalt geht es keineswegs nur um die Integrität eines Körpers. Darüber hinaus können literarische Texte gesellschaftliche Macht- oder Herrschaftsstrukturen insgesamt als gewaltförmig vorführen. […] Wird ›Gewalt‹ nicht auf die Beobachtung individueller aggressiver Aktionen beschränkt, ist sie allererst als eine Form sozialen Handelns erkennbar, die im Verhältnis von Machtordnungen und Gewalt anzusiedeln ist. Das Gewalthandeln einzelner Figuren kann als Verstoß gegen eine gesellschaftliche Ordnung erscheinen oder umgekehrt als Ausdruck gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse verstanden werden, wenn einzelne Gewaltakte oder -phantasien ihre Ursache in verborgenen systembedingten Herrschaftsstrukturen haben, die nicht durchschaut bzw. gegen die sich das Individuum nicht zur Wehr setzen kann […]. (Geier 2013: 264–265)*

Geier's observations about violence within literary texts echo notions of violence that have also been presented in the previous sections of this book. Different manifestations of violence can occur in literature – Hania Siebenpfeiffer mentions five

40 For a short overview of the research on violence within literary studies and how it has changed in recent decades, cf. Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 342–344.

41 Cf., for example, works on the history of literature, such as those of Wertheimer (1986) and Nieraad (1994), which center on violence.

42 In 2002, however, Nieraad was still lamenting how little research on violence has been done in literary theory (cf. 2002: 1276).

forms of violence, which are not just prevalent in violence research, but are also well-established in the study of violence in literature: physical violence, psychological violence, structural and institutional violence, ritualized violence, and cultural (or symbolic) violence (cf. Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 340–341). Siebenpfeiffer's catalogue of different forms of violence partly overlaps with the previously proposed ones that the case studies focus on, but in theory, other manifestations of violence could be added as analytical categories for examining the sonic imagination and literary sounds.

The underlying problem of many approaches to violence within literary studies concerns the fundamental relationship between literature, violence and related phenomena. "One can no more take hold of one's pain than one can grab some sound to mould it into a linguistic form", Peter Fifield writes in his article "The Body, Pain and Violence" (2015: 119) (as a summary of Virginia Woolf's stance on pain in literature in her 1926 essay "On Being Ill"). This statement is based on the premise of a fundamental inexpressibility of pain in an aesthetic medium such as literature, and the comparison with the relationship between sound and language is telling in the context of this book. How does one go about analyzing the very intersection of sound and pain, or more generally, harm (as a result of violence) in literary texts? And, to complicate things even further, what if the text is not about violence which is physically experienced, but is rather, for example, the outcome of systemic inequality or injustice, as is the case with structural violence?

As with sound and the sonic imagination in literature, performativity is also a key element in the literary staging of violence. If approached from this perspective, the problem raised in the quote above does not pose itself in quite the same way – the question then becomes less about how to 'take hold' of violence in literature and more about the means by which literature performatively stages violence. Instead of conceiving of violence as a fixed entity which is simply reproduced in fiction, scholars like Geier argue in favor of a processual understanding of violence in literary texts:

> *[A]ußerliterarische Gewaltphänomene oder -ereignisse [sind] keine bloßen ›Vorlagen‹ […], die im Medium Literatur lediglich ›ästhetisiert‹ würden […]. Gewaltphänomene in literarischen Texten sind nicht ›Abbildung‹ oder ›Spiegelung‹ realhistorischer Geschehnisse zu begreifen. […] Die Analyse sollte sich daher stets auf die prozesshafte Bedeutungsherstellung in einem literarischen Text konzentrieren. Diese besteht in einem komplexen Zusammenspiel aus Form/Struktur, Plot, Motivik, sprachlichem Ausdruck, Wahrnehmungs- und Beschreibungsebene (Figurenperspektive, Erzählerrede) und andere mehr. (Geier 2013: 263)*

The processuality of the generation of meaning that Geier emphasizes also holds true for the connection between sound, violence and literature: While there has been a growing affinity between sound and violence since the beginning of the 20th century, the premise of the case studies is not that the texts simply reflect these new cultural and political circumstances under which sound is produced and perceived. For example, when Anna, the narrator and protagonist of Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, feels overwhelmed by the ramblings of her racist stepmother, she notices that "there was a wind and the outer shutters kept banging, like guns" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 55). There is nothing particularly violent about the sound of window shutters, but the comparison with gunshots ties into the distress and the pain that Anna feels when her stepmother lectures her. Literature thus creates a particular bond between sound and violence, and it is important to observe which literary means a text uses to stage sound as a violent phenomenon:

> *Weder spiegelt die Gewaltförmigkeit von literarischer Sprache diejenige der lebensweltlichen Sprache einfach wider, noch geht die inhaltliche Gestaltung von Gewalt in nichtliterarischen […] Gewaltdarstellungen auf. […] Insofern die literarische (Re-)Präsentation von Gewalt nicht zu trennen ist von der Gewalt der literarischen (Re-)Präsentation, muss die literaturwissenschaftliche Gewaltforschung der spezifischen formalen und inhaltlichen Elaboration von Gewalt (in) der Literatur auch methodisch Rechnung tragen. (Siebenpfeiffer 2013: 340)*

It is for this reason that the analysis is much more about recognizing which textual and narrative characteristics constitute a specific form of violence, than about assessing whether a particular sound is also violent outside of the literary text, and whether literature 'manages' to 'represent' the violent sound. The fact that the connection between sound and violence has become more prominent in literature since the beginning of the 20th century may provide further context for the research aim of this book, but it is not the overall guiding principle of the analyses themselves. In this sense, it is not the 'intermodal reference' of literary sounds itself, but the interplay of textual and narrative means driven by the sonic imagination that generates violence. On the one hand, violence, pain and similar phenomena appear to defy representation (cf. Geier 2013: 267), but on the other hand, they are creative forces that drive new ways of literary expression (cf. Fifield 2015: 129).

2.2 The text analysis and its theoretical basis

2.2.1 The literary staging of sound

The intermodal reference of literary sounds always depends on a variety of textual characteristics and it is important to differentiate between them in order to show how they affect the connection between sound and violence in literary texts. The underlying question of this subchapter is thus, by which literary means does the sonic imagination make sounds conceivable in a text? The aspects and characteristics presented here do not form a comprehensive list for the analysis of literary sounds, rather they guide the close-reading in the case studies and are points of orientation towards understanding how sound is staged in prose fiction. Consequently, these aspects are not limited to the role that they play in the examination of violence in the chosen texts: A broader look at the literary sonic imagination is necessary in order to determine the general status of sound in each text as it forms the basis on which literary sounds can convey different forms of violence.

First, literary sounds can be analyzed in respect to their narrative qualities and configurations. On a general level, the narratological distinction between '*histoire*' and '*discours*' (cf. Todorov 1966) is of fundamental importance for the consideration of literary sounds. Since the definition of literary sounds in *Auditory Violence* relies on what has been called 'intermodal references', the level of *histoire* is necessary to determine which elements in the diegetic world evoke aural sensations through textual means. In this regard, the analysis examines what kind of sounds are mentioned in the text, what their sources are and similar details of the story that relate to the narrated characters, actions and events. An important means of staging sounds can thus be found in the form of descriptions, which attribute certain qualities to literary sounds. These qualities can be classified in accordance with common acoustic categories, such as volume, duration, pitch and others. However, it needs to be stressed that "[f]rom the point of view of the dynamics of the reading process, descriptions do not represent givens but constructs, relying on a wide range of inferences by the reader" (Nünning 2007: 96), and it is crucial, therefore, to determine how texts construct sounds and their qualities. Occasionally, the analyses refer to categorizations of literary sounds that have been suggested in the past in different publications and scholarly works. For instance, in an article about the sounds of postcolonial metropolises in the works of Amit Chaudhuri, Christin Hoene describes six different modes in which novels can evoke sound (cf. 2016: 365–366), which she bases on John M. Picker's pioneering monograph in this field, *Victorian Soundscapes* (cf. 2016: 365). Tom Vandevelde also outlines a comprehensive catalogue of different literary sounds (or 'narrative sounds' as he calls them, cf.

2015: 31), a 'taxonomy' comprising several subcategories (cf. 61–86). Vandevelde even calls this process a 'narrative sonography' (cf. 2015: 61).

On the level of *discours*, the case studies address how the narrative is structured when sounds are staged in the text. Apart from assessing the narrative configuration in regard to other common narratological categories, such as the narrator, the narrative levels, time and chronological order, the analysis pays special attention to focalization, because the concept very clearly problematizes questions of perception and how it is presented in prose fiction: "[I]f a narrative tells us that Mary sees John, we cannot be certain that the narrative is also focalized 'by' [...] Mary. Whether this is the case depends on how Mary's act of perception is narrated and on the context in which it occurs" (Niederhoff 2014: 202). The same applies to the act of hearing: The form of focalization within a text manifestly changes one's idea of how a sound is staged and perceived to an extent which cannot be grasped by merely considering to which characters the story refers. Focalization is thus one crucial component of how the intermodal reference to sound takes place, and how the imaginative staging of sound in literature distinctly differs from media in which sonic phenomena are heard directly. For example, when Anna hears the chirping of sparrows in *Voyage in the Dark* (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 60), the internal focalization creates a tension between her perception of the sound and the impersonal way of narrating (characterized by the use of a generic 'you' in the passage). This discrepancy highlights Anna's feeling of alienation, which is frequently expressed through the sonic imagination in the novel.

The various modes of how speech, thought, consciousness and perception are presented in texts is another important factor in the staging of sound. While direct and indirect discourse very much rely on literary sounds because they relate to the vocal expression of characters, free indirect discourse is also particularly suitable for presenting aural sensations.[43] Fludernik refers to the term 'free indirect perception' in her *Introduction to Narratology* and provides the following definition: "Description of the perceptions of a character in the novel, the dominant syntax being that of free indirect discourse, detailing what the protagonist is seeing" (2009 [2006]: 154). One needs to add that free indirect discourse does not have to be limited to visual perception, as indicated in the quote, and can also be applied to the process of hearing. When the heterodiegetic narrator of *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* asks and exclaims "Что за музыка? Вот заладили" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 182) ("What sort of music was this? What a programme!" Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 220), it is actually the protagonist Yedigei who is shocked by the monotonous sound coming from the

43 Free indirect discourse is also closely related to the aspect of focalization, even more so in the way perception is presented in a text, cf. Palmer 2004: 49.

loudspeakers at the railway station. Differentiating between the three modes of direct, indirect and free indirect discourse during the case studies is thus important in the analysis of the literary means used to stage sound.

It should be noted that terms like 'focalization' (or similar ones such as 'perspective' or 'point of view') rely on visual metaphors, and while terminologies such as these may generally suggest a certain ocularcentrism in the linguistic inventory within the humanities, the usage of these terms is maintained in the interest of clarity and continuity.[44] In any case, focalization cannot be reduced to visual perception and it encompasses the use of other senses as well (cf. also Niederhoff 2014: 199–202). On the other hand, there are narratological terms that seem to have a connection to sound but are also mainly used metaphorically. One example would be the concept of 'voice', which in the past has been primarily applied to distinguish different facets of narration, especially in regard to the narrator or narrative instances in the text. While this concept can be used in conjunction with analyses that take oral communication or vocal expression into account, it is not, per se, about sound.[45]

Second, the analyses consider the rhetorical and stylistic aspects of how literary sounds are staged. This perspective also focuses on the level of *discours* because it highlights the linguistic constitution of literary sounds and considers how the use of language makes them different from sounds in other media. In this context, devices such as rhetorical tropes and figures play an important role: They expand the significative potential of sounds by linguistic means and relate them to phenomena that are often not perceived aurally. Examples include metaphors, similes, oxymorons and other devices used to stage sounds in literary texts. The use of figurative language is often also essential in creating a violent imagery through the incorporation of literary sounds: Rhetorical tropes and figures can attribute violent qualities to literary sounds and make one perceive them as signs for violence. One example is the figurative staging of sound in Frankétienne's novel, in which an intangible phenomenon such as speech is frequently presented as having unusual material qualities: "*Paroles brûlées, réduites en cendres*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12; italics in the original).

Stylistically, literary texts can also employ a variety of means that have an inherent connection to sound, due to their phonetic features, in order to highlight aural sensations. Such means include, for example, alliteration and onomatopoeia. The latter in particular is of special interest for the book because it stages literary sounds

44 For an in-depth discussion of focalization in regard to sound in literature and terminological impulses such as 'auricularization', cf. Vandevelde 2017: 36–41 and Vandevelde 2015: 34–47.

45 For a critical examination of the concept of 'voice' and its connotations in narratology, cf. Blödorn et al. 2006.

in itself: By linguistic means it evokes specific sounds which do not exactly replicate the sounds in question, but instead generate a resemblance on a phonetic basis (for example, the words that are used to describe the train in Aitmatov's novel, cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 164–165). Furthermore, when examining each text and its literary sounds, other components, such as the use of punctuation and distinctive typographical features (e.g. italics or boldface), are analyzed in regard to how they highlight certain sounds and reinforce their effect. Ellipses, for example, often emphasize silences and the fading out of sounds, as is the case in the following passage from Aitmatov's novel (in the English translation, the ellipses are omitted): "Поезд ушел, унося с собой утихающий шум движения и рдеющие угасающие огни… Послышался последний протяжный гудок…" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 165) ("The train went on its way, the noise of its wheels fading and its lights slowly growing dim. The last, drawn out whistle of the departing engine sounded", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 198).

Finally, an important perspective within the case studies is gained through a contextual reading of the works of the corpus and how they focus on specific aspects of sound. The dimension of sound in the texts is thus also considered against their historical and political background, with particular attention to the postcolonial condition, which is an important influencing factor in all of the chosen works. Regarding postcolonial narratology, Hanne Birk and Birgit Neumann write: "Da die postkoloniale Theorie nach Edward Said (1978) von einer kontextbewußten Literaturkonzeption ausgeht, gilt es, die kulturellen, sozialen wie historischen Entstehungsbedingungen von literarischen Werken zu berücksichtigen" (Birk/Neumann 2002: 116).[46] While the contextual reading does not serve as an explanation for why and how literary sounds are staged in each text, it does provide an understanding of the implications of the main themes and motifs that will be identified with regard to sound, making it possible to situate them within the particular social and cultural circumstances that have been shaped by postcolonialism. Birk and Neumann also emphasize that for postcolonial narratology it is important to take into consideration that "Texte die Realität nicht abbildend darstellen (Mimesis), sondern als eine Ausprägung kultureller Selbstverständigung gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeitskonstruktionen generieren (Poiesis)" (2002: 116). Thus, the literary sounds in the texts have to be considered as independent, non-mimetic phenomena that, nonetheless, participate in the cultural meaning-making centered around sound. As the next subchapter illustrates, semiotics can provide important impulses as to how meaning is attributed to sound, leading to a deeper understanding of the sonic dimension in general.

46 The source of the reference in the quote is Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 1978.

2.2.2 The (cultural) semiotics of sound

As early as 1976, in a text entitled "Écoute", Roland Barthes addresses auditory perception from the perspective of semiotics. What distinguishes this text from his other famous essay about sound, "Le grain de la voix" (written four years before "Écoute"), is a more typologizing approach in which he traces the basic principles and the development of three distinct modes of hearing. Of the second mode he writes: "La seconde [écoute] est un *déchiffrement* ; ce qu'on essaye de capter par l'oreille, ce sont des *signes* ; ici, sans doute, l'homme commence : j'écoute comme je lis, c'est-à-dire selon certains codes" (Barthes 1982a [1976]: 217; italics in the original). Barthes thus emphasizes the sign-character of sounds and the fact that sounds are perceived as being structured through various codes. This understanding of sound shows why semiotics offers a useful approach for analyzing the political dimension of sonic phenomena: Sounds enter into relationship with different social and cultural codes, and it is possible to analyze this connection in precise terms on a semiotic basis. Thus, when examining how sounds generate meaning on a political level, semiotics can serve to illustrate how sounds interact with oppression, resistance, ideology and other political phenomena. The main part of this book includes analyses on such a semiotic basis in order to answer the research question by accurately determining how literary sounds and violence (as the overarching political category of analysis) are connected to each other within the texts chosen for the corpus.

With literary fiction it is also necessary to consider the specificities of the medium that influence the literary staging of sounds in order to account for their significative potential. Furthermore, the analysis of literary sounds does not represent a deciphering of preexisting codes (as the quote by Barthes might suggest), but is rather an examination of the creative ways in which sound is entwined with violence in literature, stimulated by the sonic imagination and its performative ability. Before the process for analyzing the relation between violence and literary sounds can be presented, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical semiotic framework which enables a consideration of sounds as signs. Recent contributions to this field further consolidate semiotics and the study of sound: Cultural semiotics and cultural studies in general substantiate a cultural understanding of sound that opens up a productive perspective on the political aspect of sonic phenomena. As Ari Kelman writes in an article, "[w]hat makes noise and sound meaningful in the first place is precisely the sonic and cultural context against or alongside of which it emerges" (2010: 230). It is important to establish a theoretical basis on which sound can be considered from such a broader cultural perspective.

Semiotics of sound and sound culture

For a long time, the application of semiotics to sound has been limited to musical contexts. Among early and prominent researchers in this field one can name Jean-Jacques Nattiez, who proposed a 'semiology of music' in the 1970s.[47] Over the past few years, a new focus on sound has begun to form which goes beyond musical phenomena. In a contribution to an edited volume about auditive media cultures, Jochen Venus describes the semiotics of sound as follows:

> *Was lässt sich dann unter der Semiose und der Semiotik des Klangs näherhin verstehen? Nach dem dominanten Selbstverständnis der Semiotik kann man beide Begriffe so umreißen: Die Klangsemiose ist der Objektbereich und die Klangsemiotik ist die Methodologie der Erforschung des psychosozialen Klanggeschehens. Der besondere Zugriff der Semiotik auf die Klangsemiose besteht darin, sie explizit unter dem Gesichtspunkt ihrer Zeichenhaftigkeit zu rekonstruieren und so mit anderen Prozessen des Zeichenuniversums […] vergleichbar zu machen.*
>
> *In diesem Sinn umfasst die Semiose des Klangs alle phänomenalen Bedingungen und Wirkungen des Hörbaren […]. Die Klangsemiotik hätte nach diesem Verständnis auf den Begriff zu bringen, wie Spürbares, Sichtbares, Hörbares und Verstehbares Klanggestalten provoziert, und umgekehrt: welche Empfindungen, audiovisuellen Gegebenheiten und Interpretationen durch Klänge provoziert werden. (Venus 2013: 117–118)*

This quote illustrates an approach to sound which explicitly addresses all sonic phenomena and not merely musical ones. Venus emphasizes a variety of aspects in regard to the semiosis and the semiotics of sound: First, sounds have a sign-character, and semiotics pays attention to sounds as signs, in the sense that a sign is "referring to or *standing for* something other than itself" (Chandler 2007: 13; italics in the original). Sterne makes a similar point about the semiotic nature of sounds when he writes, "[o]n the basis of their sonic character, sounds become signs—they come to mean certain things" (Sterne 2003: 94). Second, the conditions under which sounds are produced or generated and the effects that they have are equally part of the semiosis of sound, i.e., the process of becoming meaningful. Third, semiotics also considers how sounds are interpreted and what kind of associations they evoke.

Asserting the sign-character of sounds is not a trivial matter: For a long time, sounds were denied any kind of meaning (cf. Schulze 2012: 4), not least due to their ephemeral nature, and were instead regarded as mere by-products of more important and more meaningful processes and events. By applying a semiotic perspective to sound, it is possible to consider the significance of sounds beyond their

47 For an overview of the application of semiotics within musicology, cf. Mazzola 2003.

connection to an acoustic source from which they originate. When the conditions and effects of sounds become part of the analysis of sound, their social and cultural dimension starts to shift into focus, opening up the possibility to examine the political meaning of sounds.[48]

While there are also semiotic examinations of sound from a biological and physiological perspective (cf. Strube/Lazarus 1997), the general direction of the ideas presented here already indicates a focus not just on semiotics, but, more specifically, on the cultural semiotics of sound. Cultural studies offer important impulses for considering sound in its broader context: "Kulturwissenschaft fragt nach den Bedeutungssystemen, in die klangliche Phänomene eingebunden bzw. an deren Konstitution sie beteiligt sind" (Lange 2018: 116). This approach is thus characterized by an examination of sounds not as isolated phenomena, but as being entwined with other cultural and social processes which impact the meaning of sound. Such a cultural understanding of sound lends itself to a combination with cultural semiotics, as proposed by researchers like Roland Posner. Posner sees culture as a system of signs (cf. 1991: 39) and differentiates between social culture, material culture and mental culture as different parts of society (cf. 41–55). His explication of material culture addresses the process of how meaning is generated within society:

> *Da Systeme von Signifikant-Signifikat-Zuordnungen als Kodes bezeichnet werden, führt diese Überlegung zu dem Resultat, daß sich jede Mentalität als Menge von Kodes auffassen läßt. Mentale Kultur ist demnach nichts anderes als ein System von Zeichenkonventionen, das die Mitglieder einer Gesellschaft miteinander gemeinsam haben […]. Sie regeln deren soziales Verhalten und bestimmen die Funktionen und Bedeutungen ihrer Artefakte. (Posner 1991: 53)*

The interaction of codes (which Posner understands as systems in the correlation between signifiers and signifieds) is thus crucial for meaning-making within society. Artifacts, which make up material culture (cf. Posner 1991: 44–45), are also understood in accordance with these codes. In this sense, sounds can be regarded as artifacts[49] whose meaning is also determined through different codes. However, a semiotic approach to these codes which is informed by cultural studies also has to account for their contingent nature (which was neglected in traditional structuralist thought). Uwe Wirth describes such a cultural perspective on signs and codes:

> *Zeichen sind nicht mehr Vorkommnisse, die im Rahmen eines »Indizienparadigmas« unter einen bereits vorausgesetzten kulturellen oder epistemischen Code subsumiert*

48 Outside the sphere of literature, this has been demonstrated, for example, in an article by Eckardt (2012), who applies semiotics to examine the political dimension of listening in three different case studies.

49 Posner himself refers on several occasions to sounds as artifacts, cf. 1991: 45, 52.

> *werden könnten; vielmehr werden Zeichen als Ereignisse aufgefaßt, die* nachträglich *als monumentaler Rest oder als Detail in Erscheinung treten, wodurch »die Struktur des Ganzen erkennbar wird«. […] Das Erkenntnisinteresse der Kulturwissenschaft richtet sich […] auf »signifikante Strukturen«, die jedoch nicht einfach ›da‹ sind, sondern erst im Rahmen der Interpretation* erschlossen *werden müssen. Damit wird das starre, quasi* apriorische *Code-Modell einer auf der festen assoziativen Kopplung von Signifikant und Signifikat fußenden Semiologie im Ausgang von Saussure durch ein dynamisches,* aposteriorisches *Inferenz-Modell abgelöst, das Bedeutungsbeziehungen als historisch kontingente »lose Kopplungen« begreift. (Wirth 2008: 18–19; italics in the original)*[50]

It is important therefore to realize that sounds and their meaning as signs are not predetermined, and the codes which structure the perception of sounds are subject to constant change. Consequently, the semiotic analysis and interpretation of sounds are not forms of deciphering or decoding a preexistent meaning, but rather an examination of how cultural codes actively generate signifying structures for sound.

On this semiotic basis, the cultural generation of the meaning of sound can be further conceptualized: In her article "Towards a Cultural Semiotics of Sound", Carla Maier finds it important to "differentiate a sonic sign system from other sign systems (e.g. a linguistic sign system), and to investigate how sounds actually become meaningful in constituting culture" (2012). In addition to rehabilitating the sign-character of sounds by suggesting a sonic sign system, Maier illustrates here the interrelation between sound and culture. For her, in order to understand how "sounds become part of processes of meaning formation", it is necessary to consider "the cultural practices through which sounds are produced, perceived and disseminated" (Maier 2012). A cultural semiotics of sound thus provides an important basis for considering sounds as meaningful and constitutive entities within culture. From this perspective, sounds become more than merely physical phenomena – they become carriers of meaning that vary with historical and political circumstances. Elaborating the point made further above, this understanding of sounds sheds light on their role within society: The ways of perceiving sonic phenomena

50 The sources of the references in the quote are as follows: Ginzburg, Carlo. "Spurensicherung: Der Jäger entziffert die Fährte, Sherlock Holmes nimmt die Lupe, Freud liest Morelli – Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst." *Spurensicherung: Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst*. Translated by Gisela Bonz. Berlin: Wagenbach, 1995. 31 [7–44]; Weigel, Sigrid. *Literatur als Voraussetzung der Kulturgeschichte: Schauplätze von Shakespeare bis Benjamin*. München: Wilhelm Fink, 2004. 12; Derrida, Jacques. *Grammatologie [1967]*. Translated by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Hanns Zischler. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983. 273; Luhmann, Niklas. "Die Form der Schrift." *Schrift*. Ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 355 [349–366].

are not natural givens; they form processes of constant meaning-making (through cultural practices, as Maier emphasizes).

An additional basis for considering sounds and their perception as cultural elements can be found in recent research, such as the work of cultural sociologist Andreas Reckwitz. Through a praxeological approach, he comments on the interrelation between the senses and society:

> *[D]as, was wir soziale Ordnungen nennen, [sind] letztlich Ensembles sozialkulturelle Praktiken […]. […] [D]ie Komplexe von Praktiken modellieren und mobilisieren auch die Sinne und die durch sie verlaufende Wahrnehmung auf eine bestimmte Weise. […] Sinnesorgane, Akte des Wahrnehmens und Aktivitäten des Handelns sind innerhalb einer Praktik […] untrennbar miteinander verzahnt. […] Im Wahrnehmen werden zugleich einzelne Sinnesorgane auf eine bestimmte Art und Weise eingesetzt und in diesem Einsatz spezifisch strukturiert. Schließlich werden in der Wahrnehmung spezifische kulturelle Schemata der Wahrnehmung angewandt. (Reckwitz 2015: 447)*

Reckwitz not only speaks of a social order, but of a 'sensory order' (cf. 2015: 446) which is influenced by and itself organizes society, and the sense of hearing is part of this very order. He also emphasizes how sociocultural practices are central to the structuring of the senses, attesting to the contingent nature of perception, which relies on the routinization of each practice and its social reproduction (cf. Reckwitz 2002: 255). In an earlier article, Reckwitz makes an argument which also shows how semiotics and cultural studies can complement each other; the research program of the latter "zielt darauf ab, die impliziten, in der Regel nicht bewussten symbolischen Ordnungen, kulturellen Codes und Sinnhorizonte zu explizieren, die in […] menschlichen Praktiken […] zum Ausdruck kommen und diese ermöglichen" (Reckwitz 2004: 2). Human perception also follow such symbolic orders and cultural codes, and semiotics provides a methodological basis for describing the multifarious horizons of meaning (Reckwitz's term) of sensory experiences such as sound.

In the past, different terms and concepts were used to draw attention to the cultural constitution of sound and its perception. One of the early attempts, in the early 2000s, to account for such a cultural understanding of sound was presented by Michael Bull und Les Back in their edited *Auditory Culture Reader* (2004), which also aims at providing different disciplines within the humanities with an umbrella term ('auditory culture') for a shared research interest in sonic phenomena and aural sensation. Soon after, Michele Hilmes posed a related, very pointed question in her article entitled "Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies? And Does it Matter?". In this review of recent publications on the topic, she describes a conceptual shift

in the field of the study of sound and suggests "to redefine it less as the study of sound itself, or as practices of aurality within a particular industry or field, than of the cultural contexts out of which sound media emerged and which they in turn work to create: *sound culture*" (Hilmes 2005: 249; italics in the original). While Hilmes specifically addresses sound media (and not sound in general) in her article, her suggested concept of 'sound culture' already points to an approach that considers sound in conjunction with social and cultural spheres. The term has since been taken up by researchers like Maier, who states that "studying *sound cultures* means exploring the specific social and cultural functions of sound in a particular time and space, across different media formats, production environments and listening habits" (2016: 179; italics in the original). Semiotics offers a conceptual framework which can be used to address the social and cultural functions of sound that Maier writes about, and the analysis of sound within literature likewise benefits from an approach informed by cultural studies which takes into account the contingency of the codes that structure sound culture.

Literary sounds participate in meaning-making within sound culture by engaging with the knowledge of sound. Writing about and staging sonic phenomena in literature is thus a cultural practice that creatively relates to sound and thereby also has an impact on the codes through which sound is understood. A semiotic approach can highlight specific significative aspects of sound within literature, such as the relation to violence.

2.2.3 The semiotic relation between literary sounds and violence

The application of semiotics within sound studies (and related fields) described above provides a theoretical background for the analyses of literary sounds in the case studies. Semiotics lays open the significative potential of sounds and their ability to interact with other sign systems and cultural codes. This potential is even further expanded in literary texts: Here, the imaginative staging of sounds opens up new possibilities regarding how sound is entangled with different codes, and it creates new codes that attribute other meanings to the auditory dimension. In Jurij Lotman's terminology, this process can be called an 'external recoding', which is one way of creating meaning in a secondary modeling semiotic system such as literature (cf. Lotman 1977 [1970]: 35–36). Lotman notes that "the greater the distance between structures made equivalent to each other in the process of recoding, the greater the disparity in their nature, the richer will be the content of the very act of switching from one system to the other" (1977 [1970]: 36). The notion of literary sounds as intermodal references, as applied in this book, can be seen as such an act

of switching between systems (e.g. between the literary and the aural), and the sonic imagination acts as the driving force behind this process.

Literary sounds and their semiotic properties thus differ distinctly from 'real', audible sounds, resulting in practically endless possibilities for sounds to become meaningful in literary texts. Instead of attempting to provide an exhaustive semiotic analysis of the literary sounds in the corpus of texts, the application of semiotics is strictly limited to the connection between sound and violence. Through this approach, the political dimension of literary sounds is foregrounded in order to answer the main research question of this book. Thus, when literary sounds are identified as signs in *Auditory Violence*, primarily the focus is not on their semiotic properties as linguistic signs, but rather as cultural entities that signify violence. While the linguistic constitution of literary sounds is an important aspect for the analysis in the case studies, neither the structural relationship between literary sounds and language, nor how they are connected to 'real', extra-literary sounds can be examined on the basis of semiotics within the scope of this book.

The main point of reference for the semiotic analysis and its terminology is the work of Charles S. Peirce. In recent years, more and more sound scholars have adopted Peirce's theories for the study of sonic phenomena (cf. Capeller 2018, Murray 2015). In the edited volume *Keywords of Sound*, Samuels and Porcello's contribution also examines "implications of the Peircean sign-type formulation for sound studies" (2015: 90). They focus on Peirce's second trichotomy of signs, which consists of the index, the icon and the symbol, and they show that sounds can also be categorized in accordance with these types of signs (cf. Samuels/Porcello 2015: 89–91). This trichotomy is also particularly useful in regard to the research interest of this book because it can be adapted to form a tool for examining the political significance of literary sounds in precise terms. Peirce's second trichotomy is still an important classification of signs within semiotics and beyond, and researchers continue to discuss and attempt to develop it further for new application purposes (cf. Ding 2016). Some scholars even argue that his later systems of classification (which are more complex and comprise many more classes of signs) are inferior to the triadic view of signs, arguing that such an extended classification is counterproductive and reductionist (cf. Liszka 2019: 154–155). For the case studies, Peirce's second trichotomy makes it possible to correlate literary sounds with violence as part of a relation between a sign and its object: Within the trichotomy, signs are classified as either icons, indices or symbols, depending on the relation of the sign to its object (cf. Peirce 1994: 2.247),[51] and the semiotic analyses within the main part of this book

51 Peirce's works will be quoted in accordance with the electronic edition of the *Collected Papers*, i.e., with reference to the volume and the paragraph.

determine how literary sounds are connected to violence based on this distinction. Orienting the analysis towards Peirce's terminology and concepts can also ensure that the case studies share a uniform theoretical framework which, in turn, makes it possible to compare the different ways in which literary sounds relate to violence in the chosen texts of postcolonial literature.

As described in the introduction, postcolonial literature is pervaded with themes and topics related to violence, and sound is an important (albeit overlooked) aspect in the history of postcolonialism, which is also affected by the same violence. However, these two components, violence and sound, are combined in many different manners in postcolonial literature. Consider the following two examples: A text stages the sounds that are produced during the torture of a prisoner (for example, human screams), as is the case in the beginning of J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (cf. 2000 [1980]: 5). In another text, the accompanying noise of a train is foregrounded, a train whose arrival and departure signals the arrest of a village inhabitant by the secret police (in Chingiz Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, cf. 1981 [1980]: 162–165). In both cases, violence plays an important role in the narrated events, but one needs to distinguish between the different forms of violence that are manifest here (physical in the first example, and mostly structural in the second). Depending on the form of violence, the sounds establish different semiotic relations to violence, which is also greatly affected by how sound is staged in the text, i.e., by which literary means sounds are presented.

On the most basic level, the understanding of literary sounds as signs follows Peirce's statement that "in order that anything should be a Sign, it must 'represent,' as we say, something else, called its ***Object***" (Peirce 1994: 2.230; bold and italics in the original). By conceiving of literary sounds as signs for violence, the analysis can differentiate between various sign relations: Within this approach, a literary sound is a sign (or representamen) and violence is its object. In Peirce's second trichotomy, signs are divided into three different types depending on how the sign relates to its object (cf. Peirce 1994: 2.243). In accordance with this classification, literary sounds can be distinguished with regard to how they convey violence.

First, there is the sign type of the index. One of the definitions that Peirce provides for the index is that it is a sign "which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object" (1994: 2.248). There is thus a direct correlation between an indexical sign and its object. For literary sounds, this means that a sound can be the effect of violence, or that it can be identified as the result of an act of violence when it falls into the criteria of indexical signs. A literary sound such as this merely directs the attention to the fact that violence is taking place.

Second, the icon, which is a sign that "refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own" (Peirce 1994: 2.247). In other words, the sign and

its object are in some way similar to each other (cf. Peirce 1994: 2.276). In this sense, literary sounds become iconic in regard to violence if they share some of its features: This is the case when, for instance, a literary sound itself is identified as violent, or when it is the direct target of violence and is thus itself marked by a violent characteristic. The difference between an iconic and an indexical relation between sound and violence also becomes clearer when one considers that a 'pure' icon makes it impossible to differentiate between the sign and its object because, then, they are too much alike (cf. Peirce 1994: 5.74). The literary sounds in the analyzed texts can never be pure icons in regard to violence because it is always possible to make a distinction between the sign and its object in this context. But the idea of the pure icon illustrates that in the case of an iconic relation, sound is more intrinsically interwoven with violence due to its own characteristics.

Third, the symbolic sign completes Peirce's second trichotomy: It is "a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object" (Peirce 1994: 2.249). The symbolic connection between a literary sound and violence is thus more abstract than in the case of an index or an icon. Unlike an index, a literary sound which symbolically relates to violence is not directly affected by it. Neither does it have to resemble aspects of violence, as an iconic relation suggests. For Peirce, a symbol is a "conventional sign, or one depending upon habit (acquired or inborn)" (1994: 2.297). Literary texts can stimulate the formation of a 'habit' that lets one associate certain sounds with violence, for example, through the repetition of motifs or the parallelization of sonic phenomena with the conflict between different forces.

The semiotic examination in the case studies determines which one of these sign types is the most applicable to specific literary sounds and shows how the semiotic relations between the sounds and violence are developed in the texts. However, as Peirce also shows at various points, the sign types cannot be absolutely isolated from each other: Each relation of a sign to its object thus involves, to a certain degree, at least one of the other forms of signification within this trichotomy.[52] This is also true for the connection between literary sounds and violence: When the analysis determines the semiotic relation between specific sounds and violence, this does not imply that they exclusively have an indexical, iconic or symbolic relation. Rather, the analysis observes which semiotic characteristics are the most noticeable in a specific literary sound and the way it conveys violence. In each instance, it is possible that a literary sound also establishes other semiotic relations to violence

52 Cf., for example, what Peirce writes in regard to the index: "In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. It does, therefore, involve a sort of Icon" (1994: 2.248).

and these may also involve different forms of violence that are less apparent. However, over the course of the case studies, it will be shown how certain semiotic relations tend to have a greater affinity with specific forms of violence when it comes to literary sounds.

3 The literary sonic imagination and violence in postcolonial prose fiction: Case studies

The works analyzed in the following case studies explore different aspects of the entanglement of sound and the postcolonial condition. The sonic imagination articulates a variety of conflicts that are tied to different forms of oppression and resistance in these texts, which are analyzed through the prism of violence and its various forms.

In Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, on which the first case study focuses, the Soviet presence becomes palpable through the auditory environment and elements, such as the railway, that are accompanied by a plurality of literary sounds. In interviews, Aitmatov himself refers to a 'Russian colonialism' within Central Asia (cf. Martens 2005), and while his perspective on this time period and his relationship with the Soviet government are highly ambivalent, his novel presents an extensive exploration of the effects of occupation, which become noticeable not least through the sound culture of the region.

Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* tells the story of Anna Morgan, who moves from the British West Indies (known today as the Commonwealth Carribean) to England during a period before decolonization. Some of the central themes in the novel are closely related to sound, such as Anna's work as a chorus-girl and her attempt at a singing career. As the narrator and protagonist, Anna's attentiveness in regard to sound makes certain power dynamics apparent that manifest themselves in terms of political categories, such as gender, race and class.

Two of Coetzee's novels also demonstrate a particular awareness of sonic phenomena in combination with highly charged political issues relating to imperialism and postcolonial statehood. *Waiting for the Barbarians* details the escalation of a conflict between the representatives of a fictional 'Empire' and an indigenous people (referred to as 'barbarians') in a frontier town and its surroundings. The 'Magistrate', who is in charge of the town before a Special Forces division takes over control, witnesses the mistreatment of the indigenous population and relies very much on his aural perception throughout this process, particularly in relation to the frequently occurring torture of prisoners. *Life & Times of Michael K*, also written under the prevailing influence of apartheid in South Africa, is an account of the eponymous protagonist and his experiences during a civil war and a time of political unrest. K's arduous journey, on which he runs into the military and is interned in different camps, is told with a strong emphasis on the contrast between various literary sounds that stages a sonic conflict between overwhelming sonic phenomena and a silence that, over time, becomes a subversive instrument.

As the object of the last case study, Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi* demonstrates yet another approach to the interconnection of sound and power. Set in Haiti after centuries of colonization and occupation, the novel entwines different narrative strands that revolve around the ascent of a dictator and his despotic rule. Sound plays an eminently important role throughout the text, be it in relation to sonorous traditions of Haitian Vodou or the silencing of the dictator Saintil's subjects in favor of a 'sonic monopoly' of his voice.

3.1 Chingiz Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* and the sonic occupation of Central Asia

Among the many changes within Central Asia brought on by the Russian colonial project, the introduction of the railway was one of the most incisive features of the occupation by the Russian Empire in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. The Russian Empire pursued a so-called 'railway imperialism,' not only consolidating its territories, but also expanding them through the establishment of a railroad system (cf. Schenk 2014: 114). In the Soviet Union, the railway continued to grow in importance in Central Asia, as the example of the Turkestano-Siberian Railroad shows: Built from 1926 to 1931, and one of the most important railway projects in Central Asia and the Soviet Union in general, the Turkestano-Siberian Railroad "was to bring not only trains to the Kazakh steppe, but revolution" (Payne 2001: 10), on the basis of a massive push for industrialization (cf. also Rees 1995). In the Soviet Union as a whole, the railway became inextricably linked with the Gulag prison system, whether as a means of transporting prisoners to the camps (cf. Applebaum 2003: 159–180) or as a gigantic building project reliant on forced labor, as the notorious examples of the Salekhard-Igarka Railroad, or Dead Road, Stalin's unfinished railroad venture, and the Baikal-Amur Railroad demonstrate.

Closer to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 1980, the Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov published his first novel, *И дольше века длится день* [*I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*] (*The Day Lasts Longer Than a Hundred Years* in the English translation), choosing the Soviet *lingua franca* Russian instead of Kyrgyz, which dominated his early literary career in the 1950s and 60s. In the novel, Aitmatov highlights an array of topics and themes that relate to Central Asia under Soviet rule, which has also been termed the region's "second colonial experience" (Brower 2003: 153).[53] The opposition between the Soviet political system and traditional ways of life in particular are

53 In the last 20 years, the Soviet Union and Central Asia have been increasingly examined from the perspective of postcolonial studies; cf., for example, Moore 2001, Ram 2003, Etkind 2011, Adams 2008, Heathershaw 2010, and Khalid 2007. For an analysis of Aitmatov's novel based on postcolonial theory, cf., for example, Coombs 2011.

pervasive throughout the novel: The process of Russification, for example, is one of the chief issues negotiated in the novel; the sentiments and ideas expressed in the text even became so influential that some of its terms are now being used in areas outside of literature, as can be seen in the case of the 'mankurt' (a figure from a legend told in the novel): Bhavna Dave notes that, in Kazakhstan, "[*m*]*ankurt* is a widely used metaphor to convey the loss of ethnic identity and native language, and has become synonymous with being Russified" (2007: 50).[54] Aitmatov's novel thus lays bare political tensions which existed in 20th century Central Asia by contrasting native identity, indigenous traditions and folk ways with the political regime and its version of modernity. This opposition is also expressed through themes such as the conflict between languages (cf. Caffee 2013: 30–36), the focus on folk legends and myths and the repressive measures taken against their circulation, the contrasting of urban and rural life, and, last but not least, the impact of technological innovations (cf. Mozur 1995: 120–122).

One of the topics taken up constantly throughout the novel and relating to the above issues is the railway. The following paragraph is repeated multiple times throughout the text: It is featured at the beginning of the novel, it stands at the opening of many chapters, it is the closing paragraph at the very end of the novel, and it is used to indicate shifts between different storylines. Each time it is repeated, the passage may be different in some minor regards, but it is always clearly recognizable as a variation of one and the same opening paragraph:

> Поезда в этих краях шли с востока на запад и с запада на восток...
>
> А по сторонам от железной дороги в этих краях лежали великие пустынные пространства – Сары-Озеки, Серединные земли желтых степей.
>
> В этих краях любые расстояния измерялись применительно к железной дороге, как от Гринвичского меридиана...
>
> А поезда шли с востока на запад и с запада на восток... *(Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 8–9; italics in the original)*

> Trains in these parts went from East to West and from West to East...
>
> On either side of the railway lines lay the great wide spaces of the desert – Sary-Ozeki, the Middle lands of the yellow steppes.
>
> In these parts any distance was measured in relation to the railway, as if from the Greenwich meridian...

54 For an analysis of the mankurt within the novel, cf. Mozur 1995: 107–111; Mozur 1987: 13–24; Kolesnikoff 1999: 71–74; Haber 2003: 137.

> And the trains went from East to West, and from West to East… *(Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 12; italics in the original)*

The importance of the railway within the novel is foreshadowed through the frequent repetition of this passage: Here, the centrality of the railroad is emphasized by ascribing it the status of a universal geographical guideline, and it is depicted as the most important point of orientation in the steppes (which is where most of the novel's story takes place), also mirroring the momentous introduction of the railway in Central Asia. Most noticeably, however, Aitmatov chooses to foreground a particular attribute of trains (and the railway system in general) throughout *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*: Their sonic properties, the sounds they produce. The number of references to auditory perception is striking when the events of the novel involve trains, railroads or railway stations, and sounds often serve to highlight the political conflicts that pervade the text.

Only recently has the railway been taken up again as an object of investigation within sound studies. Michael Bull summarizes the multidimensionality of the railway as follows:

> *Trains like other technologies are subordinate clauses in the march of cultural history deriving their meanings from power, economics, cultural and perhaps more personal experiences. At various times we have listened to and understood the locomotive through the prism of leisure, noise pollution, industrialization, imperialism, progress and so on. (Bull 2019: xxvi)*

In the case of Aitmatov's novel, it certainly appears as if the sounds of the railway (literally) echo the imperial heritage of the Soviet Union, which goes back to the occupation of Central Asia by the Russian Empire. While the railway itself is a prominent trope in postcolonial fiction and has been examined in a variety of publications (cf., for example, Spalding/Fraser 2012, Aguiar 2011), the sound dimension of trains has been relatively ignored in this context. Recent research in the field of sound studies and ethnomusicology can stimulate a much needed debate on the importance of sound in the formation of empire which could also be extended to literary studies:

> *As a colonizing force in the rise of empire, […] sound productions became a key tool in imposing other forms of discipline and order. At the outset, sound's presence was anything but orderly. Occupations were inherently noisy and chaotic […]. In its participation in social order, however, sound production quickly assumed a role in organizing human behavior. (Radano/Olaniyan 2016: 2)*

Radano and Olaniyan's characterization of occupation as 'noisy' opens up the perspective reflected in Aitmatov's novel, relating to what can be tentatively called the

'sonic occupation' of Central Asia: Occupation and the aural are firmly interrelated, and in order to gain a fuller understanding of the extent of occupation, one has to take into account the changes in sound culture. The way the sounds of the railway are presented in the novel lets one perceive them as a disciplining force and a means of oppression in their own right.

Besides the railway, Aitmatov also addresses other issues referring back to the occupation by the Russian Empire: Russification, for instance, did not start with the Soviet Union[55] and it was already well underway during Russian imperial rule – some of these enduring policies and political measures established by the Russian Empire are directly related to the introduction of the railway and extend well into the 20th century and the Soviet Union.

3.1.1 The railway in Central Asia under the Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union

Similarly to other colonial systems around the globe, the railway in Central Asia was an important imperial tool under Russian rule. It served economic and military purposes, and the railway was also a major factor in the colonization of the region. Since "[w]hat is audible about empire is part of a larger working logic" (Radano/Olaniyan 2016: 6), the introduction of the railway in Central Asia under the Russian Empire – long before the establishment of the Soviet Union – is an illuminating process enabling one to gain a deeper understanding of the changes in the sound culture during that time. The railway had numerous social and cultural effects within the historical region of Turkistan (as it has come to be called since the Russian conquest), a part of which later became the Kazakh SSR, where most of Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* is set.

Plans to establish a railway system in Central Asia emerged in the 1870s. The construction of the Transcaspian railway started in 1880 and it reached the city of Samarkand in 1888, connecting it to Krasnovodsk bay. In 1899, the route was extended to Tashkent, as part of the Samarkand-Andijan line. By 1906, the Orenburg-Tashkent connection was completed after six years of construction work (cf. Schenk 2014: 84–88; Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 63–68; Brower 2003: 79–80; Abdurakhimova 2005: 141). The growth of the railway system can be summarized as follows: "By 1880, just before the construction of the Transcaspian railway, Russia had built 21,000 km of railways, and 70,000 km of railways were built in 1906" (Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 65).

55 For a nuanced study on linguistic and cultural hegemony within the Soviet Union in the first half of the 20th century, cf. Martin 2001.

Economically, the railway was intended to facilitate colonial exploitation by the Russian Empire: "The introduction of the railway [...] was a direct consequence of the policy of making the colonies profitable" (Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 65). Cotton, for example, was one of the most important commodities for the Russian Empire, and the textile industry heavily relied on shipments from Turkistan.[56] By building railroads, the Russian Empire ended the economic isolation of Central Asia and integrated the region into the global trade market to the Empire's benefit (cf. Brower 2003: 79–80).

The military was also a deciding factor in the establishment of the railway, as it was an important means of moving troops from the imperial center to distant regions faster than ever before. For instance, the Russian Empire sought military security to counter British power in Central Asia against the background of the so-called 'Great Game' (cf. Schenk 2014: 88). The Empire also needed to maintain a military presence to put down rebellions in Turkistan and for its campaigns to subdue Turkmen nomads, for instance, in the western deserts of Central Asia (cf. Brower 2003: 80–82).

As more convenient means of transportation, trains were also largely responsible for a big influx of Russian settlers in Turkistan, who received preferential treatment from the colonial authorities in the distribution of land, for instance, also further contributing to ethnic conflicts (cf. Brower 2003: 130–140). The native population, which consisted to a large extent of pastoral nomads – approximately 80 % in 1897 (cf. Tabyshalieva 2005: 87) – were forced to settle in order to keep up with the Russian colonizers and be able to earn their living (cf., e.g., Abdurakhimova 2005: 140). Furthermore, the nomadic way of life was considered 'primitive' and there were campaigns for the sedentarization of the indigenous peoples as part of a Russian *mission civilisatrice*, which also pushed the process of Russification (cf. Schenk 2014: 88, 91; Brower 2003: 128). The Russian presence and the railway also made certain occupations obsolete, such as muleteers and travel guides, since the railway presented a more comfortable and much faster means of transportation compared to travelling by camel (cf. Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 66–68).

The railway epitomized the conflict between traditional pastoral societies and technological modernity: From an imperial perspective, there were the cattle and livestock of the nomads on the one hand, and on the other, the so-called 'iron horse' of the Empire. The railway was, thus, an incisive innovation which confronted the indigenous population with new economic, social and cultural problems.

56 "[T]he share of cotton from Turkistan rose from about 30 per cent to more than 60 per cent in a very short period (from 1908 to 1912). In 1915 more than 350,000 tonnes of cotton were shipped to Russia, compared to 11,000 tonnes by 1877, that is before the construction of the railway and the introduction of American species of cotton" (Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 69).

In the Soviet Union, the railway remained a part of the civilizing mission referred to above, as can be seen in the example of the massive project of the Turkestano-Siberian Railroad. Among other things,

> *[t]he colossal struggles involved in […] acclimating nomads to industrial work while "Sovietizing" peasant seasonal workers […] cast Turksib in the role of an instrument of civilization in a supposedly uncivilized outback. Turksib's builders, very aware of this civilizing role, constantly made reference to the need to uplift backward natives, reform individualistic managers, and "reforge" insufficiently proletarian workers. (Payne 2001: 5)*

The building of the Turkestano-Siberian Railroad also furthered ethnic conflicts, as the Russian workers "sought to exclude Kazakhs from the ranks of proletarians" by "prejudice, mockery, and vicious pogroms" (Payne 2001: 10). While the blatant contradictions within the Soviet ideological program cannot be addressed within the scope of this case study,[57] it can be said that the railway was still an instrument of occupation under the Soviet regime, and it still had an immense impact on the lives of the indigenous population. The railway also prolonged the imperial history of the region, reinforcing racist mindsets in the context of the opposition between modernity and 'primitiveness'.

There is another aspect to the railway in Central Asia which has been disregarded in the academic literature about the region: The dimension of sound and its importance in regard to these new means of transportation.[58] Besides being a relevant factor in the subjugation and domination of different regions within Central Asia, trains and railway stations introduced Turkistan to an entirely new auditory environment in the 19th century. The pioneering work of scholars of sound studies, such as Emily Thompson (2004 [2002]), Mark M. Smith (2001) and Karin Bijsterveld (2008), to name but a few, has demonstrated how industrialization and technologization created a whole new spectrum of sounds, and how both processes influenced the ways of hearing and listening. "The steam whistle", Thompson writes, "which announced the arrival of both railroad and factory, constituted the acoustic signal of industrialization" (2004 [2002]: 120). M. Smith even goes as far as to call the sound of trains on the railroad the "rumble of modernity" (2001: 96). The sounds of the railway were also perceived as a nuisance at many points due to different factors: "[W]ith industrialization […], new kinds of noises began to offend. The sound of the

57 Cf., for example, Ram 2006: "The Soviet Union was expressly internationalist yet zealously territorial and expansionist, denying the autonomy of its constitutive peoples while retaining a federal structure that would nonetheless permit an elaborate discourse of local specificity" (832).

58 For a recent study about the auditory dimension of the railway as a theme in literary texts, cf. Marcus 2017.

railroad, for example, became a new source of complaint. The noise of its steam whistle was disturbing not only for its loudness but also for its unfamiliarity" (Thompson 2004 [2002]: 117). While the idea of the noisy technological innovation of the train might represent a culturally pessimistic "trope of industrial capitalism in the form of the railroad puncturing rural quietude" (M. Smith 2012: 44), the negative connotations of the railway correspond to the perception of trains in Central Asia in the 20th century, when at times the railway was even held by the indigenous population "to be a creation of the Devil" (Poujol/Fourniau 2005: 66). In Central Asia as well, trains and railroads produced entirely new sounds and unusual noises, at unprecedented volume levels, drastically altering the auditory environment. With the help of the railway, the Russian Empire did not just conquer space and time, but also the soundscape.[59]

In Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, these sounds, which are so closely associated with industrialization, become entangled with political oppression; additionally, the array of sounds is extended corresponding to technological renewals in the field of the railway in the Soviet Union. Loudspeakers, for instance, add to the auditory environment of the railway station, and Aitmatov's novel explicitly references the public address system (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 182–184).

While most researchers and critics focus on the science-fiction subplot and space flight, when it comes to the technological themes in the novel, the railway is also a pervading motif in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. Besides the passage quoted in the beginning of this case study, in which the centrality of the railroad is emphasized, the railway is integral to many more aspects of the novel: For example, the protagonist Yedigei works at a way station, just like his friend Kazangap, who dies in the beginning of the text and whose burial is the plot's main driving element. Even the former, alternative title of the novel markedly points to the railway: *Буранный полустанок* [*Burannyj polustanok*], which can be translated as *Blizzard Stop* or *Blizzard Station*.

There are two episodes in the novel in which the railway is of major importance and where the sound dimension of the narrated events presents the railway as an oppressive force, with different sites of sonic occupation becoming manifest. However, the sonic imagination also involves very positive experiences of sound in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. The kind of positively connoted sounds in the passages discussed in the following subchapter stand in direct contrast to the sonic phenomena produced by the railway system. The staging of these literary sounds puts the sonic impact of the railway into perspective and provides an additional view of the greater complex of themes related to sound in the novel.

59 For a critical discussion of the term 'soundscape' and its problematic implications, cf. Kelman 2010.

3.1.2 Native traditions of sound production

As mentioned above, the central plot element of the novel is the burial of Kazangap, an old friend of the protagonist Yedigei. Besides extensive renderings of folk myths and legends, the novel also consists of Yedigei's recollections of his own life, leading up to Kazangap's death. In one of his memories, Yedigei sets out to find and capture his camel Karanar, who – in a "sexual frenzy" (Coombs 2011: 56) as one researcher calls it – terrorizes another village during the rutting season. At this point, Yedigei has fallen in love with the wife of a friend of his and is tormented by the moral conflicts that come with this. He meets Erlepes, the supervisor of the local railway junction, while spending the night as a guest in the village. Erlepes is characterized by two particular qualities: Firstly, his knowledge of Kazakh history and folk traditions (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 216), and, secondly, his ability to play the dombra (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 217), a lute instrument which is popular in Central Asia. Yedigei greatly relates to the music that Erlepes plays on his dombra because it seems to express the agony he finds himself in due to his ill-fated love for his friend's wife:

> *Выходит, давно уже было известно тем людям, которые сочинили эту музыку, как и что произойдет с Буранным Едигеем, какие тяготы и муки предназначены ему на роду? А иначе как могли они знать, что почувствует он, когда услышит себя в том, что наигрывал Эрлепес? (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 217)*

> *It seemed that the people who had composed this music so long ago had somehow known what was going to happen to Burannyi Yedigei, what strains and tortures were to be his from birth. Otherwise, how could they have expressed it so perfectly in the music which Erlepes was playing? (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 261)*

In descriptions such as these, it is not just the musical quality of the pieces Erlepes plays that make Yedigei appreciate them so much, but also their great age and traditional value. From this point on, the narrator often highlights the ancient character of the music that Yedigei hears and how it enriches his aural sensations: "Давнишние переживания давнишних людей оживали в струнах, высвобождая, как сухие дрова в костре, огонь душевного горения" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218) ("[t]he long-dead feelings of ancient peoples lived again in the strings, re-kindled like dry wood in a blaze", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 198). The simile in the Russian original is much clearer in the appreciation of the antiqueness of the musical pieces because it establishes a direct connection between the age-old feelings brought to life by the strings and the age of the metaphorical dry wood (and their effect on the listener): Here, the 'sounding' or 'sounded feelings' rekindle the inner burning (of

the soul) of the listener. Thus, being antique becomes a value in itself, which is expressed through the literary staging of the music.

The esteem for the old compositions and the very fact of their antiqueness is also explicitly voiced by Yedigei – when asked, what kind of piece he would prefer to hear next, he replies: "Конечно, старинные вещи — они как бы роднее. Не знаю отчего, за душу берут, думы навевают" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 220) ("[o]f course, I prefer the old things, they're dearer to me. I don't know why, but they touch the heart and feed one's thoughts", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 263–264). Again, the Russian text reveals additional connotations in how the sentence is phrased: The Russian word 'родной' (*rodnoj*) – translated as 'dear' in the English text (which is only one of the possible meanings) – evokes different associations because it is connected to 'close' (as in 'close to someone's heart') and also to 'akin', in a quite literal genealogical sense. This choice of words is important here because in the novel the idea of tradition is very much connected to questions of identity, and the sonic imagination engages with this very discourse within the text.

The literary sounds staged during Yedigei's stay in the village also establish a connection to other themes and topics within the novel – for instance, the music makes him think of the Aral Sea, which is a very important place for Yedigei:

> *Одни наигрыши сменялись другими, одни мелодии переливались в следующие, и плыла душа Едигея, словно лодка по волнам. Снова очутился он мысленно на Аральском море […]. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218)*
>
> *One tune followed by others, one melody flowed into the next, and Yedigei's soul floated on the music like a boat over the waves. Once more he felt that he was back on the Aral' Sea. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 261)*

The sensory experiences staged in this passage and the language used here gradually introduce the theme of the Aral Sea, an important landmark throughout the novel. Yedigei's 'floating soul' is a figurative expression to illustrate the effects of the music, and even before this phrase, the image of the 'flowing melody' introduces a water metaphor emphasizing the 'organic' quality of this piece of music and also illustrating the dizzy state in which Yedigei finds himself while listening to it. The English translation establishes a more explicit connection between each part of this water imagery, since in the Russian original, Yedigei's soul does not float on the music, but simply floats – here, one is left to identify how Yedigei's floating soul and the flowing melody (which evokes the movement of waves) are related to each other. The direct simile between Yedigei's soul and a boat rounds off the references to water and the sea within the sonic imagination of this passage, even before the Aral Sea is introduced as a place to which Yedigei's mind wanders – in itself, the

phrase "словно лодка по волнам" ("like a boat over the waves") is also a clever joining of sound and water, since the concept of waves is generally used to describe the dispersion of both phenomena (sound waves and water waves). Furthermore, the sea has already been brought up shortly before in connection with Erlepes' playing of the dombra, also through the use of figurative speech: Having tuned his instrument, Erlepes looks at Yedigei and "в его черных, навыкате, больших глазах блеснули, отражаясь, как в море, блики света" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 217) ("in his large black eyes a gleam of light appeared, as if reflected from the sea", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 261). This moment before Erlepes starts to play already hints at the close connection between the literary sounds to come and the motif of the sea. Even after falling asleep, Yedigei dreams about the Aral Sea, and while dreaming that he is there, he continues to constantly hear the dombra and Erlepes singing (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 222).

Besides functioning as an important site for the personal development of the characters in the novel, the Aral Sea is also a symbol of the disastrous impact of Soviet policies in the region. Today, what remains of the Aral Sea is only a fraction of the extensive territory it once spanned, a process which began with the massive irrigation projects in the 1960s and which has had, and is still having, catastrophic effects on the ecology of the region (cf. Shukurov 2005: 503; Nurpeis 2005: 258–259; Alimova/Golovanov 2005: 238).[60] Through references such as these, the text subtly brings to mind the history of Central Asia under Soviet rule. Like the traditional piece of music staged in the account of Yedigei's visit of the village, the Aral Sea is another important part of the native culture, and these two entities are brought together in these passages through the sonic imagination.

Music and sound are also connected with native traditions on other levels during these events in the novel. For instance, after Yedigei states his preference for old pieces, Erlepes starts to sing a folk tale about an elderly bard who falls in love with a young girl (or the other way around, depending on how it is told; cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 220). Thus, the content of the tale also attributes great value to a profession that is inherently tied to music. Incidentally, this is the very same tale that is mentioned as incriminating evidence during the arrest of Abutalip, another character in the novel (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 161).

It is also remarkable that, in addition to the examples discussed above, other instances of figurative speech during this scene make heavy use of references to the sense of hearing and sonic phenomena. Upon hearing the second piece of music, "снова застонала настороженная душа Едигея" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 220)

60 For an analysis of the significance of the Aral Sea within Aitmatov's novel, cf. Mozur 1987: 20–22.

("[a]gain Yedigei's heart groaned", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 264). The metaphorical expression of Yedigei's agony through the 'groaning heart' (in the Russian original, it is his soul that groans) gives rise to newly imagined sounds. Moreover, the Russian text further describes Yedigei's soul as 'настороженный', which can be translated as 'alert' and is often used in connection with ears or hearing, as in 'to prick up one's ears'. The narrator goes on as follows: "[B]се, что было в этой истории, отзывалось в нем в этот раз с особой тоской и пониманием" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 220) ("all that was in this story was brought out again in him, this time with special feeling and understanding", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 264). Again, the Russian uses a particularly sonic imagery in the description of Yedigei's reaction to the music and the tale as 'отзывать' can be more literarily translated as 'to call forth', a metaphorical expression which relies on the idea of the voice and a concept of call and response in the staging of Erlepes' performance (instead of 'to bring out' in the English translation). This kind of figurative speech, saturated with sound images, is continually used throughout the depiction of the effects that the song has on Yedigei:

> *Ожили и переселились в душу через ту домбру страдания некогда влюбившегося, на беду свою, певца Раймалы-аги. И хотя ничего общего не было между ними, Едигей ощутил в той истории Раймалы-аги какое-то отдаленное созвучие, какую-то одинаковую боль. То, что испытал Раймалы-ага лет сто тому назад, как эхо отдавалось теперь в нем, в Буранном Едигее, живущем в пустынных сарозеках. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 222)*

> *The sufferings of Raimaly-aga long ago, whose love had led to his downfall, had been resurrected through the* dombra *and had entered Yedigei's heart. And although there was nothing exactly comparable in their predicament, Yedigei did feel that there was some distant accord, some similarity in their pain. That which Raimaly-aga had suffered some hundred years ago, was now, like an echo, sounding in Burannyi Yedigei, living in the Sarozek desert. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 266; italics in the original)*

Apart from the emotional capabilities of the musical instrument, the choice of words is again noteworthy: The 'accord' between Yedigei and Raimaly-aga is another metaphorical expression which is even more strongly connotated with sound in the Russian original ('созвучие', a 'sounding-together' or 'consonance'). This is then followed by a simile which describes how Yedigei relates to the tale he hears: The comparison with an echo lets the sonic imagination of the text convey the power of the musical piece and its touching effect, which is rooted in the native tradition 'ringing out' through the ages.

Time and time again, the text highlights the contrast and the gap between the traditional music played by Erlepes and the present time in which the characters

live: “Когда он взял в руки домбру, то сосредоточился и словно отдалился на некое расстояние от повседневности” (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 217) (“[w]hen he picked up the *dombra* and concentrated on the business of playing, he seemed to detach himself from everyday life”, Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 260). The instrument and the music seem to present a possibility of escape from the contemporary reality. This is later reiterated when the narrator – through free indirect discourse focalized by Yedigei – opposes Erlepes’ profession and his musical endeavours:

> *Перед ним сидел Эрлепес, вдохновенно наигрывая на домбре и вторя ей голосом, начальник разъезда, которому положено прежде всего ведать путями на определенном участке железной дороги, казалось бы, зачем ему носить в себе мучительную историю давнего прошлого, историю несчастного Раймалы-аги, зачем страдать так, точно бы сам он был на его месте… Вот что значит музыка и истинное пение, думалось Едигею […]. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 221)*

> *Before him sat Erlepes, singing and playing with inspiration on the* dombra. *This man was in charge of the junction, and his first task was to look after a certain stretch of railway track. It might be asked, why should he have preserved within him this harrowing story of the distant past, the story of the unhappy Raimaly-aga? Why should he choose to suffer as if he himself was in Raimaly-aga’s place? This was the message of all real singing and music, thought Yedigei […]. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 265; italics in the original)*

While Erlepes is playing the dombra and singing the folk tale, Yedigei again starts to think about the great age of the musical piece. The piece appears to deviate from the order and necessities of everyday life, giving rise instead to introspection and a contemplative meditation on the ‘true’ meaning and value of art and, more generally, life. The narrator contrasts the day-to-day tasks of Erlepes, as the supervisor of the railway junction, with his dedication to the art and craft of performing these traditional songs. Here already, the railway seems to be the antipode of the ‘natural’ order of things, something that stands in the way of truly knowing oneself, or is at least radically different from that, and a mark of alienation.

During the remainder of these events in the novel, the railway makes multiple appearances, and quite noisy ones at that: “Как и на Боранлы-Буранном, то и дело проходили с шумом поезда, позвякивали стекла” (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 216) (“[a]s at Boranly-Burannyi, every now and then the trains went noisily past, rattling the windows”, Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 260). The sounds of the train are contrasted here with the other characteristics of the auditory environment; for instance, the train’s noise disrupts the rural stillness of the night: “Представил он

себе, как, грохоча, бегут в тот час поезда среди ночи, полыхая огнями и взметая снежную пыль, и какая глухая и бесконечная ночь стоит вокруг" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 219) ("[h]e imagined the trains racing through the night with their great noise, their lights blazing, sending up clouds of powdery snow. Yet what a still and endless night lay all around!" Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 262). The following examples from the novel expand on oppositions such as this one, where trains and the railway system in general emblematize the text's fundamental conflicts, foregrounded through the sonic imagination and the literary staging of sounds.

3.1.3 The railway station as a site of sonic occupation

Among Yedigei's recollection of various events in the novel, some of the most important ones are related to the memories of his experiences with the family of Abutalip, his wife Zaripa and their two sons Ermek and Daul. In one of these memories, Yedigei travels to the city with Zaripa, whose husband Abutalip died during his imprisonment after his arrest by the secret police. When they go to the train station to claim a notice informing them of Abutalip's death, Yedigei thinks about his friend's death and about what is to become of Abutalip's children. While he waits for Zaripa in the square in front of the station, he notices people getting off a train and loud music coming from the public loudspeakers:

> *Все о том же думал Едигей, сидя на скамейке в пристанционном скверике, поджидая Зарипу. […]*
>
> *Он удивлялся, какие отрешенные лица у людей, какие они безликие, равнодушные, усталые, как отдалены друг от друга… К тому же музыка, передаваемая по радио, простудно хрипящему на всю пристанционную площадь, вызывала печаль и уныние однообразной текучей монотонностью. Что за музыка? Вот заладили. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 182)*

> *He was amazed what bored, drab faces people had, how featureless, how unconcerned they looked, how tired and cut off from one another. Added to which, the radio music on the public address sounded as if it were suffering from a throaty cold, filling the whole station square with its monotonously flowing dull noise and adding to the general misery. What sort of music was this? What a programme! (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 219–220)*

The literary sounds in the above quote meet the criteria of three different modes of sound in literature which are described by Hoene: First, there are "descriptions of environments with predominantly auditory terms and a focus on auditory sensations" (Hoene 2016: 365) – in the above case, the station square is presented with a

heavy emphasis on sound, and more specifically, the music which fills the square. Secondly, Hoene also refers to cases in which "objects and technologies of auditory perception are the subject matter" (2016: 365), and the public address system in the quote clearly represents such an acoustic apparatus. Thirdly, Hoene cites "characters' auditory perceptions" (2016: 365) – while Hoene most likely refers to instances where the sensation of sound is made explicit in the text (through verbs such as 'listen' or 'hear'), the use of free indirect discourse at the end of the quoted paragraph ("What sort of music was this? What a programme!" Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 220) clearly indicates that the sounds are conveyed through Yedigei's listening experience.

In this passage, the culturally pessimistic trope of the train as the emblem of modernity and technologization is again noticeable. In line with the opposition of traditional ways of life and the Soviet political system within the novel, the train is rendered in a negative light by the way the effects of this mechanical means of transportation are presented: more specifically, by reference to the isolation and apathy of the passengers leaving the train. At this point in the text, one also notices how the music coming from the loudspeakers on the square matches the alienated state of the rail travelers. Thus, the music and the technological apparatus of the loudspeaker enter into a relationship with the train, creating an assemblage of estranging forces which converge at the railway station.

The staging of this music in the novel also needs to be considered in the context of Yedigei's visit to the village of Ak-Moinak, which has been discussed in the previous subchapter. The cold, sterile character of the music at the train station is decidedly different from the 'organic', 'flowing' nature of the previous traditional music , which also inspired the passages' water imagery when showing Yedigei's reaction to Erlepes' playing of the dombra. While the above quote also uses the word 'текучий' or 'течь' ('flowing' or 'to flow'), it is not used to directly characterize the music in the Russian original (contrary to the English translation), but instead is only applied to the monotony of the music that fills the surroundings, which is a subtle but decisive difference. When, in the case of Yedigei listening to the folk music performed by Erlepes, the lively melodies flow like waves, here it is the monotony that 'floods' the square and calls forth sorrow and gloom. These two instances in which music is staged in the text are also opposed to each other on other levels: Besides Yedigei's different reactions to what he hears (being deeply moved by the emotional power of the traditional piece in contrast with being appalled by the dullness of the music at the train station), the media producing the sounds in question and the setting in which they are perceived also differ radically. It is of great importance that Yedigei's experience of the traditional folk music is facilitated by the

'unfiltered' in-person performance of Erlepes, which represents the immediate perception of the physical process of producing sound on a live instrument and vocally through song. Compare this to the broadcast of the dull music through the public address system at the station square, a mechanically-aided reproduction of sound, which is also marked by 'cold' sonic characteristics (as opposed to the warmth of Erlepes' performance). In addition to the different sources of the sounds, the intimate setting at the home of one of the inhabitants of Ak-Moinak, among people with whom the protagonist feels a close connection, deviates clearly from the circumstances under which Yedigei hears the music at the station square, characterized mainly by the anonymity and isolation of the mass of railway passengers. Thus, passages such as this in the novel continue the theme of the "terrifying side of technology" (Mozur 1995: 121) through the sonic imagination.

Shortly after the quoted passage, Yedigei and Zaripa find out why the music is broadcasted all over the station square:

А музыка лилась по радио над станцией, как знаючи, траурная, бесконечно тягостная. […]

Задрав головы, они смотрели, как несколько человек, приставив лестницу, вывешивали высоко над дверью большой военный портрет Сталина в черном, траурном обрамлении.

Понял он, почему и музыка по радио так заунывно звучала. […] Он не проронил ни слова. И Зарипе было ни до кого и ни до чего…

А поезда шли, как и полагалось им идти, что бы ни произошло на свете. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 184)

The radio music played on all over the station, as if aware of Zaripa's bereavement, for it was mournful and exceedingly painful. […]

Lifting their heads, they were watching some men put up a ladder and set about hanging a large portrait of Stalin in military uniform, with a black mourning border around it, high above the door.

Now he understood why the radio music had been so mournful. […] He did not utter a word. Moreover Zaripa was not interested in anyone or anything else.

The trains, however, were running as usual, as they had to, whatever else might be happening on earth. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 221–222)

Although at first the sorrowful music seems to coincide with Zaripa's grief, the two characters are then confronted with the real reason why the music is playing: It is mourning music arranged to be played on the occasion of Stalin's death in 1953. The internally focalized narration at this point in the novel – foregrounding the experiences of the two characters – adds to the effect of surprise, leaving one stunned

when reading about this unexpected detail, just as Yedigei and Zaripa appear to be. Thus, by presenting the events through internal focalization, one is also deceived at first by the sad solemnity of the music. To add insult to injury, the passage is rounded off with a remark about how the trains still keep running, unaffected by the tragedy that has befallen Zaripa's family.

The staged sounds establish a connection between Abutalip's death and Stalin's – but as it turns out, the auditory environment serves entirely to commemorate Stalin's passing. The music announcing Stalin's death also appears to drown out Zaripa's and Yedigei's grief for Abutalip, assisted by the public address system at the train station. Barry Truax highlights the political effect of high-volume sounds emanating from loudspeakers:

> *The control of spatial communication […] is essential to centralized power and domination. Therefore, acoustic power, amplified through the loudspeaker, or in the form of any loud sound, is linked to the domination of space. The loudest sounds have always been associated with the most powerful forces in the world, whether they represented physical or political power. (Truax 2001 [1984]: 113)*

Jacques Attali makes a similar point in his earlier publication about the emission of sound and how it is related to power: "La monopolisation de l'émission de messages, le contrôle du bruit et l'institutionalisation [sic] du silence des autres sont partout les conditions de pérennité d'un pouvoir" (Attali 1977: 17). Therefore, by staging the music broadcast by the public loudspeakers, the text marks the railway station as a site of sonic occupation. The music serves a propagandistic purpose by announcing Stalin's death which, at this point in the novel, is contrasted with the death of a victim of Stalin's regime. As Michael Denning argues in his article in *Audible Empire* with reference to Kofi Agawu's contribution to the same volume: "Empire […] was a musical event: the conquest and colonization of territories was 'accompanied' by the musical occupation of the space, and the projection of a new colonial order in sound" (Denning 2016: 35). In the case of Aitmatov's novel, the story of which is situated in the Soviet Union, the occupation of space through sound is still in effect, and the music at the train station does, in fact, project a new colonial order: A colonial order in which the lost lives of the indigenous population go unnoticed when they are juxtaposed with the passing of the head of the political terror. Furthermore, in the quote from the novel, there is a discrepancy in the intensity of the sounds within the auditory environment: The behavior of Yedigei and Zaripa is quiet, as opposed to the loudness of the music. By presenting this contrast in volume, the text also conveys the imbalance of power, which becomes manifest

at the train station. Aided by the sonic imagination, one becomes aware of this precarious power constellation based solely on the staged sound dimension of the narrated world and the effect this has on the characters.

Already during the Russian Empire, railway stations were also imagined to be part of the *mission civilisatrice* because they represented a "breeding ground for civilization" (Schenk 2014: 189; my own translation). As Aitmatov's text also shows, under the Soviet regime, the space of the railway station was modernized with acoustic technologies that further enabled the sonic occupation of Central Asia. The sonic attributes of trains are staged in a similar fashion in the novel, as can be noticed during Abutalip's arrest, which subsequently leads to his death.

3.1.4 The literary sounds of the train and Soviet oppression

The following episode in the novel also relies heavily on a contrast of sounds, and the difference in the acoustic modes and behaviors is even more striking than in the example from the previous subchapter. Yedigei's recollections here are about the actual arrest of Abutalip, who is charged with "вражеская агитация" and "котрреволюция" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 154) ("hostile agitation" and "counter-revolutionary tendencies", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 185), by the secret police, which took place before the events at the railway station analyzed above. This time, sonic occupation becomes manifest in connection with the train on which the officers take Abutalip away. The scene where the train arrives at the village and leaves again with Abutalip under arrest is riddled with various literary sounds that establish a contrast of auditory phenomena and further highlight the menacing presence of the train. It is also noticeable that – similarly to how train noises were perceived as a nuisance when newly introduced – the sounds of the train are a source of distress for the novel's characters and the text accentuates the adverse situation between the village inhabitants and the secret police by the train noise and the reactions to it.

Before the train arrives at the village, the sonic behavior of the inhabitants and the auditory environment are presented to set the scene. They are aware of Abutalip's arrest and they are portrayed as mostly quiet: For example, "Зарипа неслышно плакала" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 162) ("Zaripa was weeping quietly", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 195)[61] and Daul, one of Abutalip's sons, "молчал" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 162) ("was quiet", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 195). Likewise, the surroundings are described as equally quiet: "Ветер гнал поземку с шорохом и едва различимым посвистом" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 162) ("The wind swept through

61 The English translation does not exactly reflect the level of quietness present in the original; a more literal translation of the quote would read as "Zaripa wept inaudibly".

the place. It chased the snowy air across the ground with a rustling sound and a scarcely audible whistle", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 195). In order to express the utter silence in the text, some of the actions are relegated to the visual realm, even if they are commonly associated with specific sounds: "Клубы пара изо рта выдавали тяжелые вздохи Укубалы." (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 162) ("The heavy sighs of Ukubala were revealed in the clouds of mist which came from her mouth", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 195).

On the other hand, and in contrast to the acoustic behaviours of the village inhabitants and to the quiet surroundings, there is the train, which signals the imminent parting with Abutalip and produces very loud noises. The train is described as an intrusive element disturbing the sorrowful quiet:

> *Пробивая лобовым светом толщу морозной летучей мглы в воздухе, он грозно надвигался, вырастая из клубов тумана темной грохочущей массой. С его приближением все выше над землей поднимались пылающие фары паровоза, все различимей крутилась в полосе света мятущаяся поземка между рельсами, все слышней и тревожней доносился натруженный шум кривошипов и поршней. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 163)*

> *With its headlight piercing through the thick, frosty, swirling mist, it came on, a dark, threatening, clattering mass. As it approached, the blazing headlight and the other lights seemed to rise above the ground; the snowy air above the rails became more visible in the beams, and the heavy noise of the cranks and pistons grew louder. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 195–196)*

The train is presented as an obscure, menacing object by means of its sonic characterization in the text. What follows is a plethora of descriptions of the intimidating sounds produced by the train, making it out to be much more than simply a transport vehicle made of steel: The train stops "с долгим, тяжким скрежетом" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 164) ("with a long, heavy screeching", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 196), its engine lets out "с шипением [...] пар" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 164) ("a great hiss of steam", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 196), and later the train leaves "скрипуче раскручивая колеса" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 165) ("its wheels shrieking as they turned", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 198). Remarkably, both in the Russian original and in the English translation, all the words used for the sonic phenomena produced by the train have an onomatopoeic quality: 'Screech' and 'скрежет' (*skrezhet*), 'hiss' and 'шипение' (*shipenie*), and 'shriek' and 'скрипучий' (*skripuchij*). Furthermore, there are other noises connected to the train, such as the recurring sound of the whistle, which is described alternately as "пронзительный" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 164) ("piercing", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 196) and "свербящий душу" (Ajtmatov 1981

[1980]: 164) (“terrifying”, Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 197). The original uses a more figurative language in the last instance, presenting the effects of the whistle sound in an even more vivid way, since it could be loosely translated as “soul-unsettling” or “mind-troubling”.

In her readings of Western novels dating from between 1875 and 1975, Karin Bijsterveld formulates a typology of mechanical sounds and sounds connected to technology. She suggests four different types of sound, one of which is what she calls ‘intrusive sounds’:

> Intrusive *sounds are usually expressed as a multitude of different sounds or a series of recurrent sounds. These sounds threaten the existence of something or someone that is vulnerable or fragile, such as nature, harmony, or one’s heart, mind, body or security. […]*
>
> *Intrusive sounds violently enter the protagonists’ world, often all at once, and endanger something cared for. The simultaneousness of different sounds creates chaos or forms a deep rumble that affects a subject’s body. (Bijsterveld 2008: 44–45; italics in the original)*

Bijsterveld even singles out the sounds of a train in one of her analyzed texts as an example for intrusive sounds (cf. 2008: 45). The train in Aitmatov’s novel is characterized in very similar terms, as can also be noticed when reading about the reactions to the loud noise of the train: “Мальчик на руках Едигея испуганно вздрогнул, когда паровоз, равняясь с ними и еще продвигаясь несколько вперед, с резким шумом сбросил пар […]” (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 163–164) (“The boy in Yedigei’s arms had shivered with fright when it had come level with them, and had jumped as the train gave out steam with a sudden hiss”, Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 196). With reference to Vandevelde’s ‘narrative sonography’, these literary sounds fall into the category of ‘narrative sound effects’, and more precisely, can be classified in accordance with their emotional impact, since the affective quality of the sounds is foregrounded (cf. Vandevelde 2015: 96). The intrusion of the train is also illustrated in the way the sounds are contrasted with the behavior of the characters who witness the arrest of Abutalip, and what kind of sounds are ascribed to them (as was already shown above in reference to their quiet demeanor). There are also occasional loud interjections by the village inhabitants which either fade away or they are drowned out by the sounds of the train: For example, Abutalip’s son Ermek falls silent when his father does not respond to his remark about the train: “Папика, папика! Смотри, поезд идет! — кричал Эрмек и замолкал, удивленный тем, что отец не откликается” (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 163) (“‘Papika! Papika! Look, the train’s coming!’ Ermek was shouting – then he too became silent, surprised that his father did not answer”, Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 196). Such transitions from loudness

to quiet further highlight the villagers' silence vis-à-vis the train's overwhelming sonic presence in the text. Furthermore, the 'sound types' (cf. Vandevelde 2015: 62) of the sonic phenomena of the opposing sides differ (on the one hand, 'human/anthropomorphic', and on the other, 'mechanical' sounds, cf. Vandevelde 2015: 63, 65). This aspect is also relevant when considering the pessimistic and critical perspective on technology within the novel.

Thus, the arrival and departure of the train are narrated with an emphasis on literary sounds, and the political conflict at the heart of this episode in the text is transferred to the auditory dimension: The interrogation by the secret police that takes place before the quoted passages and the arrest of Abutalip culminate in the scene where they force Abutalip onto the train to take him with them. Their aim is to prevent him from writing and thus suppress the memory of the indigenous population and their traditions.

As was the case in the example in the previous subchapter regarding the railway station, the train is associated strongly with the Soviet regime and its repressive measures, and Aitmatov presents the train as a menacing object mainly by depicting its sound attributes. Both examples convey specific forms of violence through the staging of the literary sounds of the railway.

3.1.5 The sound and violence of cultural eradication

Prior to the semiotic analysis of the literary sounds and their relation to violence, it is important to note that Abutalip is arrested by the secret police because he writes down folk legends and his memories of World War II for his children – this also includes the very same folk tale that Erlepes sings during his performance in Yedigei's other memory. His writings and memories are deemed "враждебные" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 155) ("hostile", and the English translation also adds "to the State", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 187). While interrogating Yedigei about Abutalip, the officer presents his reasoning as to why Abutalip should not have written of his own accord: "Важно вспоминать, нарисовать прошлое [...] так, как требуется сейчас, как нужно сейчас для нас. А все, что нам не на пользу, того и не следует вспоминать" (Ajtmatov 1981: 157) ("What matters is that when we describe the past [...], we should do so in the way that is needed now, [...] for us. Things that are of no use to us at the present time must not be mentioned", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 189). The dialogue between the officer and Yedigei is one of the novel's most explicit references to how the native population is denied their collective memory and, ultimately, their identity under the Soviet regime. In the Russian original, the officer's statement is even more drastic because it not only prohibits mentioning the things that are not useful to the Soviet regime, it also states that, according to him, even

remembering them should be forbidden, making the forceful process of forgetting even more explicit. These events in the novel also appear to echo the cultural policies in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, when, for example, Kyrgyz epics were criticized during a "general campaign against epics" (Grenoble 2003: 155; cf. also Haber 2003: 53–54).

In *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon describes processes such as these as a kind of 'oblitération culturelle', which is also characteristic of colonial domination:

> *La domination coloniale, parce que totale et simplifiante, a tôt fait de disloquer de façon spectaculaire l'existence culturelle du peuple soumis. La négation de la réalité nationale, les rapports juridiques nouveaux introduits par la puissance occupante, le rejet à la périphérie par la société coloniale des indigènes et de leurs coutumes, l'expropriation, l'asservissement systématisé des hommes et des femmes rendent possible cette oblitération culturelle. (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 225)*

The eradication of the indigenous culture, including the history and tradition of the native population, is thus a hallmark of colonialism. This 'cultural obliteration' is a prime example of what Spivak refers to as epistemic violence, because these oppressive measures against the transmission of native folk tales also represent a project which consists of "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other [the colonial subject] in its precarious Subject-ivity" (Spivak 1999: 266). Denying the native population their ways of remembering and passing on their memories can effectively be called an obliteration of their subjectivity and it is, consequently, a form of epistemic violence.

The train in the text, as the vehicle for taking away persons who infringe on this 'prohibition of memory', is connected with the epistemic violence against the indigenous population by means of literary sounds: Its menacing presence is conveyed by staging intimidating and fearsome noises, and further highlighted by contrasting the train's sounds with the behavior of the town inhabitants. Thus the sonic imagination also illustrates the transgression against the characters in the novel through the dimension of sound.

However, the sounds of the train are not directly connected with the epistemic violence conveyed in the text – the noise of the railway itself does not cause the cultural obliteration of the tradition of passing on folk tales and maintaining the collective memory of the indigenous population. The semiotic relation between these literary sounds and epistemic violence is too abstract to be considered indexical or iconic. Realizing the parallel structure between the oppressive measures put in place by the Soviet regime and the overwhelming effect of the sounds accompanying the arrival of the train on which the secret police take Abutalip away relies

instead on an interpretation during the reading process. In this instance, the semiotic relation between the literary sound as the sign (or representamen) and epistemic violence as its object is thus that of the symbol (cf. Peirce 1994: 2.249).

It needs to be noted that the power constellation portrayed in the novel can also be described as a form of structural violence – the very structures of the Soviet regime harm the characters in the novel through policies, different state institutions and other parts of the political system. In this sense, the epistemic and structural violence rely on each other in the novel, the one facilitates the other (as is often the case in colonial and postcolonial configurations of power). The different distribution of power and its effects create structural violence (cf. Galtung 1969: 175) that manifests itself in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* through the political repression of the indigenous population. However, the literary sounds discussed in the above sections are not directly affected by the structural form of violence either, even if the train, as their source in the text, to a certain extent emblematizes the Soviet presence in Central Asia.

The process of obliteration and occlusion can also be noticed in the chapter about what takes place at the train station. Here, again, epistemic violence is made palpable through the staging of sound: Momentarily, the music coming from the loudspeakers seems to accentuate Zaripa's loss, only to reveal its true nature shortly after, when the narrator describes the men hanging up Stalin's portrait in a black frame. Therefore, even after Abutalip dies, his death is overshadowed by the death of the leader of the Soviet Union. The characters' reaction to the announcement of Stalin's death further emphasize this opposition – when Yedigei takes note of the news at the train station, it leaves him unfazed:

> *В другое время он тоже поднялся бы, и постоял среди людей, и разузнал бы, что и как случилось с этим великим человеком, без которого никто не представлял себе круговращения мира, но сейчас своего горя хватало. (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 184)*
>
> *At any other time, he would have got up too and joined the crowd of people, eager to find out what had happened to this great man, without whom no one could imagine the earth revolving on its axis. But for now he had grief enough of his own. (Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 222)*

Yedigei's attitude towards this event is used to illustrate how differently lives are prioritized in the Soviet system: Here, the cult of personality surrounding Stalin is contrasted with the hidden political killing of indigenous people. This situation in the novel is, in semiotic terms, again conveyed symbolically, since the literary sound (the music at the train station) is not directly involved in the denial of the

(self-)representation of the native people, rather it is merely 'symptomatic' of it. In this sense, the music repeats the semiotic relation between the literary sounds of the train and epistemic violence: The music is not violent in itself (at least not in terms of an epistemic kind of violence), but symbolically it illustrates the process of concealing the political victims of the Soviet regime.

It is important to also note that the novel hints at the exertion of further violence which is much more concrete than the epistemic and structural forms described above. It is clear that Abutalip dies during his imprisonment, but the specific circumstances and the details of his death remain more or less obscure in the first published version of the novel in 1981. While one might suspect the use of interpersonal violence (be it physical or psychological) here, the text itself focuses on the political circumstances under which people are arrested rather than on the physical harm that is inflicted upon them. In the case of this particular novel, the literary sounds likewise reflect the dominant forms of violence in the text, which are primarily epistemic and structural.

One could make the case that both the noise of the train and the music at the railway station convey another, different kind of violence – through their intrusive and alienating qualities, these literary sounds actually possess a violent dimension. For instance, the epistemic and structural violence against the indigenous population is also reflected in the forceful intrusion of the train into the village, as underlined by the bewildered reaction of the inhabitants to the noise of the train. In this case, then, violence would not be entirely external to these literary sounds and would form an inherent part of them as well. This would give the discussed literary sounds iconic properties in their semiotic relation to violence because the sign and its object would share certain characteristics (cf. Peirce 1994: 2.276). This kind of violence – a direct, acoustic form of violence – is much harder to pinpoint terminologically, but the shock effect of the staged sounds does lend itself to considering them from the perspective of violence in a more direct sense.

3.1.6 Soviet sonic occupation and contact zones

Against the background of the staging of sounds related to the railway and the analysis of the forms of violence that they convey, the initial passages about Yedigei's visit to the other village become all the more meaningful. In the face of policies of political oppression, such as the ones described during the semiotic analysis, performing traditional songs almost becomes an act of resistance in the novel: Sustained by a spirit similar to what Fanon calls a "recherche passionnée d'une culture nationale en deçà de l'ère coloniale" (2002 [1961]: 200), Erlepes practices exactly what the secret police wants to counteract – a 'remembrance of things past' without

any filter. Fanon describes the contribution of the colonized intellectuals, who "s'acharnent à reprendre contact avec la sève la plus ancienne, la plus antécoloniale de leur peuple" (2002 [1961]: 200), as combating colonizing tendencies, which he identifies as one of the initial steps in the anticolonial struggle. This is precisely what Erlepes is also indirectly engaging in. Thus, the accusation of the secret police against Abutalip, defaming him as "писатель феодальный старины" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 161) ("a writer of ancient legends", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 193),[62] also applies to Erlepes, who brings old stories to life through his musical performance. This characterization by the officer is a kind of Soviet code for someone who is considered reactionary, who adheres to the 'old ways' and thus stands in the way of a new foundation for society. Erlepes represents this concept through his music, just as Abutalip does through his writing.

The position of Erlepes as a contemporary incarnation of a bard (equipped with a traditional instrument like the dombra and his own singing voice), who himself sings in turn about a bard from an old folk tale, calls Fanon to mind again, when he writes about the situation of storytellers in Algeria during the 1950s, to whose repertoire he also reckons "la littérature orale, les contes, les épopées, les chants populaires" (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 229). Fanon describes how these storytellers were persecuted under colonialism, not least because their performances constituted "un authentique spectacle qui reprend valeur culturelle" (Fanon 2002 [1961]: 229). Sound, from this perspective of the tradition of oral literature (in its various forms), is thus precarious within colonial systems, and Aitmatov's novel also shows why adherence to precolonial culture plays an important part in the imperial distrust of certain manifestations of sound production. The rendering of the folk legend in the novel, the same legend which is cited later on as one of the reasons why Abutalip is arrested, is a powerful form of resisting the official dictate of 'selectively remembering' or outrightly forgetting the past, which is aided by the sonic imagination and, more precisely, by staging Erlepes' playing of the dombra and singing. In Edward Said's terms, one can say that Erlepes is reviving a 'narrative' through his production of sound, taking charge of his and his people's past and traditions: "Narrative [...] introduces an opposing point of view, perspective, consciousness to the unitary web of vision" (Said 1979: 240), by which Said means the vision of a totalizing Orientalism. Erlepes' song is thus a form of resistance against Soviet memory politics and the epistemic violence it represents. The sound of the dombra and Erlepes' singing – and everything these sonic phenomena stand for – are then also opposed to the hegemonic status of the loudspeakers, which are one of the key elements in the chapter about at the train station.

62 A more literal translation of the Russian quote would be 'a writer of feudal antiquity'.

In between these clashing forces, the protagonist Yedigei maneuvers in a 'contact zone' (in the sense of Mary Louise Pratt) in sonic form. By contact zone Pratt means "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (2003 [1992]: 4). In the case of *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, different sound cultures, also characterized by asymmetrical power relations, clash. Of course, Yedigei is not exclusively part of either one of these sound cultures: For him, being a railway worker himself, trains and the infrastructure surrounding them are not alien at all, and this includes the auditory environment that they generate. Central Asia under Soviet rule is an enduring contact zone that consists of multiple antagonisms which nonetheless have a productive effect, and Yedigei is, for all intents and purposes, a Soviet citizen who is witness to both worlds: He is familiar with the different sound cultures that create a hybrid contact zone through confrontations such as the one between the ancient traditions passed on through song and the new sonic regime of Soviet authority. The latter is precisely realized in the novel in the staging of literary sounds related to the railway.

Aitmatov's novel highlights the imperial heritage of the Soviet Union by focusing on the railway and its status as an imperial tool which was retained even a century after the Russian annexation of Central Asia and reaches beyond 1917 and the dissolution of the Empire. Here, the railway emblematizes the conflict between the subjugated people and an oppressive political system. The text establishes the conjunction between the railway and the occupation by staging a particular auditory environment: The political impact of the railway therefore is also foregrounded in the novel by the plethora of literary sounds that amplify its overall importance.

The last two examples from the text analyzed in this chapter featured two different elements of the railway system – the railway station and the train itself, and in the context of the novel's opposition of past and present, both appear as objects and spaces that further illustrate how the indigenous population is oppressed by a political regime that forces them to forget their traditions and values. When Abutalip is arrested for writing down folk legends and his memories of World War II, the train – with its screeching and shrieking wheels and hissing engine – provides the soundtrack to his imprisonment, in a manner of speaking. In the other chapter, following these events and after some time has passed, the mourning music being played in honor of Stalin over the loudspeakers at the railway station drowns out the grief of Abutalip's family and friends. The railway is thus closely connected with the power structures within the novel, and the literary sounds not only increase the dramatic effect of the narrated events, but also highlight the political significance of the railway – showing that the Soviet regime relied not just on the occupation of

the mind, but also of the ear. Moreover, the sonic imagination evokes the fundamental conflict between Soviet authority and the indigenous people, their traditions and culture. The literary sounds in the text point to the oppressive circumstances under which the indigenous population lives, how they are not allowed to preserve their traditions, and how grief for the death of those who fall victim to the state's repressive measures cannot be adequately expressed. Different forms of violence – epistemic, structural and possibly a purely acoustic form – are expressed through the staging of sound in the novel, and the sonic imagination conveys both an esteem for native traditions and a critical assessment of the Soviet regime's political decisions.

Rhys's novel takes a different approach to literary sounds and violence: Here, the sonic imagination focuses rather on interpersonal relationships, and the first-person narration foregrounds the protagonist Anna's perception of sound even more distinctly. At the same time, Anna's hardships relate to greater political questions which become palpable through the staging of sound.

3.2 Staging gender, class and race through sound in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*

In *Voyage in the Dark*, a variety of sensorial sensations are constantly presented throughout the text. However, as the title of the novel already suggests, visual perception is relatively marginalized and other sensory phenomena are emphasized instead: Besides sound, scent in particular plays an equally important role in the unfolding of the story and the way it is told. It is obvious that the protagonist, Anna Morgan, has a keen sense of smell, and throughout the novel she pays particular attention to the scent of different rooms, as easily witnessed due to the homodiegetic first-person narration. The sensation and perception of temperature are also frequently and very prominently pointed to: In numerous situations, Anna is distinctly sensitive to cold and heat, and thermoception is also an important point of reference in highlighting Anna's background and her origins. Having grown up in the West Indies and having moved to England at a later point in her life, Anna notices the distinctive difference between the two climates, often feeling cold at this new place and longing for the warmer weather of her native country (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 3). This sensory astuteness is further underlined by the countless literary sounds that she encounters, demonstrating not only a refined sense of smell and a great sensitivity to temperature, but also 'sharp ears'. The dimension of sound, even more so than the olfactory sense or other sensory phenomena, functions as a marker for a multiplicity of specific topics and aspects that are related in the novel to oppression, resistance and different forms of violence. The conflicts that make up the subject of the novel are often illustrated or even communicated entirely at the level of sound and sonic phenomena. This is often the case with – but not limited to – the voice in the novel, which is frequently the catalyst for the antagonistic relationship between characters. But even outside the novel's staging of literary sounds in a political context or in conjunction with the predominant themes of power and conflict, sound is a ubiquitous element in the text: Anna starts out as a chorus-girl, a profession which fundamentally relies on (musical) sound; sounds of all kinds trigger memories in her or serve to establish a connection to her past, before she came to England; the novel is also permeated by a variety of songs sung by different characters.[63] Last but not least, the language of *Voyage in the Dark* is often wrought with an imagery that incorporates sound and the sensation of hearing. All of these elements would certainly make it seem that it was no accident that the original title of the novel was in fact, *Two Tunes* (cf. Rhys 1984: 149, 235).

63 For an analysis of songs and melodies in *Voyage in the* Dark, other texts by Rhys and her own life, cf. Snaith 2020.

There are different forms of power relations and political configurations that all run together in Anna, as the protagonist and narrator, and are also reflected in the role of sound and its functions in *Voyage in the Dark*. An intersectional perspective helps to consider these political aspects, since they cannot be considered independently from one another and very much presuppose one another. Patricia Hill Collins and Valerie Chepp provide the following working definition for intersectionality:

> *[I]ntersectionality consists of an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships […]. (Collins/Chepp 2013: 58)*

While it is possible to include a variety of categories of social identity in intersectional analyses (cf. also Cooper 2016: 386), this case study limits its scope to the most important themes in *Voyage in the Dark* that are negotiated through sound and which can be determined as gender, race and class. The concept of intersectionality is a tool to "understand all dimensions of power relations, including race, class, gender, and sexuality" (Collins/Chepp 2013: 59) and to think about these categories in conjunction with each other because "[i]ntersectional knowledge projects have reconceptualized these phenomena as mutually constructing systems of power" (Collins/Chepp 2013: 59). Thus, the parameters of oppression in Rhys's novel also need to be understood as greater than the sum of their parts. The sonic imagination helps to articulate Anna's intersectional experience of domination (but also of resistance) in the novel, and the diverse identity categories of the protagonist and narrator are held together by sound. Every aspect that makes up this particular kind of intersectionality affects Anna differently and also influences the various forms of violence that are conveyed in the text through the staging of literary sounds.

3.2.1 Sound and general themes in *Voyage in the Dark*

Sound, in general, has a very vivid quality in *Voyage in the Dark*. The way literary sounds are staged is indicative of the creative potential and performative qualities of the literary sonic imagination, and at the same time incorporates recognizable features that are commonly associated with sound. Literary sound is often utilized to make abstract concepts or phenomena more tangible in the novel: One example of this process is the idea of time, more precisely, the feeling of time. "It's funny when you feel as if you don't want anything more in your life except to sleep, or else to lie without moving. That's when you can hear time sliding past you, like water

running" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 93) – the simile with water in this instance serves as much to illustrate the flow of time as to express Anna's melancholic mood. The idea of hearing time is not as absurd as one might initially find: This connection between sound and time highlights a specific concept accentuated by both phenomena, namely ephemerality. The passage of time is likened to the appearance and fading of a sound, making Anna's perception (or non-perception) of time more palpable.

As a matter of fact, the coupling of time and sound can be encountered frequently in the novel, as in the following, where Anna thinks about Walter, with whom she falls unhappily in love in the beginning, and how she feels when she leaves after they have slept together: "I would think about […] getting up and saying. 'I must go now,' and dressing, and going down the stairs quietly, and the front door that clicked so silently, that clicked always as if it were for the last time, and there I was in the dark street" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 31). The literary sound of the clicking door again highlights Anna's feeling of transience, and at the same time, her anxiety about unrequited love becomes manifest through how she perceives the clicking of the door: Just as this sound fades away, Walter might, too. As the novel progresses, this threat of her love going unreciprocated grows more and more real, letting a literary sound such as this one appear truly foreboding. In fleeting moments such as this, time, sound and Anna's love interest are united as elements that cannot be fixed, and the sonic imagination helps to convey this feeling of transience.

Moreover, Anna's anxious outlook in the quote above also signals the onset of her melancholic state, and sound is often associated with this particular feeling: "When it was sad was when you lay awake, and then it began to get light and the sparrows started – that was when it was sad, a lonely feeling, a hopeless feeling. When the sparrows started to chirp" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 60). This passage is curious in different ways: Aside from the literary sound of the bird chirping and its connection with Anna's melancholy, the phrasing and structure of the sentence seem counterintuitive. It is a continuation of the beginning of the chapter ("[w]hen it was sad was when you woke up at night and thought about being alone", Rhys 2019 [1934]: 59) and illustrates a peculiar way of describing Anna's sadness: Emphasis is laid on the sadness itself by placing it at the beginning of the sentence, but the use of 'when' also modifies the understanding of this sadness. The 'when' suggests a prolonged state of sadness, if compared to a more simple expression like 'it was sad', which would make it seem that this feeling is restricted to a more specific, precise point in time. The structure has a cyclical quality in that the narrator repeats that it is sad while describing a continuing series of events and also repeating that the sparrows are starting to chirp, which seems almost redundant, but has a lulling effect. Additionally, she uses the generic 'you' as a pronoun in this passage, making it seem as if it is not her who has this feeling of sadness or who lives through these

events. The use of the generic 'you' and the resulting disruptive effect are even more blatant in the next paragraph: "Dressing to go and meet him and coming out of the restaurant and the lights in the streets and getting into a taxi and when he kissed you in the taxi going there" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 60). Rather than mentally talking to herself, here Anna narrates from an impersonal perspective which is still very much focalized by herself. This is further highlighted by the impersonal pronoun 'it' which is also used to declare the sadness of the situation ("it was sad") instead of her directly owning up narratively to her sentiment. This style underlines a feeling of alienation in addition to the apparent sadness, and thus Anna's melancholy is also communicated on the level of *discours*. This wording is also interesting considering that shortly before this passage, at the end of the previous chapter, the pronoun 'I' is still frequently used, even exceedingly so, almost in an enumerative manner: "I stood there until I felt the pain of the headache begin [...]. And then I was cold, and when I had been very sick I went home. I got fever and I was ill for a long time" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 59). This abrupt change signals a marked difference in mood, and the most concrete sensation amid the presentation of this alienated state is that of sound, of the sparrow chirping.

The literary sound of the bird is highlighted by the distanced way of narration, and although Anna as the narrator does not directly acknowledge it as her own, it is her sense of hearing that stands out in this melancholic mood. The fact that she hears sparrows is of itself noteworthy: Historically, the sparrow is characterized by a symbolism closely connected to love, sexuality and female 'promiscuity' (cf. Werness 2006: 384–385), all of which are also important topics for Rhys's novel. The latter especially is an explicit topic at various points in the text, for example, when Anna and Maudie discuss Émile Zola's *Nana* ("Maudie said, 'I know, it's about a tart. I think it's disgusting. I bet you a man writing a book about a tart tells a lot of lies one way or another [...]'", Rhys 2019 [1934]: 5), but also in other cases which relate to Anna more directly. As Carole Angier puts it in her afterword: "[S]he [Anna] is reading a book 'about a tart', as Maudie says – which is, in cold external words, what we are doing too" (Angier 2019: 161).

The sparrow is also a bird which is associated with phenomena of global migration, often being imported to other countries (to get rid of pests, cf. DeMello 2012: 289). In the past, the sparrow has also been connected with "anti-immigrant rhetoric [...], with the sparrows acting as stand-ins for foreign and unruly outlaws" (DeMello 2012: 289–290). The conflict about, and confrontation with 'foreigners' and the Other in general, as also epitomized by Anna as a character, is of fundamental importance in *Voyage in the Dark* – not least with regard to sound.

The parallelization of the sparrow and Anna in the novel is also reinforced by the fact that she increasingly focuses on singing when her career as a chorus-girl

does not seem to work out. Coincidentally, immediately before the quote made above, one briefly learns about a conversation with Anna's vocal coach ("[w]hat I want, Mr Price, is an effective song for voice-trial", Rhys 2019 [1934]: 59). The bird-song, then, seems to echo Anna's vocal training and her preoccupation with her singing performance.

This passage and its literary sounds therefore already encapsulate many of the different complex political aspects within the novel with regard to gender, race and also the topic of the disciplining of Anna's voice (in the above case, in relation to her singing). The sparrow and its chirping could almost be understood as an external projection of herself, in that they evoke the themes of sexuality, migration and song, which are all important aspects of her persona as it is presented in the novel.

Aside from the connection between sound and Anna's melancholic state, the other important idea briefly discussed above, time, is taken up at various other instances in the novel through the sonic imagination and developed further on different levels as well. Anna's awareness of the ephemeral nature of sounds and her anxiety about transience in general become noticeable very early on in the novel:

> *Somebody was playing the piano in one of the houses we passed – a tinkling sound like water running. I began to walk very slowly because I wanted to listen. But it got farther and farther away and then I couldn't hear it any more. 'Gone for ever,' I thought. There was a tight feeling in my throat as if I wanted to cry. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 6)*

Moments like this illustrate the impact that sounds have on Anna. The literary sound of the piano also introduces the theme of music into the novel, which is pervaded by references to countless songs and musical pieces. As was the case with the sound of the door clicking, Anna is painfully aware of how the sound of the piano fades into nothing and is lost forever. Her perception of sounds stands in opposition to other sensations such as sight, which can be noticed, for example, when she reads a book: While it also makes her "sad, excited and frightened" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 5), she points out that what is giving her this feeling is not what she is reading, but "the dark, blurred words going on endlessly" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 5). The printed words on the pages of her book, perceived by Anna visually, thus stand in stark contrast to the sounds that she hears. Even if both aural and visual phenomena can make her feel anxious, they do so through different qualities and different concepts associated with them. While sound accentuates transience for her, sight presents her with seemingly immutable, immovable sensations, existing in perpetuation.

Another aspect of the connection between sound and time in the novel is how the sonic imagination establishes a link to Anna's past and lets her relive memories

of her childhood in her native country: "I would put my head under the water and listen to the noise of the tap running. I would pretend it was a waterfall, like the one that falls into the pool where we bathed at Morgan's Rest" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 73). She develops this habit while she is in a listless, tired state after Walter leaves her, and sounds like the water from the tap help her to withdraw into the past instead of having to face and live in the present (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 73). This indicates that, despite its ephemerality, sound has an 'afterlife' in the novel, even if as a physically perceivable phenomenon it eventually fades away. The sonic imagination stages these literary sounds as sensory triggers that are very much akin to Marcel Proust's madeleine: What starts out as Anna listening to the noise of the tap water leads her to remember how she used to bathe at the waterfall, and she starts narrating various events that happened there and her experience of them (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 73).

It is worth noting that in both of these examples from the novel, water again plays an eminent role. Anna compares the sound of the piano to "a tinkling sound like water running" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 6), and in the latter passage, she focuses on the sound of actual water, bringing back memories of her childhood. Taken together with the first quote from this chapter, where Anna compares the passage of time to water flowing (describing the feeling of being able to "hear time sliding past you", Rhys 2019 [1934]: 93), water is also evidently associated with temporal themes in *Voyage in the Dark*, whether in connection with the idea of transience or with remembering the past. The water imagery thus also serves to reinforce the connection between time and sound throughout the novel.

The water theme is also explored further with regard to sound, or rather, with regard to the absence of sound, at other points in the novel. When Anna sees Walter for the last time, she uses the following simile to describe the feeling when he tells her that he cannot, or will not, go to his place with her anymore:

> *It was like letting go and falling back into water and seeing yourself grinning up through the water, your face like a mask, and seeing the bubbles coming up as if you were trying to speak from under the water. And how do you know what it's like to try to speak from under water when you're drowned? (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 79)*

The contradiction of speaking – or producing any intelligible sound, for that matter – under water is used here to express the pain that Anna feels when Walter tells her that he will not see her again. It is noteworthy that she does not directly refer to the sensation of drowning in order to describe the shock of the experience, but rather the feeling of observing herself or somebody else drowning and imagining the attempt to speak under water, something which cannot be heard but only seen due to the air bubbles ascending to the surface. The marked absence of sound is decisive regarding what makes the idea so shocking for her, as she also notes that one cannot

fully understand such an experience first-hand because it involves asphyxiation ("how do you know what it's like to try to speak from under water when you're drowned?" Rhys 2019 [1934]: 79). The inability to speak in this context is thus equated with the impossibility of love; trying to speak, but being unable to produce a sound is analogous to Anna's love going unrequited. Already this passage also points to how phenomena of pain, discomfort and unpleasantness are conveyed through literary sounds in the novel.

Literary sounds are also utilized for seemingly more 'banal' things in the novel. For example, Anna often refers to sound to characterize her surroundings, both inside and outside: "It's funny how parts of London are as empty as if they were dead. There was no sun, but there was a glare on everything like a brass band playing" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 32). Interestingly, this passage also has a synesthetic quality to it: In order to describe the 'glare' (which she perceives in the streets of London), normally a visual phenomenon, Anna alludes to a brass band making music – also, 'glare' itself does not necessarily have to indicate an actual source of bright light, but can equally refer to the general atmosphere of a particular moment. The sonic imagination is able to express the feeling Anna has while she walks through London without any actual brass orchestra being present. The reference to the music played by such a band also ties in with the appearance of brass instruments and their glossy surface, able to create a 'glare' by themselves as well.

Synesthetic moments such as this are not a singular occurrence in the novel either. While talking to Laurie, a former chorus-girl colleague of hers, Anna remarks on her ostentatious behavior: "She had another whisky and went on about being clever and putting money away, and her voice joined in with the smell of the room" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 96), of which she states shortly before that "[t]he whole place smelt of her scent" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 94). The overwhelming effect of Laurie showing off her *savoir-vivre*, while also addressing the hurtful topic of relationships with men (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 95), is thus presented not just through what she talks about, but also through how she controls the entire room on different sensory levels, such as smell and sound. The two sensations overlap and complement each other in this passage, once again highlighting senses other than sight.

In other cases, where literary sounds also add to the overall atmosphere, they can develop an almost violent effect: "The ropes of the hammock creaked and there was a wind and the outer shutters kept banging, like guns. It was shut-in there, between two hills, like the end of the world" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 55). The impact of the literary sounds on Anna in this scene already sets the tone for the more explicitly political aspects of the novel, as they pertain to gender, class and race, and how sound influences their presentation. Apart from the simile between the shutters and guns, through the word 'shut' this passage establishes an intriguing connection

to the one immediately before it detailing her stepmother Hester's reaction to her falling ill as a child: "Hester came and jawed away at me, her eyes wandering all over the place. I kept saying, 'No, rather not … Yes, I see … Oh yes, of course …' But I began to feel awfully miserable, as if everything were shutting up around me and I couldn't breathe. I wanted to die" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 54). Hester's rambling elicits dread in Anna, which is also illustrated through her cryptic, elliptic reply, rendered in direct discourse. There is a rift between the account of Hester approaching her, how she 'jaws away' at Anna but in a very unspecified way (albeit the term itself is very descriptive in its crudeness), and Anna's response, which is presented in a more direct manner, but which reveals very little by itself, due to repetition of empty phrases. This rift between the presentation of both of their speeches illustrates Anna's struggle with her stepmother, which is very unlike her relationship with the household servant Francine and her reassuring reaction to Anna's illness (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 54). The sensation of everything 'shutting up' has two connotations: Anna feels as though everything is closing down around her, i.e., she feels trapped in the face of Hester's behavior, and it is also associated with someone becoming quiet (stopping talking). The verb 'to shut' is then reiterated in the other passage, through the 'shutters' and the place being 'shut-in' between two hills, which also conveys a feeling of constriction that Anna expresses shortly before that as the sensation of asphyxiation. The simile between the shutters and guns can be considered a continuation of the brutal effect of Hester's voice on Anna – as with other literary sounds in the novel, it is not so much about the content of Hester's speech (unspecified in the text) as about the way she vocally addresses Anna, 'jawing away' at her. It is as if her speech is reduced to the mere activity of producing sound by moving her jaw, as opposed to Francine, of whom Anna says the following: "[W]hen I was unwell for the first time it was she who explained to me, so that it seemed quite all right" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 54). With Francine, it is very much about the soothing words that she speaks to Anna and less about the physical activity of producing sound, as is the case with Hester.

The form of psychological violence exerted on Anna by Hester is but a preview of the diverse manifestations of violence through sound that can be found in the novel. In this context, voice very often plays a role, as a possible source or also target of violence. Just as other literary sounds are often used to characterize certain situations or places in the novel, as demonstrated above, the voice is an important aspect in the description and presentation of different characters. The categories of gender, race and class are thematically developed in Rhys's novel through voice, as well as other literary sounds, and also function as the basis for violence.

3.2.2 Sounding gender and gendered violence

Voice is indeed a focal point in the description of characters and their behavior towards Anna. It is as if the voices of people lead a life of their own in the novel, providing an insight into the values and convictions of the person speaking. Different moods and attitudes are also accompanied by a corresponding tone and a shift in how a character sounds: After a falling out with Ethel, with whom she shares an apartment at one point, Anna remarks about her that "[s]he had two voices – the soft one and the other one" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 124). The seemingly autonomous character of the voice is also expressed throughout the novel in how Anna relates to her own: At different points in the novel, she notices how she talks or produces other vocal sounds which she experiences as if from an outside perspective, as a (listening) observer: "I heard my voice going on and on, answering his questions" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 15), "I heard myself giggling" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 63), and so on. It is of significance that these situations, where her voice seems to disconnect from herself, commonly occur when Anna is around men. At one point, Anna briefly reflects on how another vocal behavior, her laughing, is connected with other people's expectations of her: "He laughed. I laughed too, because I felt that that was what I ought to do" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 16). Rather than laughing out of genuine amusement, she merely complies with what is expected of her. The disassociation between her own voice and herself seems to be the result of how other characters treat her, what they expect of her and the way she vocally produces sound, i.e., how she speaks or even sings.

Throughout the novel, she is confronted by different expectations and assumptions that are articulated with regard to different aspects of her identity and are often linked to each other through Anna's voice or the voices of others. In this sense, *Voyage in the Dark* is also the story of how different characters attempt to shape and discipline Anna's voice.

The most subtle manifestation of the influence of others on her voice consists of dismissive remarks and insults, such as the one uttered by Anna's landlady at the beginning of the novel: "'You and your drawly voice. And if you give me any of your lip I'll 'ave my 'usband up to you [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 22). Not only does the landlady express her contempt for the way Anna speaks, she also gives her a warning about talking back to her. Constraints such as this one are repeated throughout the novel and are often directed at Anna's use of her voice.

When Walter's behavior begins to display signs that he is tired of Anna and he makes preparation for moving on from her, he suggests that she should work on her singing voice: "'I believe it would be a good idea for you to have singing-lessons. I want to help you; I want you to get on [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 39). The lessons that

Anna takes after this conversation are yet another process which serves to change or 'improve' her voice.

The attitude towards Anna's use of her voice is often contrasted in the novel with how others use their voice, most strikingly in the case of the voice of men. At one point, when Anna walks down the street, a man verbally harasses her: "A man spoke to me out of the side of his mouth, like they do, but he went on quickly, before I could hit him" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 122). Even though Anna challenges the stranger's insinuating remark and even briefly chases him (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 122), she realizes that – unlike her voice and speech, which are under constant scrutiny – acts of verbal harassment by men are not universally disapproved of, as indicated by her brief resigned comment ("like they do"). Confrontations such as these are clearly presented as gendered conflicts in the novel and they very often relate to vocal sounds and oral communication. In another passage, Anna goes to a park with her friend and colleague Maudie, where they hear a soapbox orator talk about God:

> *We got up close to him. I could see the Adam's apple jumping up and down in his throat. Maudie began to laugh, and he got wild and shrieked after us, 'Laugh! Your sins will find you out. Already the fear of death and hell is in your hearts, already the fear of God is like fire in your hearts.'*
>
> *'Well, the dirty tyke!' Maudie said. 'Insulting us just because we haven't got a man with us. I know these people, they're careful who they're rude to. They're damned careful who they try to convert. Have you ever noticed? He wouldn't have said a word if we'd had a man with us.' (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 38)*

This example exhibits a variety of insightful details revealing how the text lays open the different standards with which vocal utterances by women and men are judged. First of all, Maudie explicitly remarks on the fact that the orator would not have reprimanded them if they were accompanied by a man. Seeing that they are on their own allows him to raise his voice, and he also does it in reaction to Maudie spontaneously making use of her voice by laughing. He perceives her laughter as a transgression, and he not only frames it as a transgression against himself, but reinterprets it in religious terms as well. Through the religious references, his reprehension develops a normative dimension used to dismiss Maudie's reaction to his speech. This scene in *Voyage in the Dark* also illustrates the different contexts in which it is regarded as legitimate that men and women publically make use of their voice: While men can hold impromptu public speeches about topics such as religion, women's voices are mainly listened to for entertainment purposes, as in the case of Anna's attempt at a singing career.

It is also remarkable that, despite the gravitas of the orator's words, Anna summarizes the rest of his speech in an almost lampooning manner: "You could only

hear 'God … God … The wrath of God … Wah, wah, wah, wah …'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 38). After Maudie and Anna's confrontation with him, she reiterates her depiction of the orator: "We heard his voice after us, *God*, wah, wah, wah … *God*, wah, wah, wah …'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 38). The ridiculing effect of the word 'wah', an oral expression to ironically portray someone who is yammering, contrasts greatly with the serious content of what he is talking about. Thus, on the narrative level, Anna formulates a way to dismiss and resist the vocal utterances of others.

The voice of women is indeed a highly contested topic with a long history, and recent research focuses more and more on the gender-specific aspects of the voice, as a recent article by Karin Martensen shows:

> *Die klanglich-ästhetische und zugleich politische Dimension der weiblichen Stimme lässt sich bereits in dem frühen Verbot festmachen, dass Frauen ihre Stimme in der Kirche erheben: mulier taceat in ecclesia. Doch auch in zivilen Zusammenhängen kam die weibliche Stimme lange Zeit überhaupt nicht vor. (Martensen 2018: 377)*

With passages such as the one discussed above, Rhys's novel can also be considered as an exploration in fictional form of the nature of gender disparity with regard to voice and sound. It must also be noted that the attempts at disciplining Anna's voice are not without resistance in the novel: When someone tries to correct her singing at one point, she replies, "'I'll sing it how I like it […]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 128). Anna thus demonstrates that she does have a mind of her own when it comes to her vocal production of sound, even when the external circumstances often become overwhelming.

Anna's keen sense of hearing also manifests itself in her attention to the voices of others and the subtleties in their voices that enable her to perceive their attitude towards her. Not only that, Anna possesses a vibrant sonic imagination of her own, as in a passage where she thinks about moving into a hotel to get away from Ethel:

> *Then I thought, 'If I went to that hotel in Berners Street. I've got just about enough money on me to pay. They'd say, of course, that they hadn't got a room if you went in without any luggage. With the hotel half-empty they'd still say that they hadn't got a room.' I could imagine so well the girl at the desk saying it that I had to begin to laugh again. The damned way they look at you, and their damned voices, like high, smooth, unclimbable walls all around you, closing in on you. And nothing to be done about it, either. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 122)*

Anna imagines facing a specific assumption about her here, namely that she is a sex worker (thus explaining the fact that she does not have any luggage), and there-

fore being denied access to a room in the hotel. This rejection is very much a gendered issue in the novel, as men do not face the same stigmatization as women do in this regard:

> *The men Laurie knows can also rent rooms in hotels where the staff turn a blind eye to girls they bring in for sex. However, it is a different story for women: when Anna has a quarrel with Ethel she is tempted to go to a hotel in Berners Street but knows she will not be allowed to book a room without luggage […]. (Savory 2009: 63)*

The position that Anna finds herself in – wanting to stay at a hotel due to personal problems, but not being allowed to rent a room – is solely due to the fact that she is a woman and is symptomatic of the double standard with which she is frequently confronted. In addition to this, what makes the (imagined) encounter between her and the receptionist even more unsettling is the fact that the receptionist's assumption does not correspond to Anna's understanding of herself. She is already familiar with assumptions such as this and the affront associated with it, and although she only imagines this specific conversation, her perception of it stems from her personal experience.

At the beginning of the novel, Anna is unexpectedly thrown out of her apartment. When she asks the landlady, why she did not inform her of it sooner, she gives her the following reply:

> *She began to bawl. 'I don't hold with the way you go on, if you want to know, and my 'usband don't neither. Crawling up the stairs at three o'clock in the morning. And then today dressed up to the nines. I've got eyes in my head.' […]*
>
> *At the door she turned round and said, 'I don't want no tarts in my house, so now you know.' (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 22)*

At first, the landlady merely insinuates that she might be a sex worker, by alluding to 'the way' she 'goes on', meaning her returning home very late at night and dressing very well, as if ready to go out again right away. She states "I've got eyes in my head", implying that Anna could not hide her presumed profession from her. At the end of the quote, she makes it explicit that she does not want 'tarts' renting rooms in her house. Her comment leaves Anna speechless, only her "heart was beating like hell" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 22). Before this incident the landlady already gets upset about Maudie not dressing 'properly' in her house after her and Anna get up late and Maudie comes downstairs "in her nightgown and a torn kimono" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 4) to get something to eat: "'Showing yourself at my sitting-room-window 'alf naked like that,' the landlady said. 'And at three o'clock in the afternoon too. Getting my house a bad name […]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 4). While Maudie does not think anything of the way she dresses and does so out of comfort after staying in bed longer

that day, the landlady is noticeably shocked and admonishes Maudie to dress differently when passersby can see her: She accuses her of giving the house a 'bad name', i.e., making people think that it is a brothel, or at least that it looks like one because the female tenants do not dress 'decently' or 'modestly'.

It is assumptions and accusations like these that make Anna imagine the conversation between herself and the receptionist at the hotel the way she does. Anna expresses the smothering feeling of being boxed in when confronted with an unjust allegation through her sonic imagination – she imagines the receptionist's voice and describes it with a simile that gives it concrete form: In her mind, it is "like high, smooth, unclimbable walls all around you, closing in on you" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 122). Her past experiences with other people and their moral understanding resonate in this sentiment, and the feeling of facing false assumptions, being wrongly categorized and of having nowhere to go is conveyed in a tone that she compares with walls that cannot be escaped or overcome. Anna is already familiar with this particular claustrophobic sensation caused by sound (in the form of a voice), as evidenced in her memory of Hester's tirade and the ensuing awareness of a place that is "shut-in [...], between two hills, like the end of the world" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 55). As before, the sensory perception that ties these themes together is that of hearing: Anna's feeling of being lectured, the confrontation with gender stereotypes and double standards, and the imagery of being walled in are all connected and reiterated through literary sounds.

Later on, the wall simile is repeated in connection with other senses as well. When Anna tells Vincent, a friend of Walter's, that she is pregnant and needs financial support to get an abortion, he reacts as follows:

> *'Poor little Anna,' making his voice very kind. 'I'm so damned sorry you've been having a bad time.' Making his voice very kind, but the look in his eyes was like a high, smooth, unclimbable wall. No communication possible. You have to be three-quarters mad even to attempt it. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 143)*

Thus, Anna's feeling of being walled in is not exclusively limited to her auditory perception, it is indeed a 'multi-sensory experience'. Extending the simile to her visual impressions allows her to contrast the look in Vincent's eyes with how he makes his voice sound kind, exposing the hypocrisy behind his intentions. Just before this passage, Anna also observes how he looks at her when they meet (Walter sends Vincent to look into what is happening with Anna), noting that "[h]e stared at me – and he might just as well have said it" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 142), meaning that his only real concern is whether she is pregnant with Walter's child (although he never explicitly asks this), to which she responds: "'Oh, I don't mean it's Walter's. I don't know whose it is [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 142). The kind tone of his voice cannot hide

the fact from her that for Walter, after their short-lived involvement, she is utterly disposable.

At this point, it is necessary to add a specific understanding of violence to the catalogue of forms of violence in this book, namely, gendered, or gender-based, violence. Gendered violence is not situated on the same analytical level as interpersonal, structural or epistemic violence, but is rather a qualitative specification of each of these forms in certain situations.

> *[G]ender violence is any interpersonal, organizational, or politically oriented violation perpetrated against people due to their gender identity, sexual orientation, or location in the hierarchy of male-dominated social systems such as families, military organizations, or the labor force. (O'Toole et al. 2007: xii)*

Following this definition, gendered violence is a comprehensive term that can refer to different situations and conflicts in which either overt or subtle uses of violence are made. For example, it can relate to the description of the perpetrator and the victim of violence (though not merely a term for indicating violence between different genders), but also to structural circumstances under which certain instances of violence become possible. Gendered violence, then, is an additional heuristic tool to consider the broader context in which violence becomes manifest from a more systemic point of view (instead of regarding it as consisting of a series of individual, unrelated events). It can take the form of interpersonal, structural, and epistemic violence (cf. also O'Toole et al. 2007: xiii).

The examples from Rhys's novel discussed above included conflicts and confrontations that develop specifically due to the fact that Anna is a woman, and it is evident that she would not be subjected to the same situations if she were a man. Sound also surrounds even more blatant cases of gendered violence in the novel, that is, violence that Anna experiences, broadly speaking, because of her "location in the hierarchy of male-dominated social systems" (O'Toole et al. 2007: xii). The following passage from *Voyage in the Dark* harks back to the important components of time and memory often associated with sound in the novel, as shown further above, and weaves it together with the topic of gendered violence. After Anna has her abortion, her health deteriorates and she falls into a state of delirium. Mrs Polo, the housecleaner in the building where Anna lives, alerts Laurie to Anna's serious condition and when Laurie arrives, she and Mrs Polo discuss whether they should call a doctor or not (among other things):

> *I drank the gin and listened to them whispering for a long while. Then I shut my eyes and the bed mounted into the air with me. […] And the clock was ticking loud, like that time when I lay looking at the dog in the picture* Loyal Heart *and watching his*

> *chest going in and out and I kept saying, 'Stop, stop,' but softly so that Ethel wouldn't hear. 'I'm too old for this sort of thing,' he said; it's bad for the heart.' He laughed and it sounded funny. 'Les émotions fortes,' he said. I said, 'Stop, please stop.' 'I knew you'd say that,' he said. His face was white. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152)*

During this episode, Anna, drunk and delirious, relies mostly on her auditory perception, and one is guided along through the staging of literary sounds, which are used as starting points to narrate Anna's current state and her memories. She begins by listening to Mrs Polo and Laurie talking about her, before she finally stops her visual perception altogether by shutting her eyes. Thus able to focus more on sounds, she notices the loud ticking of the clock, which is yet another memory trigger in the form of a sound. While she also recalls what she saw during her previous experience, this presentation of her memory still consists largely of hearing sensations, and it is also the literary sound of the ticking clock that for her connects past and present.

Anna's memory details an experience where she had sexual intercourse with a man, Carl Redman, while living with Ethel. She repeatedly tells him to stop but he shrugs it off, amused by her request. Curiously, one does not gain any insight into Anna's inner life, apart from her sensory perception, which is limited to a few visual impressions and, more prevalently, to what she hears. As if trying to cope with what is happening to her, she focuses on external phenomena without reflecting too much on them; for example, when she looks at "the dog in the picture" or even Carl's "chest going in and out" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152). The narrative level and its distanced presentation (apart from the use of direct discourse) has a disquieting effect due to the discrepancy between the fact that Anna continues to have sex against her will, and her cold, seemingly lethargic observations, such as of the fact that "[h]is face was white" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152). The style of the passage also makes the literary sounds stand out more, as most of the content relates in one way or another to sound, be it the direct discourse of both characters or the staging of vocal phenomena in the third person (such as "[h]e laughed", Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152).

Sound and violence are linked on multiple levels in the quoted passage. First and foremost, Carl's statements and his replies to Anna make it clear that he is not worried about her objections and that he does not take her pleas seriously. He is effectively forcing his will upon her by continuing to have sex with her despite her request to stop, resulting in a specific form of interpersonal violence, namely, sexual violence. The literary sound of his speech illustrates this very violation, especially considering the difference in the way both of them speak and how Anna communicates: While Carl is visibly unrestrained, Anna only dares to speak "softly so that

Ethel wouldn't hear" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152). He, on the other hand, considers himself to be superior to all others, and particularly Anna, deriding her attempt to make him stop by laughing and saying things such as "'I knew you'd say that'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152).

The semiotic relation between sound and interpersonal (sexual) violence in this case is not as direct as in other cases, despite the harmful consequences: Carl's vocal production of sound is not what causes the sexual violence in the first place, it merely indicates the fact that he continues to have intercourse with Anna without her consent. In semiotic terms, these literary sounds symbolically convey interpersonal violence, because only the context enables one to know or conclude that his statements and audible behavior are signs that he is forcing Anna to do something that she does not want.

Besides the interpersonal physical, sexual aspect, there is another dimension to the violence in this passage which also consists of the very fact that Carl consistently ignores or does not honor Anna and her wishes. By shrugging off her protest, he fails to recognize Anna as a person, almost turning her into an object which exists for the sole purpose of satisfying his sexual needs. In the text, this is also articulated through his laughter, which is the sonic embodiment of his dismissal of her position, in particular vis-à-vis the seriousness of her objection. The literary sound of laughing is thus in itself a violent phenomenon, in the sense of an epistemic violence which fails to identify and acknowledge Anna's will. From this perspective, the literary sounds in this passage (such as Carl's laughter) also have iconic properties in relation to violence because as signs they directly exhibit violent characteristics on an epistemic level.

Both of these aspects, the interpersonal sexual violence and the epistemic violence, rely on and reinforce each other in the quote. The two forms of violence in this instance are part of the overarching theme of gendered violence in the novel as they can be attributed to Anna's position in a patriarchal order which legitimizes the dismissal of women and enables men to feel entitled to their bodies. The fact that these are gendered conflicts is also underlined by details such as Carl's surname, which even contains the word 'man' (Carl Redman). However, women likewise participate in this social order in the novel, as the example of how Anna imagines the conversation with the receptionist at the hotel shows. Even if it does not have as grave consequences as the passage about Anna's memory of her encounter with Carl, the receptionist also fails to properly recognize Anna and her position and consequently refuses her access to a hotel room. This results in a gendered epistemic violence which men cannot be subjected to.

Anna's memory in the above quote has even more significance considering that, conspicuously, Anna's actual experience of the incident is initially skipped over in

the novel. When she moves in with Ethel, it is Anna's declared intention to help Ethel with her business and start working and earning money as a manicurist (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 110, 116). However, men arrive at Ethel's place expecting Anna to have sex with them, and there are constant subtle hints that make one think that Ethel might want to employ Anna as a sex worker (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 111, 115, 117). One day, when Carl arrives with his friend, he soon makes it clear to Anna that he is not interested in getting a manicure from her. At this point, Anna's behavior again appears to be disassociated from herself: "'Oh, don't worry about the manicure,' he said. 'I only wanted to talk to you.' I sat down again. My mouth smiled at him" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 127). When Carl starts to unexpectedly kiss her, Anna does not resist, and she again notices a certain tone in his voice indicating that she does see through him and his intentions, regardless of how caring he might like to seem:

> *He shook his head and said, 'Now, what have they been doing to you?' in that voice which is just part of it. When he touched me I knew that he was quite sure I would. I thought, 'All right then, I will.' I was surprised at myself in a way and in another way I wasn't surprised. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 127–128)*

Besides her distanced observations about herself, Anna's keen sense of hearing comes to the fore here again, making her realize that Carl's words belie his intentions. However, there is a striking gap at the end of this paragraph and the very next paragraph, which begins with Carl suggesting to her that she should get dressed (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 128) and nothing being said about what happened in between. Only the memory from the other quote, during her delirium, reveals at a much later point how she experienced this incident. It seems that the literary sound of the ticking clock triggers this suppressed experience, initially skipped overt, revealing the violence that she was subjected to.

The situation of Anna and other women in the novel is not purely a matter of gender, however. Class is another political and social category which has an impact on their position and also influences the staging of literary sounds in *Voyage in the Dark*. Considering class and its role in the sonic imagination of the novel helps to appreciate the dimension of violence because "by addressing the multifarious ways in which ideologies of race, gender, class, and sexuality reinforce one another, reading intersectionally can illuminate the diverse ways in which relations of domination and subordination are produced" (Smith 1998: xxiii, as quoted in Cooper 2016: 401). The intersectional reading of Rhys's novel and its literary sounds thus helps to further understand the violence conveyed through the sonic imagination in the text not just in regard to gender but also to class.

3.2.3 The sound of class and social status

The way that women are expected to speak, to produce sound, is also very closely tied to a particular social standing in the novel. It is often stated that women should aspire to sound 'ladylike' – this idea is undoubtedly about the content and style of their speech, but in various instances in the novel it is evident that it is also about a certain quality of the sound they make on a purely tonal level. Already at the very beginning of the novel, Anna notices how Maudie adjusts how she sounds so as to persuade the landlady to let them one of her rooms, "making her voice sound as ladylike as possible" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 4). Such a strategic use of the voice and different tonal qualities can be observed throughout the novel, for instance, when Anna moves in with Ethel, who then tries to convince her of her respectable family background:

> *That's what I can remember best – Ethel talking and the clock ticking. And her voice when she was telling me about Madame Fernande or about her father, who had a chemist's shop, and that she was really a lady. A lady – some words have a long, thin neck that you'd like to strangle. And her different voice when she said, 'A manicure, dear.' (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 116)*

Once again, Anna's vivid memory of sounds comes into play in this passage. Aside from yet another ticking clock, she pays close attention to Ethel's voice, which is markedly different whenever she wants to be perceived as a lady. Her voice is also different when she bosses Anna around, as if Anna is beneath her. Anna also articulates her aversion to the idea of the 'lady' by stating that it is a word with "a long, thin neck that you'd like to strangle" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 116). This feeling also stems from Anna's experience with other characters who use a voice similar to Ethel's in such situations. Anna's stepmother Hester in particular has this character trait, and Anna senses a disapproving undertone in her voice:

> *She had […] an English lady's voice with a sharp, cutting edge to it. Now that I've spoken you can hear that I'm a lady. I have spoken and I suppose you now realize that I'm an English gentlewoman. I have my doubts about you. Speak up and I will place you at once. Speak up, for I fear the worst. That sort of voice. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 45–46)*

The "sharp, cutting edge" is characteristic of what Anna understands by a 'ladylike' voice: These metaphorical expressions suggest an arrogant, contemptuous tone. Anna imagines behind Hester's voice specific words that fully express this perceived contempt. This kind of voice is used not only to elevate the speaker and solidify their position, but also to put someone in their place on the basis of how they in turn talk.

The voice is thus one of the most important markers for social prestige and standing in the novel. However, it is not only used to indicate a (self-proclaimed) higher standing, the sound of oral communication can also signal a lower social stratum. When Anna reminisces about life in her native country (another memory which is also full of literary sounds, cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 125), she remembers a woman who spoke to her when she was riding a horse: "And the place where the woman with yaws spoke to me. I suppose she was begging but I couldn't understand because her nose and mouth were eaten away; it seemed as though she were laughing at me" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 126). The woman, whose face is visibly disfigured by the infectious disease of yaws (framed in the text as an obvious mark of poverty), confronts Anna with what it is like to be unable to make oneself heard from an outside perspective. The figure of the beggar is a prime example of the victims of epistemic violence, as described by Spivak: She writes about "the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, Aboriginals, and the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (Spivak 1999: 269). 'Subproletariat' is traditionally a Marxist term which often functions as the translation of the German *Lumpenproletariat*. Originally used in a variety of ways, one of the definitions given by Marx is that the *Lumpenproletariat* "[bildet] in allen großen Städten eine vom industriellen Proletariat genau unterschiedene Masse [...], von den Abfällen der Gesellschaft lebend, Leute ohne bestimmten Arbeitszweig, Herumtreiber, gens sans feu et sans aveu" (Marx 1960 [1850]: 26). While Spivak refers to the term in a different context and with a different intention, beggars typically form a part of the category of the subproletariat. It is also with regard to them that Spivak poses her principal question as to whether the subaltern can speak (cf. Spivak 1999: 269). In the quote from Rhys's novel, this question appears to be answered in the negative: The beggar, suffering from a severe case of yaws which negatively affects her physical means of sound production, addresses Anna but she is not able to make out what the woman says. This scene in the novel emblematizes the epistemic violence in the form of literary sound (the beggar's voice): The sonic imagination illustrates an unknowability and ignorance of the position of characters based on their social standing, expressed here through the woman's speechlessness or, at the very least, her unintelligible speech. From a semiotic perspective, in this instance the epistemic violence is directly connected to sound, i.e., the voice of the woman is in itself characterized by violent attributes, resulting in an iconicity of violence through sound. However, unlike the passage in which Carl Redman laughs at Anna, articulating his dismissal of her position through this sound, the beggar's voice is itself the object that is directly affected by epistemic violence. Her voice and the content of her speech and thus, by extension, the woman herself, cannot be recognized by Anna.

Class, therefore, is a significant category for the correlation between sound and violence in *Voyage in the Dark*. Sound plays an important role at various points in the spectrum of class status, and women are variously affected by class parameters compared to men, something which is also illustrated through the sonic imagination at different instances in the novel. As the narrator and protagonist of the novel, Anna's position and how it is articulated through the staging of literary sound can only be adequately assessed if the categories of gender and class are considered alongside each other.

Another important political category in *Voyage in the Dark* that is also of significance in the analysis of its sonic imagination is that of race. Already in the quote discussed above, a certain in-betweenness about Anna can be noticed when she remembers coming across the woman while riding the horse. Wheras she feels a distance between herself and people close to her who regard themselves as ladies of a high social standing, the beggar in her memory also seems dismissive of her, due to the fact that Anna perceives her to be laughing at her. Laughter in general is a sonic form of rejection and exclusion in the novel: Aside from Carl laughing at Anna and her pleas during intercourse, there are other scenes such as the one in which Walter, his friend Vincent and his companion Germaine laugh about how Anna and Walter met. Anna visibly feels excluded and belittled, asking "'[w]hat's the joke?'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 69) and often reiterating statements such as "'[o]h, stop laughing at me. I'm sick of it [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 69). Anna is clearly struggling to find her place and literary sounds convey the process she goes through. A similar struggle takes place in respect to other aspects of her identity, particularly race, and the sonic imagination reinforces this theme in the *Voyage in the Dark*. Race is also inherently tied to the categories of gender and class because the combination of race and sound also indicates why in the eyes of others it is not possible for Anna to attain a 'ladylike' tone or voice.

3.2.4 Anna, race and the 'sonic color line'

Given that Anna experiences processes of sound production as a gendered conflict – as in the story world it is characteristic that women in particular are judged by their voices and how they communicate orally – and that there are underlying notions about class in the way people speak, sound in the novel also needs to be considered from the perspective of race.[64]

64 In her article about "Jean Rhys and the Politics of Sound", Anna Snaith goes into detail about how music and songs in *Voyage in the Dark* interweave race and sound, for example, through the inclusion of minstrel songs, cf. Snaith 2020: 574–575.

It is important to note that, in the text, Anna's narration establishes what Jennifer Lynn Stoever calls a 'sonic color line', which she also calls "race's audible contour" (Stoever 2016: 6). The sonic color line is formed not just through dismissive and discriminatory statements and views (such as are attributed to Anna's stepmother Hester), but also through affirmative and sympathetic attitudes, such as Anna's own. Anna's position in this dynamic is ambiguous because of the in-betweenness in her personal background, which is due to her "[h]aving been brought up in the Caribbean as the daughter of a white former slave-owner and a Creole mother" which "positions Anna between two cultures from the very start" (Loendorf 2000: 24). She nonetheless participates in the process of establishing a sonic color line, which is the "process of racializing sound—how and why certain bodies are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds—and its product, the hierarchical division between 'whiteness' and 'blackness'" (Stoever 2016: 7). The sonic color line also helps Anna to express her own position, which cannot be adequately described as fully adhering to ideas of either 'whiteness' or 'blackness' in the novel.

At various points in *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna proclaims that she "always wanted to be black" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 23), and also presents her reasoning behind this sentiment: "Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 24). It is telling that immediately after this classification, she remembers Francine, the black servant girl from her childhood, and how she used to sing (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 24). Indeed, Anna's idea of 'blackness' is very much tied to Francine, whom she remembers to a great extent through the dimension of sound, thus facilitating her "auditory imaginings of blackness" (Stoever 2016: 1).

Anna details some of her childhood impressions of Francine; for example, the way she ate mangos:

> *When she had finished she always smacked her lips twice, very loud – louder than you could believe possible. It was a ritual. […]*
>
> *She was always laughing, but when she sang it sounded sad. Even very gay, quick tunes sounded sad. She would sit for a long while singing to herself, and 'beating tambou lé-lé – a thump with the base of the hand and then five short knocks with the fingers. (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 54)*

Anna attributes specific sonic characteristics to Francine, such as loudness, and she pays close attention to Francine's behavior when it is connected to sound, such as in her tendency to sing. For Anna, these are 'black' characteristics, and they also run counter to what is usually expected of women and even more so of English 'ladies': Francine does not keep quiet and she also sings not to entertain others but simply for herself. Francine also includes Anna in her sound-filled activities, for

instance, when she tells her a story which requires Anna's participation: "Sometimes she told me stories, and at the start of the story she had to say 'Timm, timm,' and I had to answer 'Bois sèche […]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 57). The interaction described by Anna is an introductory formula within Creole oral literature (cf. Chaudenson 2001: 282) and features a call-and-response structure between the storyteller and the listener, which "aims to capture the audience's attention at the beginning of the story and to create a 'narrative climate'" (Chaudenson 2001: 282). French creole, as spoken in this passage, is also strongly associated in the novel with Francine and with Anna's native country. It is also markedly different from the occasional French spoken by some of the characters that Anna meets in England (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 141).

Just as Anna perceives 'blackness' and its sonic articulation as positive, for others in the novel it is connoted negatively. When Anna's stepmother Hester tells her about how she confronted Anna's uncle Bo about his lifestyle, which she considered inappropriate, she describes his reaction as follows: He was "laughing in that greasy way – exactly the laugh of a Negro he had" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 51). Perceiving sound in a racialized manner complements Hester's negative impression of Anna's uncle Bo, whom she condemns for having a lot of children with different women and not hiding it, adding that "an English gentleman doesn't have illegitimate children and if he does he doesn't flaunt them" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 51). Characterizing his laugh as that "of a Negro" thus serves to both reinforce her criticism of Bo for his flawed morals and elevate the ideal of a white English man in her eyes (vis-à-vis the 'primitive black man'). The sonic color line becomes even more evident here than in the case of Anna, due to Hester describing his laughter as greasy and connecting this attribute to 'blackness':

> *The sonic color line produces, codes, and polices racial difference through the ear, enabling us to hear race as well as see it. It is a socially constructed boundary that racially codes sonic phenomena such as vocal timbre, accents, and musical tones. […] White-constructed ideas about "sounding Other" […] have flattened the complex range of sounds actually produced by people of color, marking the sonic color line's main contour. (Stoever 2016: 11)*

Not only does Hester have a specific understanding of what the voice of someone who is black sounds like, she also expresses her disapproval of the presumed sonic characteristics by calling it 'greasy', a metaphorical expression which signals falseness as well as exaggeration. Hester's statement also reveals that "[w]hiteness […] is notorious for representing itself as 'invisible'—or in this case, inaudible" (Stoever 2016: 12). For Hester, it is easier to describe how 'blackness' sounds (and thus how

'whiteness' does not sound) than to delineate white identity from the perspective of sound, without relying on its supposed sonic opposite.

Derogatory remarks and slurs based on race are also used at other points in the novel and often relate directly to Anna. When Anna is introduced to Walter, Maudie tells him that the other chorus-girls "call her [Anna] the Hottentot" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 8) because she was born in the West Indies. Walter's reaction is intended to be protective of Anna, but once again it demonstrates the racist attitude of white English characters in the novel: "'Why the Hottentot?' Mr Jeffries said. 'I hope you call them something worse back [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 8). Walter does not take issue with their use of a racial slur, but addresses the fact that Anna is referred to specifically as being black. The latter constitutes the real insult for him, and consequently he suggests to Anna that she ought to fight back and engage in a 'sonic conflict'.

Walter's reaction foreshadows Anna's struggle with her in-betweenness regarding race. While she states that she has always had a wish to be black, she is constantly confronted with negative stereotypes about blackness, which make her feel at odds with her own identity. As before, this conflict is conveyed in the novel largely through the sonic imagination, as the following passage again shows: Here, Hester discusses how Anna leads her life in England and whether she will continue supporting her financially. She insinuates that Anna is a lost cause, precisely because of her family background, and she goes on to explain what she finds so troubling about her:

> *'My conscience is quite clear. I always did my best for you and I never got any thanks for it. I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn't do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you had! Exactly like a nigger you talked – and still do. Exactly like that dreadful girl Francine. When you were jabbering away together in the pantry I never could tell which of you was speaking. But I did think when I brought you to England that I was giving you a real chance. And now that you're beginning to turn out badly I must be made responsible for it and I must go on supporting you [...].' (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52)*

In another one of Hester's tirades, she reveals much of her antipathy towards people who are black and directs her aversion at Anna. Her misgivings are articulated mainly in relation to sound, demonstrating not just her prejudices, but also once again drawing a clear sonic color line.

Anna is confronted here once again with a criticism of her voice, only this time, it is based on conceptions of race. Hester points out Anna's "awful sing-song voice", similarly to Anna's landlady, who criticizes her for her 'drawly' voice (cf. Rhys 2019

[1934]: 22). Only in this case, Hester ascribes this particular tone to (her idea of) 'blackness', also using a racial slur when comparing Anna to a black person. This quote also combines all of the other political categories analyzed so far (gender and class), in that Hester directly contrasts Anna's voice and the way she talks with how a 'lady' would sound. Hester further frames the fact that she helped her go to England as an effort to 'civilize' Anna (and her voice), which, according to Hester, has failed because she seems to "turn out badly" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). In Hester's account, a black person is the Other to an English woman of high social standing, which for Hester finds expression mainly in sound. Hester's approach serves as much to degrade 'blackness' as to elevate 'whiteness' and its sonic manifestation, while never describing how exactly to sound 'white':

> *While never seeming to speak its own name, white sonic identity imagines itself against circumscribed representations of how people of color sound. The binary hierarchy of proper/improper marks one border of the sonic color line; the socially constructed divisions between sound/noise and quiet/loud mark two others. (Stoever 2016: 12)*

Likewise the sonic color line that Hester formulates makes a clear distinction between 'proper' and 'improper' and it is clear to her on which side Anna falls. The binary hierarchy in Hester's idea of what one should sound like is also evident in her comparison of Anna with Francine: Having established the two directions in which Anna can go in terms of sound, Hester chooses Francine as a negative example to show Anna just how improper her behavior is. She states that by just listening to them, she could not distinguish the two from one another, and she further characterizes the way they spoke as 'jabbering', which contrasts with her choice of the word 'talk' for ladies, also reinforcing the binarity of the sonic color line.

In this quote and shortly before it, Hester insinuates that it was probably unavoidable that Anna would develop the traits she observes in her solely due to her descent (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). When she says "of course I couldn't do it" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52), Hester again alludes to Anna's family background on her mother's side, convinced that Anna's 'fate is sealed' because of her not exclusively white ancestry. Anna senses the subtext of what Hester is saying and feels compelled to defend herself: "'You're trying to make out that my mother was coloured,' I said. 'You always did try to make that out. And she wasn't [...]'" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). Anna's reaction to Hester's insults creates a contradictory situation, in which she is prompted – despite being drawn to what she perceives as 'black' – to correct her stepmother and make it clear that her mother was not, in fact, black. However, to Hester this is irrelevant, as she has made up her mind about her stepdaughter,

whom she sees as of 'mixed' descent and not 'purely' white. Hester adheres to a racist biological determinism that makes her see Anna as 'contaminated', with certain predispositions that in Hester's mind can also be noticed on the level of sound. When she remarks that it was impossible to get Anna "away from the servants" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52), she wants to further substantiate her claim about Anna's 'racial corruption'.

In *The Sonic Color Line*, Stoever claims that sound, race and violence often go hand in hand: She notes that "listening operates as an organ of racial discernment, categorization, and resistance" and highlights "the importance of sound [...] as a critical modality through which subjects (re)produce, apprehend, and resist racial identities and structures of racist violence" (Stoever 2016: 4). The processes described by Stoever are precisely what characterize the conversation between Anna and Hester, and they are similar to what Anna experiences through sound in regard to gender and class.

The conflict presented in this passage is once again based on Anna's feeling of being wrongly categorized and thus not properly seen as a person. The exchange with Hester is a repetition of her sense of being closed in by people around her, by their assumptions and their understanding (or ignorance) of her identity and her position, resulting in an epistemic violence towards Anna on the basis of race. Hester does not speak to Anna eye to eye, she talks down to her due to Hester's assumed 'racial superiority', preventing her from engaging in a reciprocal communicative situation (cf. Dotson 2011: 242). However, the violence expressed here is not purely epistemic, as it also directly targets Anna, intended to make her feel she is a lesser person because of the way she speaks and because of her family background. This violence does not inflict bodily harm on Anna, but it is still interpersonal violence because it causes psychological damage by devaluating her and her identity.

Violence and sound are intricately interwoven in the quote: The literary sounds staged here – Hester's speech, Anna's voice – function semiotically as iconic signs for both forms of violence. The sounds are directly affected by the forms of violence and in some way resemble aspects of violence. Interestingly, sound appears here both as the object and the medium of violence: The epistemic violence is aimed at Anna's usage of her voice, but Hester's voice is the very carrier of that violence. While the words and the content of her speech are the deciding factor in regard to what makes it violent, this scene also contrasts different uses of vocals sounds. Shortly afterwards it becomes clear that remarks by Hester such as those mentioned above involve a particular tone in her voice: When Anna and Hester talk about puns and witty retorts in social situations and Anna gives an example that Hester considers primitive and vulgar, she says to her: '"There's a certain difference, but of course you can't be expected to see that.' In that voice as if she were

talking to herself" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 56). Here Hester speaks again from a place of perceived superiority, as if assuring herself of the hierarchy between them resulting from her conception of race. Anna notices such tonal subtleties, which constitute microaggressions staged through the sonic imagination.

3.2.5 The sonic imagination of intersectionality

Voyage in the Dark is a story of how different characters attempt to discipline and change the way Anna (vocally) produces sound, but also of how they discipline themselves and their own voices to make it sound different so as to either achieve a specific goal or to distinguish themselves on the scale of social prestige and in accordance with different power structures and hierarchies.

The analysis here focused on the most important political components regarding Anna as the narrator and protagonist, with particular attention to the staging of literary sounds. The notion of intersectionality helps to recognize the political significance of sound in *Voyage in the Dark* without relying on, or overemphasizing one specific aspect in which violence becomes manifest:

> *[I]ntersectionality is most useful not as an account of all the intricacies of the subjectivity of any intersectional group, but rather it is useful for exposing the operations of power dynamics in places where a single axis approach might render those operations invisible. (Cooper 2016: 401)*

Anna's story is equally shaped by ideas and structures relating to gender, class and race, and these political categories reinforce each other in the novel as parts of Anna's identity. This is particularly noticeable from the perspective of relationality, which is also highlighted in intersectional approaches: "[S]ocial positions (occupied by actors, systems, and political and economic structural arrangements) necessarily acquire meaning and power (or a lack thereof) in relationship to other social positions" (Collins/Chepp 2013: 60–61). Be it about power structures between men and women, between high and low social standing or between 'whiteness' and 'blackness', Anna constantly finds herself on the margins of these intersecting social positions. Reducing her struggle with her own identity to one of these particular oppositions would fall short of accounting for why she experiences violence from other women or, being white-passing herself, from characters who are white.

Sound in the novel is an important marker for Anna's in-betweenness within these interacting power constellations and the sonic imagination makes her intersectional experience of violence palpable. Besides tying different themes together

and often driving the narrative, literary sounds highlight specific conflicts and confrontations in the novel and illustrate not only the oppression Anna faces, but also how she resists the countless efforts to discipline and subjugate her.

The two selected works by Coetzee turn again to political conflicts that are greater in scale and not as subtle as the power dynamics in Rhys's novel. The sonic imagination in these texts ranges from overwhelmingly loud sounds to profound, unfathomable silence, and some of the staged literary sounds even point to a violence that entails death. The characters in these novels are attentive to the auditory environments of war, riots and torture, but individual conversations can also create sonic conflicts of their own.

3.3 Sounds of violence in two of J. M. Coetzee's novels

Within the literary landscape of South Africa, J. M. Coetzee's "works present a sophisticated intellectual challenge to the particular form of colonial violence embodied in apartheid" (Head 1997: 1). His fiction also addresses multiple variations of this colonial violence through the sonic imagination. Rereading two of his novels with a focus on literary sounds offers a new perspective on how these texts approach oppressive systems built on injustice and the excessive use of force. *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life & Times of Michael K* emphasize different forms of violence in their staging of the perception and production of sonic phenomena, and analyzing them side by side makes it possible to demonstrate the wide-ranging intertwinement of sound with political themes and the different literary means that are applied in this process.

Both novels foreground sonic environments in situations of political conflict, with varying narrative perspectives focused on different areas in each respective conflict: While *Waiting for the Barbarians* mainly highlights the act of torture through literary sounds, *Life & Times of Michael K* considers the auditory dimension of civil war in a country affected by political unrest.

3.3.1 'Sounds of violence' in *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* opens with the Third Bureau, the most important policing division of the Empire in the novel, taking over the administration of a small border town, alleging that war is imminent with the 'barbarians' – nomads and fisher folk who are "mainly destitute tribespeople" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 4). The novel is narrated by the Magistrate who surrenders control over the town to Colonel Joll and his men.

Sound is a key element in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and is highlighted early on in the text. For instance, the process of hearing is used to illustrate the Magistrate's struggle with his own conscience during the first half of the novel, when he finds himself in the position of a bystander (and an accomplice) who condemns the actions of the Third Bureau but does not choose to openly challenge their authority until later. After the yard below the Magistrate's apartment is turned into a makeshift prison yard by the Third Bureau, he grows increasingly aware of the sounds that reach him when more and more 'barbarians' are taken prisoner and held there. He ponders whether he would be able to find a way to ignore their suffering if he lived elsewhere, and eventually realizes that "it is the knowledge of how contingent my unease is, how dependent on a baby that wails beneath my window one day and does not wail the next, that brings the worst shame to me, the greatest indifference to annihilation" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 22). At this point, the Magistrate admits that

he still chooses not to act despite knowing that if one of the infants in the yard cannot be heard crying one day it means that it most likely has died. It is the literary sound of the wailing child that triggers this thought process in the Magistrate and forces him to face his own passivity. Shortly before, this passivity also lets him state, "I would like to be able to stop my ears to the noises coming from the yard below" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 22), as if being isolated from the sounds would already ease his conscience. A conspicuous absence of sensory experiences other than auditory phenomena (here the Magistrate is confronted with the desperate situation of the prisoners solely based on sound) is also characteristic of the novel as a whole.

The inner conflict of the Magistrate presented with an emphasis on sound is continued later on when he talks to a young officer about the plans for a military offensive against the 'barbarians' and about the general approach of the Third Bureau in handling the situation in the town and at the frontier. During the conversation, the Magistrate becomes more and more irritated by the officer's limited perspective on the matter and gets carried away trying to reply to his naive questions: "It is not too late to put a stop to the lecture. Instead I hear my voice rise in tone and abandon myself regretfully to the intoxication of anger" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 54). Despite his efforts to curb his eagerness to object to the officer's opinions and enlighten him about the people beyond the frontier, the Magistrate's conscience actually gets the better of him. This moment is illustrated by presenting his voice as having a life and a mind of its own, and the Magistrate appears to merely listen to it passively. He seems to have lost control over his own voice and ultimately over himself, leading him to openly question the oppressive measures of the Third Bureau. The conversation with the officer marks a turning point in his confrontation with the Empire, conveyed in the manifestation of the proverbial voice of conscience as a literary sound that is separate from himself (and thus from his former complicity).

From then on, the idea of the Magistrate's voice as an entity that is not part of him and has a mind of its own is reiterated at various points in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In some cases, this sentiment occurs when he speaks again against his better judgement, similarly to the way he lectures the young officer. For instance, when he addresses the soldiers tormenting him later in the novel (in an attempt to understand how they can treat him the way they do), he notes: "Amazed I stare at this elaborate utterance as it winds its way out of me. Am I mad enough to intend a provocation?" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 129). Interestingly enough, he states that he 'stares' at his own utterance, an oxymoron which further highlights the Magistrate's detached state when his voice starts to make itself heard independently of his will while he confronts his tormentors. In other cases, he hears himself talk and is occasionally surprised by what he sounds like (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87, 05, 116, 121, 141).

Sound also serves to accentuate important moments in the novel, like when the narrator tries to help the 'barbarian' woman with whom he has an intimate relationship go back to her tribe: When they arrive at their destination and encounter a group of 'barbarians', the Magistrate remarks that "[t]here is the beating of my heart, the heaving of the horses, the moan of the wind, and no other sound. We have crossed the limits of the Empire" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 76–77). While the literary sounds heighten the tension during this first encounter by staging a relative silence (his beating heart can only be heard by himself), they also signal that the party has gone beyond the sphere of influence of the Empire after having travelled across the desert: Here they are far away from the noises that are so characteristic of the frontier town where most of the novel takes place.

Torture, one of the central themes of the novel, is also inherently tied to processes of the production and perception of sound, as is already evident when the Magistrate talks to Colonel Joll about the effectiveness of the use of force during interrogations at the beginning of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In this conversation, Joll tells the Magistrate how he recognizes whether the torture has achieved its aim and whether a prisoner is telling the truth, having yielded to the pain: Joll states that he is able to tell whether the information acquired in this way is true because, according to him, "[a] certain tone enters the voice of a man who is telling the truth. Training and experience teach us to recognize that tone" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The Magistrate (ironically) dubs this particular tone the "tone of truth" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5) because he knows very well "how natural a mistake" it is "to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 46). To him, the tone that enters the voice of someone who is tortured cannot be the carrier of truth, but can only express pain, a thought that he articulates when he thinks about the 'barbarian' woman and what she must have gone through after being brought to the town with her father. The woman is another character in the novel who relies very much on the perception of sound because her eyes have been injured by the soldiers who tortured her. So when the Magistrate tries to imagine what it has been like for her to be present while they tormented her father, he remarks: "Or perhaps by that time she could not see, and had to know [that her father is being humiliated before her] by other means: the tone his voice took on when he pleaded with them to stop" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 88). Unlike Colonel Joll, the Magistrate believes that a pain-riddled tone does not always bring the truth to light, but can also merely be a sign of desperation. The sound of the voice during torture is a recurring element throughout the novel.

The conversation between the Magistrate and Joll about the 'tone of truth' – a specific sonic characteristic that results from the use of physical force and the experience of harm – already hints at the intricate relationship between sonic

knowledge and violence in the novel. Joll's belief and confidence in the 'tone of truth' are not the least reasons for his campaign and the excessive measures used in trying to counter the supposed threat of a 'barbarian' attack. This 'sonic ideology' augurs the status of sound during the torture of prisoners taken by the Third Bureau. The staging of hearing processes also makes it possible to maneuver the challenge that Coetzee himself formulates in one of his articles devoted to the literary approaches to torture, where he asks "how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority, how to imagine torture and death on one's own terms" (Coetzee 1992 [1986]: 364). This challenge is posed due to the "dilemma proposed by the state, namely, either to ignore its obscenities or else produce representations of them" (Coetzee 1992 [1986]: 364). Focusing on sound rather than other sensory experiences affords a way of circumventing to a certain extent the dilemma that Coetzee addresses in regard to writing about torture.

As early as the beginning of the novel, the text demonstrates how literary sounds can shift one's attention away from an explicit presentation of the act of torture and instead provide a perspective from which torture remains an opaque but nonetheless unsettling phenomenon. As one of the first steps in the escalation of the confrontation at the center of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a 'barbarian' boy and his elderly uncle are suspected of having taken part in a raid close to the town, and Colonel Joll orders their interrogation while they are imprisoned. In the following passage, the Magistrate becomes aware for the first time of the brutal interrogation methods employed by Colonel Joll:

> *Of the screaming which people afterwards claim to have heard from the granary, I hear nothing. At every moment that evening as I go about my business I am aware of what might be happening, and my ear is even tuned to the pitch of human pain. But the granary is a massive building with heavy doors and tiny windows; it lies beyond the abattoir and the mill in the south quarter. (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5)*

The Magistrate's account of how the boy and his uncle are tortured centers exclusively on sound and the sonic imagination. In the quoted paragraph, everything relates to a specific sound (albeit varying degrees of explicitness) – the screaming of two people being tortured due to the suspicion that they might have committed a crime. Sound is thus critical for understanding what is actually happening to these prisoners: Due solely to the staging of the sonic phenomenon of the scream, when reading this passage one is able to form an idea of the interrogation taking place within the granary.

The reason for this focus on sound is that the narrator is excluded from being present and directly witnessing the interrogation process, on the vague pretense that he would "find it tedious" because of "set procedures" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 4)

which Colonel Joll and his men adhere to. Due to the internal focalization of the homodiegetic narration within the novel (which is a 'focalisation interne fixe' to be precise, cf. Genette 1972: 206–207), the description of this torture scene is restricted to its auditory dimension, since the Magistrate is not physically in the room when the prisoners are interrogated. As the sounds travel beyond the walls of the provisional prison cell and it is far more difficult to prevent the Magistrate or other witnesses from hearing the prisoners' screams, only the sonic dimension can give an indication of what is going on during the interrogation. The significance of sound is further amplified through remarks about the process of hearing, such as the fact that the narrator's ears are "tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5).

So far, such an interpretation corresponds to a basic form of sonic knowledge, in accordance with which it makes sense that, even without being able to see inside the cell, one can deduce what is going on by listening to the sounds that emanate from it. However, the narrative situation in the quote is far more complicated and stages sound by almost paradoxical means that are not compatible with a common, extra-literary sonic knowledge: What is striking is that when reading the passage closely, the discussed sounds are, in fact, not heard, as is clearly stated by the first-person narrator. Nevertheless, there is a staging of sound taking place even when the Magistrate claims to not have heard any of the screams, and this can be thought of as the staging of sound *ex negativo*: Literary sound is such a significant element within the quote precisely because it appears to be absent, which corresponds to an understanding of 'marked absence' in literary texts.

The narrator marks the lack of sound by mentioning the testimonies of others who did hear the screaming; the screams are thus rendered meaningful through being marked as absent: "Like the holes of a Swiss cheese, absence can basically only be perceived in relation to a real or expected presence" (Wolf 2016: 6). By calling attention to the auditory perception of others and to the acoustic conditions of his surroundings, the narrator creates the expectation of a sound which is conspicuously missing, namely through the following phrase: "Of the screaming [...] I hear nothing" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). In order to explain the absence of sound, he describes how the building is constructed and how its location makes it hard to hear anything emanating from the granary. The fact that sound does not pass easily through these structure only reinforces the idea that the screams of the prisoners must be extraordinarily drastic: It is as if to say that the screams are so loud that only the heavy doors and the remote location could drown them out.

In this instance the description of the building and the reference to the claim of other people that they had heard the screams have a specific function for the staging of sound. They are 'significance triggers' (cf. Wolf 2016: 5, 18f) for the absence

of sound, indicating that even when the first-person narrator states that he does not hear anything, the screams are still meaningful in this context because they are marked as absent.

Due to the way the prisoners' screams are staged in this passage, the literary sound oscillates between presence and absence; it is there and not there at one and the same time: The narrator claims that he does not hear it, but by means of prolepsis, by remarking that others did hear it, he is able to point out that the sound is indeed there.[65]

The Magistrate's perception of sound is highlighted once more at a later point in the novel when other prisoners are tortured, again without him present:

> *The prisoners are returned not to the yard but to the main barracks hall: the soldiers have been turned out, quartered on the town. I sit in my rooms with the windows shut, in the stifling warmth of a windless evening, trying to read, straining my ears to hear or not to hear sounds of violence. Finally at midnight the interrogations cease, there is no more banging of doors or tramping of feet, the yard is silent in the moonlight, and I am at liberty to sleep. (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 23–24)*

In this passage, the interrogation process is repeated and it is, again, only through the staging of literary sounds that one learns about the torture of even more prisoners. As before, the narrator does not directly witness how the prisoners are interrogated and he can only tell that they are being tortured because of sonic impressions – the "banging of doors" and "tramping of feet". Only sounds serve as evidence that pain is being inflicted on the prisoners, which is also hinted at by the narrator and his efforts "to hear or not to hear sounds of violence". By implying that he attempts to do both at the same time, he expresses both that he is curious about what is happening to the prisoners and also distressed by their audible agony. The Magistrate is also kept awake by the noise; the sonic environment prevents him from falling asleep until late in the night. As Philipp Schweighauser observes with regard to other literatures, here *Waiting for the Barbarians* uses "literary characters' perceptions of noise to give us indications as to their states of mind" (Schweighauser 2006: 32). The Magistrate feels noticeably uneasy about how the Third Bureau is conducting their operation in the town and treating the prisoners.

When the Magistrate is eventually imprisoned himself for "treasonously consorting with the enemy" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 85) and finds himself in the same room in which the 'barbarians' were held prisoner and tortured, sound is important

65 For a further discussion of the Magistrate's account of this event and its potential status as a false testimony, cf. Craps 2007: 63–64.

in conveying his reflections on their suffering. Here, the sonic imagination enables a figurative illustration of the Magistrate's state of mind:

> *I […] shut my eyes, trying to attune my hearing to that infinitely faint level at which the cries of all who suffered here must still beat from wall to wall. I pray for the day when these walls will be levelled and the unquiet echoes can finally take wing; though it is hard to ignore the sound of brick being laid on brick so nearby. (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87)*

In passages such as this, sound appears as much more than a sensory phenomenon that is perceived aurally. Here, sound is a domain which serves to express and come to terms with events of the past, with things that cannot be seen or felt directly anymore. Sound is a concept into which the Magistrate projects his most intimate thoughts, and one can observe that, as the narrator, he uses his own sonic imagination to create an expression of his mourning: While he tries to "attune" his "hearing" to the sounds that once resonated in the room during brutal interrogations, he does note that they are "infinitely faint", that the screams still exist in a way as echoes, beating "from wall to wall", but that they can only be grasped on a theoretical or imaginative level (underlined by stating that they "must still" reverberate in the room). At the same time, in the next sentence, he calls them "unquiet echoes", which contrasts slightly with the infinite faintness in the previous statement and is to some extent also tautological, since echoes, by definition, can never be absolutely quiet.

Focusing on sound makes it possible for the Magistrate to formulate his idea about how the prisoners who suffered and died in the cell can be redeemed: Only when the building in which the cell is located is destroyed will the echoes of their screams "take wing" and be allowed to fade away, and thus not be confined within the walls of the room anymore. The Magistrate's wish for destruction also articulates his discontent with the Empire and how the Third Bureau governs the town. It is also possible that the Magistrate imagines that the echoes of the dead never vanish entirely and merely wants them to roam freely outside of the cell walls – such a thought turns up later on in the novel when he reiterates the idea of the endless reverberation of human cries even after death: "[T]he air is full of sighs and cries. These are never lost: if you listen carefully, with a sympathetic ear, you can hear them echoing forever within the second sphere" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 123). Expressing a similar concept to the infinitely faint echo of the prisoner's cries, the Magistrate imagines another sphere within which someone's cries ring out forever (which is also reminiscent of what was conceptualized in Ancient Greece as the *musica universalis*, a physically imperceptible 'harmony of the spheres'). Moreover, even though the sounds in this sphere seem to be almost absolutely inaccessible, he

claims that the cries can keep one from falling asleep during the night (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 123). This thought is a continuation of his own problem with not being able to fall asleep while living above the prison yard in the town and hearing the sounds of the prisoners and the interrogations by the soldiers. The Magistrate's hearing also reflects his awareness of the past, which is of particular importance in the last quote because he tells this idea to Colonel Joll, who responds by reprimanding the Magistrate for failing to cooperate with the Third Bureau. The 'sympathetic ear' that the Magistrate describes stands in direct contrast with Joll's perspective on hearing and his approach of trying to extract the 'tone of truth' from a prisoner through torture: The two characters conceive of the hearing process in fundamentally different ways and formulate diverging sonic imaginations. While the Magistrate is aware of the mysterious afterlife of sounds, Joll – in his search for the 'tone of truth' – is bound to remain ignorant of the sounds in the 'second sphere' in which the suffering of others becomes manifest in (quasi-)sonic form. The Magistrate subtly confronts Joll and his involvement in the maintenance of the Empire's domination over the 'barbarians' through this imaginative concept of sound and its afterlife, which is underlined by the fact that he presents this idea to Joll in the form of an allegory that vaguely recapitulates the brutal events of the novel (cf. Knaller 2003: 118).

In the passage further above, sound also prompts a confrontation between the past and the present: The Magistrate is still thinking about the voices that rang out there before he was imprisoned, but he is distracted by the noise of the construction outside. The concurrence of these different sounds also illustrates the contrast between the normalcy of everyday life and the kind of cruel acts taking place behind closed doors, amid the ordinary course of events and the daily routine of others. This juxtaposition is already established at the beginning of the novel and also through the contrast of literary sounds, when the Magistrate thinks about the recent developments in the town, "a town of three thousand souls in which the noise of life, the noise that all these souls make on a warm summer evening, does not cease because somewhere someone is crying" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The Magistrate's remarks follow the account of the first interrogation of the boy and his uncle and once again address the discrepancy between the brutal actions of torture and the ordinariness of the way of life surrounding them.

Attuning his hearing to the echo of the screams is reminiscent of how his "ear is [...] tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5) at the beginning of the novel. This is particularly remarkable when considering that other senses, such as vision, fail to trigger the same process of understanding or imagining the brutality and harm that the prisoners had to suffer. Immediately before the passage quoted above, the Magistrate comments on his visual impressions while he is in the

cell: "I stare all day at the empty walls, unable to believe that the imprint of all the pain and degradation they have enclosed will not materialize under an intent enough gaze" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87). Rather than turning to a visualization of the violent acts that happened inside this room, the Magistrate is drawn to an auditory form of imagining. Only when he closes his eyes and concentrates fully on the idea of the sound, is he able to engage with the thought of the tortured prisoners. The auditory perception and the sonic imagination thus belong to the sensory domain that is often the most closely connected with violence in the novel.

In all of the quotes from the novel discussed so far, there are clear semantic cues that link violence to sound. The three phrases that stand out in particular in this regard are as follows: "[M]y ear is even tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5), "I sit in my rooms [...], straining my ears to hear or not to hear sounds of violence" (23–24) and when he is "trying to attune my hearing to [...] the cries of all who suffered here" (87). In all of these examples, the process of hearing either emphasizes the effects of violence, which here are pain and suffering, or directly refers to "sounds of violence". In examining the quoted passages from a semiotic perspective, it is possible to determine the connection between literary sounds and violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* in more precise terms.

In the first passage, from the beginning of the novel, the ambivalence of the narrator's account does not detract from the fact that one is able to deduce what is happening inside the granary from the context: The prisoners' screams indicate that they are being tortured, that violence is being inflicted upon them. The violent actions in this instance are clearly of a physical kind, which is also underlined by the description of their injuries ("[t]he boy's face is puffy and bruised, one eye is swollen shut", Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 3) and the fact that one of them, the boy's uncle, dies during the interrogation (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 6). The screams are thus directly prompted by the prisoners' pain caused by the violence of their interrogators, making the literary sound an index of violence in a semiotic sense: According to Peirce, "[a]n ***Index*** is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object" (Peirce 1994: 2.248; bold and italics in the original). In the quoted passage, the sound is produced by the prisoner who is directly affected by the violent procedure of the interrogation, causing him to scream in agony. An index is also "physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established" (Peirce 1994: 2.299). Applying this notion to the passage from *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the connection between the screams and the infliction of violence is simply noticed by the narrator (i.e., they are already linked, they do not rely on him establishing the connection between them). He can-

not help but come to the conclusion that these sounds are connected to violent actions. The Magistrate's statement that his ears are "tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5) just reaffirms that the screams inherently point to violence and the pain that is a direct effect of it.

In the second passage, the indexical relation of the sound to violence is slightly more intricate than in the first one. As before, since he is not able to witness the interrogations in person, the narrator's awareness of the torture is limited to the auditory dimension: Besides the "sounds of violence" there is also the "banging of doors" and "tramping of feet" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 24). The latter two literary sounds are decidedly different from the screams of the prisoners being tortured, but they nevertheless function as indices for the physical violence used against the prisoners thanks to how the sentence is structured: "Finally at midnight the interrogations cease, there is no more banging of doors or tramping of feet" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 24). When reading this sentence, it immediately becomes clear that these sounds can only relate to the ongoing interrogations – the narrator observes a direct connection between the noise made by the soldiers and the torture of the prisoners, because once these sounds cease, it signals to him that the interrogations have stopped. Peirce also characterizes indices as follows: "Anything which focusses the attention is an index. Anything which startles us is an index, in so far as it marks the junction between two portions of experience" (Peirce 1994: 2.285). For the Magistrate, the sonic environment and its various sound elements are inextricably interwoven with his perception of how the 'barbarians' are treated by the Third Bureau. The sounds of the banging doors and the tramping of feet are substitutes for a more detailed description of the torture itself, but they still point to the violence that is inflicted during the interrogation process because the Magistrate associates them with the questioning of the prisoners, which relies on the brutal methods of the Colonel.

The expression 'sounds of violence' in the passage further reinforces the indexical relation of the sonic phenomena to violence. 'Sounds of violence' can refer to both the prisoners' screams and to the noises produced by the soldiers that keep the narrator from falling asleep; all of these sounds accompanying the interrogations have violent connotations for the Magistrate.

In both of the analyzed passages, there is a narrative distance to the physical, interpersonal violence of torture, despite the indexicality of the literary sounds that relate unambiguously to pain and suffering. The process of torture plays a significant role in the novel, without developing a voyeuristic appeal, because the text avoids graphic descriptions of the use of violence. This is made possible through a focus on the auditory dimension: The staging of visuality would unavoidably encounter limitations in presenting torture with the same elliptic narrative strategy

enabled by the sonic imagination. This approach in the text also corresponds to what Coetzee sees as one of the problems in the 'representation' of torture, namely, that torture, "in truth, because it is offered like the Gorgon's head to terrorize the populace and paralyze resistance, deserves to be ignored" (Coetzee 1992 [1986]: 366). Staging violence through literary sounds, then, creates the possibility of writing about torture in a way that "is no longer limited to *either* looking on in horrified fascination as the blows fall *or* turning one's eyes away" (Coetzee 1992 [1986]: 368; italics in the originals).

Coetzee's oeuvre also includes other forms of violence that are conveyed through the staging of literary sounds. These other instances of violence do not always rely on the direct infliction of pain and bodily injuries and thus cannot be explained by a "liberal philosophical tradition that identifies violence with an agent's exercise of physical force with the intention to inflict harm" (Vorobej 2016: ix). The novel *Life & Times of Michael K* features literary sounds that also make violence perceptible, a violence that neither located on an interpersonal level, nor easily discernible in terms of its intentionality. As a consequence, the sonic imagination stages sound as a sign of violence that goes beyond indexicality (as is predominantly the case in *Waiting for the Barbarians*).

3.3.2 Overpowering sounds and silence in *Life & Times of Michael K*

Life & Times of Michael K is set in the time of a civil war in South Africa. The novel tells the story of Michael K and his futile struggle against the military authorities while trying, having left the tumultuous city of Cape Town, to reach the town where his mother was born. During K's journey to his destination, the country's administration and military forces confront him with different obstacles.

At the very beginning of the novel already, literary sounds are staged to highlight the political situation in which Michael K finds himself. When a riot breaks out after a military jeep runs over a youth, the narrator describes a variety of sounds, all of which are very loud and serve to illustrate the panic and disorder of the events and the violence that is a consequence of it:

> *Sirens announced the curfew and were ignored. […] Then from the balcony of a fourth-floor flat a man began to fire revolver shots. Amid screams the crowd dashed for cover, spreading into the beachfront apartment blocks, racing along the corridors, pounding upon doors, breaking windows and lights. […]*
>
> *A police van with a flashing blue light drew up on the promenade fifty yards away. There was a burst of fire from a machine pistol, and from behind the barricade of cars answering shots. The van backed precipitately away, while amid screams and shouts the crowd retreated down Beach Road. […] In the early hours of the morning*

> *the wind rose and heavy rain began to fall, beating through the broken windows […]. (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 11–12)*

The sonic environment in this passage involves various conflicting forces that become manifest in the form of sound. For instance, the sirens signal the presence of the state, as does the burst of fire from the machine pistol after the police car arrives. On the other side, there is a crowd of people and individuals, such as the man who shoots his revolver. The crowd is characterized by other sounds produced directly by the body, such as screams and shouts, but also the pounding on doors. All of these different literary sounds create a noisy environment that suggests a state of chaos and confusion during a time of political unrest. Even natural phenomena further underline the agitated atmosphere, such as the sound of the heavy rain beating through the windows.

The use of zero focalization enabled through the heterodiegetic narrator in the first part of the novel makes it possible to give extensive descriptions of sonic environments, such as in the passage above. The narrator stages a multitude of noises that are not necessarily tied to the perception of the protagonist and thus convey a broader spectrum of sounds.

The array of loud, tumultuous sounds also serves the purpose of introducing a contrast that will persist almost throughout the entire novel. This contrast is formed by the opposition between the sounds discussed above and the sonic characterization of Michael K and his mother. The literary sounds of the riot at the beginning of the novel are the backdrop against which the quiet behavior of these two characters becomes even more palpable. During the riot, they hide in their apartment, afraid of being drawn into the conflict that is taking place outside. They are described as "huddled quiet as mice in their room beneath the stairs, not stirring […] even when heavy boots stamped past and a hand rattled the locked door" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 12). Michael K and his mother's quietness is directly opposed to the menacing loud sounds of the soldiers searching the building and attempting to get the riot and the outbreak of assaults under control. For the two characters, the sounds that reach them from outside – "the screams, the shots and the sound of breaking glass" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 12) – signal that there is a dangerous threat and makes them assume the worst: "[B]arely daring to whisper, the conviction grew in them that the real war had come to Sea Point and found them out" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 13). The text also underlines K's auditory perception through remarks such as that, even long after the noise outside had subsided, he "sat with his ears pricked, […] breathing very quietly" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 13). In his efforts to keep as quiet as possible and reduce sound to an absolute minimum, he also grips his mother's shoulder after she falls asleep and starts snoring, in order to make her stop (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]:

13). This cautious, very quiet behavior contrasts with the loud literary sounds in the paragraphs that directly precede the description of how K and his mother try to hide in their apartment. The political unrest that is expressed through the riot meets K's passivity on the level of sound: The chaotic, war-like cacophony is fundamentally antagonistic to the silence of the protagonist.

The confrontation between Michael K's silence and the sounds surrounding him begins for him at a young age. When he talks about Huis Norenius, the institution where he grew up, K distinctly remembers the ubiquitous sound of music and how it made him feel: "'The other place I stayed there was a radio playing all the time. [...] There was music all afternoon and all evening [...]. It was like oil over everything. [...] The music made me restless,' he said. 'I used to fidget, I couldn't think my own thoughts [...]'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 132–133). For K, sound has been a source of distress since he was small, when he was unable to ignore the music coming from the radio. It even prevented him from thinking pleasant thoughts to distract him from being confined in Huis Norenius, such as imagining that he could fly (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 133).

Being sensitive to sound also stems from another aspect of his experience at Huis Norenius. Growing up as a half-orphan, K retrospectively identifies a substitute for his father during his time as a child in the institution: "My father was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, the twenty-one rules of which the first was 'There will be silence in dormitories at all times [...]'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 104–105). Silence has been an authoritative influence on his life for a long time, and while the imperative of silence is in a way incompatible with the ubiquity of the radio music at Huis Norenius, it is precisely this confrontation between sound and silence that is so central to K's story. Both sound and silence formed K during his upbringing, and both phenomena appear as oppressive forces in their own right, which he attempts to come to terms with over the course of his life. The theme of this sonic conflict is continued through his struggle with the political circumstances of the civil war.

Following the riot, Michael K tries again to obtain the permits that he and his mother need to leave Cape Town, in keeping with their prior plans to go to the district of Prince Albert, where she was born. Having waited in vain for the permits to arrive by mail, K goes to the police station again to inquire about the status of the permits. K tries to engage in an argument with a policewoman about his application for the permits, but gets cut off repeatedly. The dialogue is presented through direct discourse, and K's inferior position is signaled by dashes: "'August eighteenth. But my mother—'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 19). It does not matter how often he tries to explain his concern, he is interrupted by the policewoman again and again: "'But that is what I want to know! Because if the permit isn't going to come I must make

other plans. My mother is sick—'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 20). As K continues to protest, the policewoman interrupts him one last time by making a loud gesture: "The policewoman slapped the counter to still him" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 20). Through her dominant sonic behavior she effectively silences K, who does not go away (as the policewoman orders him to), but stops talking altogether. K continues to breathe heavily and stare at her, but the direct discourse in the text shows that only the policewoman is talking from this point on (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 20). It becomes clear that the bureaucratic machine cannot be bothered to listen to K and his requests, however valid they might be. Even when he desperately struggles for attention, ultimately his problems cannot be taken into account. After using the loud sound of slapping the counter to shut him up, the policewoman resorts to constantly calling "next!" to the next person in line (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 20), indicating that as an officer she merely keeps an automated process going and disregards individual circumstances.

The confrontation with both civil unrest (arising due to an oppressive political system) and an impenetrable administrative apparatus is thus conveyed through different sonic modes and behaviors in the novel. Either K is intimidated by sound and keeps quiet, as could be seen during the riot (a symptom of the ongoing civil war), or he encounters people who do not listen to him, resulting in a literal 'bureaucratic deafness', meaning that he uses sound in vain. The narrator assigns different sonic behaviors to opposing sides in the conflict in order to illustrate through literary sounds the power dynamic and political configurations set in motion by the state of emergency: Sound overwhelms the protagonist and enables representatives of the regime to assert their powerful position, while K fails to make himself heard.

The political conflicts expressed through sonic contrasts in *Life & Times of Michael K* reach their first climax after K and his mother try to leave town without their permits. Instead of taking the train, K builds a cart in which to transport his sick mother to Prince Albert, at least until someone passing by on the road offers to give them a ride. The beginning of their journey is narrated with a strong emphasis on literary sounds, highlighting processes relating to the perception and production of sonic phenomena. The characterization of K and his mother accentuates the same quiet qualities as before, for instance when workers on the road observe them "roll past in silence" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21). This time, their surroundings are equally quiet, so much so that "[t]here was such stillness that he [Michael K] could hear birdsong" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21). The fact that K is able to hear the birds sing is an additional indication that they have left the political turmoil of the city. Lying down for a break, he even closes his eyes, enabling him to focus fully on the sonic environment without being distracted by visual impressions (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21). However, the initial quietness proves to be deceptive:

> *He was roused by a rumbling in the air. At first he thought it was faroff thunder. The noise grew louder, however, beating in waves off the base of the bridge above them. […] Then followed a long and miscellaneous procession of heavy vehicles, most of them trucks empty of cargo. K crept up the verge to his mother; side by side they sat and watched in a roar of noise that seemed to turn the air solid. (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21–22)*

As soon as K and his mother start to get used to the stillness on their way to her birthplace, the noise of the civil war catches up to them. In an attempt to comprehend the sudden loud noise, K initially even thinks the sound of the military vehicles is a weather phenomenon. The menacing quality of the sound is expressed in terms such as the 'rumbling' and 'roar of noise'. Most strikingly, the noise is described as seemingly 'turning the air solid', a figurative expression that is based on an extra-literary sonic knowledge and extends it by rhetorical means: Sound, if its volume rises above a certain level, can be increasingly felt through other parts of the body due to the pressure transported through the air. This phrase suggests a very high intensity of sound waves, which increases the tactile sensation triggered by a sound. 'Turning the air solid' thus implies that, given such a high volume and intensity, the sound can almost be felt as if it were a solid object pressing against the body, even though it is physically impossible for sound to transform air into such an object. Through an expression such as this, the sonic imagination helps to convey the intensity of the noise and illustrate its shocking effect. The loud sounds form a stark contrast to the silence of K and his mother and the general quietness during their journey.

The noise of the vehicles and the sudden change in the sonic environment are only the start of the ensuing confrontation conveyed on the level of literary sounds. When two motorcyclists from the convoy discover the two protagonists, they approach them and start questioning them about their journey and their destination. Most of the text is taken up by the direct discourse of the motorcyclists, who interrogate K and his mother and lecture them about the regulations applying to the expressway on which they are travelling (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22). K, on the other hand, resorts to his usual behavior when faced with overwhelming sounds: "'Is this your vehicle?' K nodded. 'Where are you going?' K whispered, cleared his throat, spoke a second time: 'To Prince Albert. In the Karoo.' The motorcyclist whistled, rocked the barrow lightly, called down something to his companion" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22). K's reluctance to participate confidently in this oral communication process is shown through various details in the dialogue. His first reaction is a silent gesture, a nod affirming the soldier's question about his self-built cart. When he is eventually forced to give an answer, he whispers in response – this mode of speech

is highlighted by the fact that the text does not use direct discourse at first, but only after K clears his throat and speaks for a second time, entirely omitting what he initially says. The motorcyclist, on the other hand, is in no way hesitant in his use of sound, whistling and calling loudly to the other soldier. After issuing a warning, the motorcyclist leaves by 'roaring off' (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22), a final sound that concludes the uneven encounter. After the conversation, K is embarrassed at the trouble he has caused them and states "'[w]e should have picked a quieter road'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22). 'Quiet' can be understood in two senses: On the one hand, K refers to a road which is less busy than the one they have taken, and on the other hand, the word has a clear sound connotation. His remark thus reiterates his quiet disposition and expresses his distress caused not just by being held up by the soldiers, but also by the noise of the convoy that accompanied them.

When K and his mother arrive at a checkpoint shortly after the incident described above, they are once more confronted by soldiers who demand to see their permits to leave the area. Again, the use of direct discourse is unevenly distributed, to the point that K's speech is not once presented directly, even though the text mentions that he pleads with the soldiers to let them through. At the same time, the unrelenting regulations instituted during the state of emergency again become clear: "'I don't care who you are, who your mother is, if you haven't got a permit you can't leave the area, finished [...]'" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 23). Upon hearing that they are being categorically denied passage, the only reaction from K's mother is that "[f]rom under the black canopy she gazed out expressionlessly at the young soldier" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 23), while the soldier continues to shout. Like her son, she is left speechless by the political and administrative obstacles placed in front of her.

The hardship of K and his mother is noticeable not just in the effects the country's crisis and the resulting restrictions have on their lives, it also becomes manifest in the clash between different modes of sound production and sonic behaviors. The opposition between sound and silence reflects a power dynamic between unequal forces: There is an underlying logic to the characterization of K as someone who talks very little and remains mostly quiet, while the soldiers speak freely, shout and whistle. The confrontation is also expressed not only through speech and other human sounds, but also through other elements in the sonic environment, as could be seen in the case of the loud noises of the military convoy. Literary sounds and the fundamental political conflicts within the novel are thus inherently connected. A specific kind of violence is at play here that relates in a different way to the literary sounds than in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

The noise of the riot in the first passage discussed in this section is connected very directly with physical violence through the staging of screams, gun shots and other sounds. The sound of guns and rifles in particular can easily be identified as

the product of tools and objects that cause direct, physical harm. However, in the other passages, it is clear that the various sonic contrasts relate back to a fundamental conflict in the novel which goes beyond the physical violence on the surface level of the story. In these passages, no physical harm is inflicted on the protagonist, and the violence seems to be of a more subtle, systemic kind. This violence consists, for example, of individual needs being ignored by state institutions, or of people being denied freedom of movement, as K and his mother experience first-hand in the obstacles caused by the state of emergency during the civil war. Their encounters with the bureaucratic apparatus and the military serve as reminders of the restrictions forced upon them, preventing them from leaving Cape Town. Such constraints are part of what Johan Galtung calls 'indirect' or 'structural violence':

> *There may not be any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances. […] Violence with a clear subject-object-relation is manifest because it is visible as action. […] Violence without this relation is structural, built into structure. (Galtung 1969: 171)*

Unlike the soldiers who interrogate and torture the prisoners in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, there are no clearly identifiable agents of violence here because the structural violence at the core of the conflict in *Life & Times of Michael K* does not necessarily rely on individuals who commit violent acts. It thus cannot be "traced back to concrete persons or actors" (Galtung 1969: 171). Rather, this structural violence is the result of the political circumstances of the civil war and the regulations aimed at controlling the population in such a time of crisis. When K tries to acquire the permits, and when he and his mother try to leave the city, the policewoman and the soldiers seem to merely enforce the regulations established because of the state of emergency. From this perspective, violence is already built into the structures that govern life within the novel, and it is part of every confrontation between Michael K and the figures who represent the political authority. While this structural violence can be accompanied by physical, interpersonal violence (as it is often the case later on in *Life & Times of Michael K*), it is not a necessary part of it, as could be seen in the passages about K and his mother's journey and the preparations leading up to it.

What, then, is the significance of literary sounds in these situations of conflict? Each side of the confrontations is linked with specific sounds and sonic behaviors, which also correspond to either a subordinate or an oppressive position: Noise functions as a sensory element associated with domination in that it drowns out other sounds and overwhelms K and other characters through its volume, whereas silence and quietness signal subordination.

By employing recurring patterns in the text – K keeping silent, military personnel and other authorities producing loud noises – the narrator evokes the structural violence that the protagonist is confronted with. The sounds staged in the novel may not inflict direct physical harm, but because specific sonic behaviors are repeatedly assigned to opposing sides of the conflict, the auditory dimension is increasingly perceived to mirror and amplify the skewed power relations associated with structural violence.

The process of reiterating these sounds and showing their connection to the power dynamic within the novel causes them to appear as symbolic signs in relation to structural violence. Relying on conventions or habits rather than on causality, a symbol, unlike an index, does not relate to its object in a direct manner: "A ***symbol*** is a representamen which fulfills its function regardless of any similarity or analogy with its object and equally regardless of any ***factual*** connection therewith, but solely and simply because it will be interpreted to be a representamen" (Peirce 1994: 5.73; bold and italics in the original). In order to be interpreted as a sign (or representamen), there needs to be an established understanding of the relation between the symbol and its object, because they are connected only "by virtue of the idea of the symbol-using mind" (Peirce 1994: 2.299), contrary to an index, where the connection between sign and object is simply remarked. The sounds which are staged in the previous quotes from *Life & Times of Michael K* – e.g., the policewoman slapping the counter, the loud noises produced by the military convoy or the soldiers shouting – do not point to the exertion of physical violence and certainly do not contribute to the political structures that generate the sort of indirect violence that Galtung writes about. However, by continuously reading about the correlation between conflicting auditory elements and different positions of power, one forms an idea that enables interpreting sounds in the text as expressing the fundamental opposition between Michael K and the external constraints forced upon him. These constraints have a harmful effect, because K can be "picked up at any moment and charged with 'offences'" while he is "at the same time excluded from law in being denied its protection" (Burrow 2006: 171).[66] Against this backdrop, sounds become symbolic of the structural violence within the novel.

When considering the symbolic quality of the literary sounds in *Life & Times of Michael K*, the way the sounds of military vehicles can signify violence – when the soldiers stop K and his mother to question them – becomes clear. In addition to cars, trucks and motorcycles of themselves vaguely symbolizing violence as tools of war, the sonic imagination of the text establishes an idea that unmistakably ties the

66 Burrow also points out in this context that the position of being both inside and outside the law is what makes Michael K's situation similar to the literary figure that his name also alludes to: Franz Kafka's Josef K (Burrow 2006: 171; cf. also Atwell 2016: 107–108).

literary sounds of these machines to the divisions created by the structural violence at the core of the story. When Michael K acknowledges that he and his mother "should have picked a quieter road" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22), he further affirms the symbolic connection between the opposing abrasive sounds and the violent nature of the political structures that prevent them from moving away from Cape Town, thus again articulating his wish to be able to live in peace far away from the tumultuous events that trouble the people in the city.

The status of silence changes over the course of the novel, however. Despite the close correlation between silence and powerlessness in the first half, silence takes on a new significance as itself a violent phenomenon that can irritate and unsettle others.[67] Silence needs to be understood in relation to literary sounds and as a sonic phenomenon in itself, even though it is, by definition, the absence of sound. In *Life & Times of Michael K*, silence and the staging of hearing frequently enter into direct contact: The text often describes K as listening to silence (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 46, 57, 66, 111), thus an aural sensation is being staged, insofar as the process of listening is also accentuated through the sonic imagination.

Apart from the passages that have already been discussed, at many other points in the novel it is often reiterated that no one is listening to K, even though he does attempt to use sound to his advantage and speak up (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 40). So over time K tries to find a different approach so as to make himself heard, and while it may seem ironic that he achieves this through silence, such a strategy has often been recognized as possessing an empowering potential, especially in postcolonial theory: "Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right" (Trinh 1989: 83). From an external point of view, K remains in a subordinate position for most of the novel,[68] but undoubtedly he tries to use his silence to a different end. In the beginning, K's silence is merely a sign of fear and intimidation, often in reaction to more dominant sounds and "systematic and dehumanizing violence, injustice, and absurdity" (Chesney 2007: 311). However, towards the end of the novel, it develops a subversive potential that cannot be overlooked.

K is himself familiar with the unsettling effects that silence can have. When he thinks about being forced to go back to Cape Town before being able to reach their destination, he imagines what it would be like to return to the apartment with his mother: "K saw before him the prospect of being humiliated again while his mother watched, of trudging back behind the cart to the room in Sea Point, of sitting on the

67 For an extensive study on the violence of silence in literary, cf. Hane 2014.

68 For a critical discussion of K's silence and whether it truly is a manifestation of agency, cf. Parry 1996.

floormat with his hands over his ears enduring day after day the burden of her silence" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 25). K is not only troubled by the idea of having to return to the city and face his disappointed and disheartened mother, but also by how she would express this: He calls it the 'burden of her silence' and, paradoxically, he envisions trying to shield his ears from the engulfing quietness. This imaginative gesture reinforces how silence is framed in the novel as a sonic phenomenon that can be just as unpleasant and disturbing as other sounds.

Moments like this, in which silence appears as a disruptive force, are incorporated constantly into the novel. After his mother dies, K reflects on her death and starts to think about a kind of primordial silence, "the silence of time before the beginning" which has the effect on him that "his mind baulked" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 117). Here, K notices that silence can confuse and even obstruct thought. Considering that he is repeatedly ignored when he does try to speak, it is not surprising that K slowly turns more and more to silence in order to avoid communication and let others experience the discomfort that silence can cause.

In the second part of the novel, there is a narrative shift, and a medical officer becomes the (intradiegetic) narrator of the story. He works at a camp where K ends up being imprisoned and he treats K as one of his patients. In a much discussed interrogation scene, the medical officer and his superior try to find out whether, as the military suspects, K is part of a group of rebels or not. Both of them insist that K should start talking and answer their questions (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 138–140). K, however, keeps silent, despite their vehement interrogation. Judith Butler discusses such a reaction to being questioned in one of her texts and notes that silence "either calls into question the legitimacy of the authority invoked by the question and the questioner or attempts to circumscribe a domain of autonomy that cannot or should not be intruded upon by the questioner" (Butler 2005: 11). Through silence it is possible to generate a resistance to questions without the need to respond directly, and K takes precisely such a stance by not responding during the interrogation. The medical officer experiences frustration in trying to elicit a response from K, and as he grows increasingly desperate during his tirade, K's silence starts to have a disturbing effect on him: "There was a silence so dense that I heard it as a ringing in my ears, a silence of the kind one experiences in mine shafts, cellars, bomb shelters, airless places" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 140). The medical officer's reaction to K's silence is another example of how silence is staged as a literary sound in the novel and it also shows the violent impact it can have on the listener. The medical officer describes K's silence as 'dense', meaning that none of the sounds the interrogators produce could puncture the impenetrable silence emanating from K. The ringing in his ears is similar to the experience of a very loud sound that damages the hearing, elevating K's silence to the level of the sonic phenomena that are

the most closely associated with power in the novel. It is no coincidence that the narrator chooses frightening and threatening places for the comparison illustrating his perception of K's silence: Most of them call to mind dangerous situations that evoke the fear of suffocation, which is also explicitly mentioned in the description of them as 'airless'. This ringing is also reminiscent of tinnitus, the sensation of a a high-pitched noise that is perceived even more distinctly when one's surroundings are quiet.

What K's behavior demonstrates here is a reversal of the power dynamic that he himself has experienced over the course of the events narrated in the novel. He knows what it is like to be constantly ignored and to be overwhelmed by sonic phenomena that have an oppressive effect on the hearer. When he does not reply to the officers' questions, he turns the epistemic violence brought against him around and directs it towards those who are in a position of authority: Just as he has not been recognized before by others, with his demands and wishes being brushed aside each time, he now makes the officers live through the experience of not being acknowledged. It is important to note that K's situation and circumstances do not change as a result of this self-empowering gesture, but through his silence he is able to at least mirror the epistemic violence that he has suffered. Silence is the sonic element to which he has grown most accustomed and which he now uses as a means of resistance rather than an expression of his subordination. It is his very silence that makes the officers feel the epistemic violence of being disregarded and dismissed: Silence as a ('negative') literary sound does not indexically point to another form of violence here, and it is not purely symbolic, judging by the medical officer's reaction. K's silence is violent in itself, iconically relating to violence from a semiotic perspective because its attributes of themselves have a violent quality.

The medical officer increasingly perceives K's silence as a threat and a menacing force, and to describe this silence he continues to use expressions that are clearly connected with sound. The quietness surrounding K becomes particularly noticeable against the background of the other patients and the sounds they produce:

> *I would stand in the doorway breathing quietly, listening to the groans and rustlings of the other sleepers, waiting; and upon me the feeling would grow stronger and stronger that around one bed among all there was a thickening of the air, a concentration of darkness, a black whirlwind roaring in utter silence above your body, pointing to you […]. (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 164)*

The medical officer again refers to the sensation of difficult breathing by indicating a 'thickening of the air', which again relates to K's silence. He expresses the distress that K's silence causes him through an oxymoron, namely the "black whirlwind roaring in utter silence": As before, quietness is conveyed by a contradictory staging

of a sound, since the whirlwind cannot 'roar' and be 'silent' at the same time. By giving it a deafening quality, the sonic imagination stages K's silence by putting it on a par with the powerful sounds in the novel.

Over time, K's silence has a significant impact on the medical officer. By repeatedly withholding a reaction when addressed, K makes the medical officer himself grow more and more silent: "There was something more I had wanted to say, but I could not speak" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 148). K's silence seems to be contagious; it shatters the very foundation of this person who not so long ago could fill a "room with words", like others who "fill up whole worlds talking" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 140), as the officer himself phrases it. When he does start talking again, he can only do so quietly, which seems to surprise even himself: "Then I found myself speaking, in no more than a whisper. […] Even softer I whispered, my heart hammering" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 149). The medical officer tries to confront K with how K ended up in the camp, blaming him for making him miserable by being uncooperative and upholding his silence. Soon after, the officer starts questioning his own motivation for participating in the war and realizes in the end that he is wasting his life (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 157). K's silence thus has a similar effect on others as his own experience with the overwhelming sounds of the civil war and the state of emergency has effected him: They become unsure of themselves and start to struggle with their own sense of self. His silence causes a rupture that is not easy to mend as it is born of his own confrontation with violence, which he reverses through a silent counter-gesture that throws the hierarchical structures into disarray.

3.3.3 Ears tuned to the pitch of pain and war

The two novels by Coetzee analyzed in this case study establish a close proximity between sound and violence, but with different emphases and varying ways of staging literary sounds that convey a violent meaning.

While the homodiegetic, internally focalized narrator in *Waiting for the Barbarians* provides a more detailed insight into his own psyche and his sonic impressions, in *Life & Times of Michael K*, the heterodiegetic narrator is able to oppose different literary sounds on a larger scale by describing sonic environments more extensively. The sensitive narrator of *Waiting for the Barbarians* – whose ears are "tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5) and who is not able to sleep while there are "sounds of violence" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 24) – directs one's attention to violent aspects of sounds through his auditory perception, which can even completely substitute the description of violent interrogation processes in the novel by staging screams and other literary sounds that emanate from the rooms where the prisoners are tortured. In Coetzee's other novel, a multitude of diverse sounds

evokes the greater context of the civil war, the state of emergency and systemic disparities. The narrator conveys the political and social significance of these sounds not so much through the characters' sentiments and individual reactions to the sounds as through contrasts between sonic phenomena and behaviors. Unlike in the case of the Magistrate, K's emotional distress during the riot or his confrontation with the soldiers becomes noticeable because he grows quieter and quieter in the face of hostility.

The narrative modes of each novel also emphasize different forms of violence, which has an influence on the semiotic relation between literary sounds and violence in the text: Through his perception of sound, the Magistrate is particularly mindful of interpersonal, physical violence, which is also tied to the fact that he witnesses how unjustly and brutally the 'barbarians' are treated. This form of violence is easier to pinpoint because it consists of individual violent actions, resulting in the staging of sounds directly connected to cruel acts, such as the torture of prisoners. The indexicality of the literary sounds in regard to violence is thus also due to the detailed account of the Magistrate's personal experience and his thoughts about the events taking place around him. As could be seen in the passage about the riot, *Life & Times of Michael K* also includes the staging of sonic phenomena that are quite directly connected with violence, but most of the literary sounds in the novel are more abstract in their relation to violence. The sounds rarely occur in the context of physical harm, instead they are symbolic reenactments of the political structures within the novel. When K comes into contact with structures and institutions that further injustice and abuse, in most cases it is difficult to discern concrete agents of violence – literary sounds help to highlight the indirect, structural violence inherent to the oppressive system under which K suffers because the opposition between loud noises and quietness is reminiscent of the confrontation between the powerful and the impotent in the novel.

In both novels, the absence of sound plays an important role, but in different contexts: In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, this absence is a narrative strategy to circumvent a direct account of the screams of the prisoners who undergo torture, whereas *Life & Times of Michael K* focuses on the protagonist's silence and tells of how his silence evolves from an expression of his subordination to a means of resistance. Violence is a crucial aspect in both cases because for the Magistrate it is the first time that he indirectly witnesses how the soldiers interrogate the 'barbarians' by using physical force and injuring them, while K is able to redirect the epistemic violence previously used against him and let others experience a similar pressure and insecurity through his silence. The absence of sound in the two texts has contradictory qualities because in the first case, sound is staged despite the narrator's claim that he could not hear it, and in the second case, K's silence is described in a

way that still evokes sound; the phrases and expressions used in staging his silence are closely associated with loud sounds rather than quietness.

The sonic imagination in both novels is clearly characterized by a sensitivity to a violence that reverberates through sound. The medical officer in *Life & Times of Michael K* even uses a similar expression as the Magistrate when he describes his (figurative) attentiveness to the precarious sonic environment outside the camp after becoming disillusioned about his involvement in the ongoing conflict: He states that he is "keeping an ear tuned all the time to the hum of the war beyond the walls, listening for its pitch to change" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 158). After meeting K, he realizes that he is only waiting out the days until the war ends, which he expresses metaphorically through this reference to sound. In an article on K's silence, the medical officer is called a "'benevolent imperialist,' a colonial representative with a bad conscience" (Chesney 2007: 313), a feature he also shares with the Magistrate. For both of them, at first sound represents a way of keeping their distance to the actual violence of the political events surrounding them, but over time – not least due to sonic phenomena that they pay increasing attention to – they are forced to face their complicity and rethink their own position within the respective broader conflict.

Frankétienne's novel also deals with a political situation in which brutal measures are taken to exercise control, but this situation is presented through a less stringent narrative that can be attributed to the author's Spiralist approach. The sonic imagination relies heavily on a very figurative way of staging sounds by accentuating the violent dimension of sonic phenomena, and interweaving themes and motifs inspired by Vodou.

3.4 Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*: Sound, Haitian Vodou and violence

If one is to believe the narrative made popular by Slavoj Žižek and others, a sound event stands at the birth of Haitian national identity. Žižek alludes to a "sublime 'communist'" moment in Haiti at the end of the 18th century

> *that occurred when French soldiers (sent by Napoleon to suppress the rebellion and restore slavery) approached the black army of (self-)liberated slaves. When they heard an initially indistinct murmur coming from the black crowd, the soldiers at first assumed it must be some kind of tribal war chant; but as they came closer, they realized that the Haitians were singing the* Marseillaise*, and they started to wonder out loud whether they were not fighting on the wrong side. (Žižek 2009a: 112; italics in the original)*

While one may wonder about the authenticity of this specific account,[69] it is hard to deny the symbolic value of former slaves singing a French revolutionary song and thus demonstrating that they "took the French revolutionary slogans more literally than did the French themselves" (Žižek 2009a: 112).[70] This historical coupling provides a first glimpse of the importance of sound in Haitian history and culture.

Another event which is also connected to the Haitian revolution introduces another important element of Haitian identity: This event has come to be known as the ceremony of Bois Caïman, a Vodou ceremony in which the preparations for the Haitian revolt of 1791 are said to have taken place. While the accuracy of the presentation of the ceremony itself and its significance for the Haitian revolution are also

69 Žižek does not disclose his source for the account of this event, but in all likelihood he indirectly refers to C. L. R. James' famous publication *The Black Jacobins* and his retelling of the French General Lacroix' report about former Haitian slaves singing the song: "The dishonest political position of the French Army was now taking its toll. The soldiers still thought of themselves as a revolutionary army. Yet at nights they heard the blacks in the fortress singing the *Marseillaise*, the *Ça Ira*, and the other revolutionary songs. Lacroix records how these misguided wretches as they heard the songs started and looked at the officers as if to say, 'Have our barbarous enemies justice on their side? Are we no longer the soldiers of Republican France? And have we become the crude instruments of policy?'" (James 1989: 317–318; the original source for the quote in French that James uses is Lacroix, Pamphile de. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*. Vol. 2. Paris: Pillet, 1819, 164). If these are indeed his sources, then Žižek slightly dramatizes the event. However, the very fact that the revolting slaves performed and thus appropriated this song from the opposing side in the conflict is still significant in the context of the Haitian revolution.

70 Regardless of this particular event, the *Marseillaise* is of political significance in Haiti, where the song developed an "anticolonial meaning" (Dhanvantari 2004: 111): "Through the appropriation of this nationalist song, the slaves were able to create an ethnically based communal consciousness that helped them gain their independence. […] [T]he experience of slavery powerfully oriented the slaves to the discourse of liberation offered by the lyrics of *La Marseillaise*. By singing this 'concept-metaphor,' they were able to direct the discourse of rights to their struggle for freedom" (Dhanvantari 2004: 112–113).

a matter of dispute,[71] it is still clear that the Vodou religion "was a vital tributary to the slaves' resistance to and eventual military defeat of the colonists" (Wexler 2006: 70). In the 20th century, the status of Vodou as a religion of resistance has been instrumentalized by different political actors, resulting in its ambivalent status in Haiti.

The two events described above give direction to this chapter on Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*. Vodou, a central component of the novel, has been widely analyzed in various publications on Frankétienne's work, mainly with regard to the figure of the zombie. Sound, on the other hand, has been relatively disregarded in relation to *Les affres d'un défi*. The connection between Vodou and sound, and how these two aspects relate to each other in Frankétienne's novel, is an important part of understanding the sonic imagination of the text. Finally, violence figures prominently in Frankétienne's novel and has drawn the attention of various researchers, often in relation to the explicit way violent actions are described, but again not with respect to what role sound plays in this context and how literary sounds convey violence in the novel.[72] The peculiar formal characteristics of the text (e.g. its different font types) often add importance to sensory experiences such as the sensation of hearing because, within the opaque quality of the text, literary sounds become important points of orientation in the narration. Furthermore, in contextualizing Frankétienne's novel and its references to Vodou, one needs to consider the historical background of the course of a postcolonial country after gaining its independence from imperial powers, the variable status of an indigenous culture during political turmoil, and how postcolonial authors integrate contested cultural heritage into their works.

3.4.1 A Spiralist approach to literary sounds

Occupying a place between a (self-)translation and a rewriting, *Les affres d'un défi* is based on Frankétienne's novel *Dézafi*, the first novel ever written in the Creole language of Haiti. The French novel, published four years later, deviates markedly from the Creole novel – despite their very close similarity when it comes to the plot – and is thus generally considered as a separate work (cf. Douglas 2009: 49–50; Jonassaint 2011: 84–85).

The novel tells the story of Saintil, a Haitian tyrant who rules the population with an iron fist and with magic Vodou abilities at his disposal. These abilities afford him

71 For an overview and discussion of the debates surrounding the ceremony of Bois Caïman, cf. Geggus 2002: 81–92.

72 There are a few remarks relating to the dimension of voice and speech in the novel, cf., e.g., Glover 2010: 204–205 and Coates 2006: 185–186. However, these studies hardly consider these elements in the broader framework of sound within the novel.

the possibility to turn his subjects into zombies,[73] of which he makes ample use as a tool to subjugate his people. The result of the waves of zombification is a form of two-class society which consists of regular people and zombies, but all of them are equally powerless in the face of Saintil's rule. Both groups of the population lead pitiful existences, even if under different circumstances: The zombies are characterized mostly by their almost complete absence of will and are condemned to never-ending arduous labor and abused by Saintil's servants (for example, Zofer, one of the high-ranking officials of the regime); the rest of the population, on the other hand, also lives under desolate conditions, forced to waste away most of their time hosting and watching cockfights at the 'dézafi', a kind of fair which takes place throughout the novel (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 204–205).

However, as Coates remarks, it "is difficult or misleading to speak of a 'plot' in discussing this novel" (Frankétienne/Coates 1996: 760). This assessment is due to the formal and stylistic attributes of the novel: It is structured by a succession of clearly distinct segments marked by visual and narrative differences. In another article, Coates summarizes these characteristics as follows and relates them to the movement of Spiralism (of which Frankétienne is one of the founders):[74]

> *The segmentation of the novelistic discourse is marked by three fonts—Roman, italics, and bold face, each representing a different "voice." This is an essential technique of*

73 In the context of Haitian Vodou, zombies are apathetic servants who attend to the needs of their master (the 'boko' who turned them into the beings they are), rather than undead creatures who haunt the living and feed on their bodies or related conceptions, as the Westernized image of the zombie suggests and the way they are portrayed across different media. While in the Vodou of Haiti zombies do occupy a place between the living and the dead, they are rather seen as the victims of magic spells and, deeply entrenched in the belief system, people are afraid of being turned into one of them (cf. Métraux 1972 [1958]: 282). For the undertones of the concept of the zombie reminiscent of Haiti's colonial past, cf., for example, McAlister 2012, Hoermann 2017. For a recent overview of how the figure of the zombie developed over time, particularly in connection with popular culture, cf. Schuck (2018: 7–52 and 53–95 in particular). I would like to thank Alena Heinritz for pointing out the publication to me.

74 It has to be noted that Spiralism is also characterized by a "refusal of theoretical codification" (Glover 2010: ix): "Rejecting *a priori* the notion of a literary school or system organized according to particular rules, the three authors [Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Fignolé and René Philoctète] deliberately remain ambiguous when it comes to defining their philosophical perspective—a factor that contributes to the difficulty one faces when attempting to discuss the Spiralist aesthetic" (Glover 2010: ix). However, there are literary points of reference: It is telling, for example, that early on Patrick Chamoiseau compares Frankétienne's work with the *Nouveau Roman*: "C'est la révolution. L'écrit en créole accède d'un coup à ce que la littérature mondiale possédait à l'époque de plus moderne, de plus audacieux et de plus talentueux, à savoir le Nouveau Roman" (Chamoiseau, Patrick, and Raphaël Confiant. *Lettres créoles*. Paris: Hatier, 1991, 173, as quoted in Jonassaint 2004: 142). To give another example, Glover mentions the use of "Joycean literary techniques" (2010: xxi) when it comes to Spiralists like Frankétienne; Frankétienne himself also explicitly states that he is an admirer of James Joyce (cf. Archibold 2011).

> *Frankétienne's "spiralism," in which he shifts from one voice (or set of voices) and one scene to another without transition or explanation. (Coates 2006: 185)*[75]

The shifts between the different segments within the novel (which are accompanied by the described typographic attributes) make it more difficult to clearly discern each storyline; however, there is still a clear sequence of events, and there are recurring characters, the development of which the novel follows (albeit in varying degrees of detail). There is, for example, Sultana, Saintil's daughter, who falls in love with Clodonis and who remains attracted to him after he has been turned into a zombie. Clodonis' offense – leading to him being turned into a zombie – is not elaborated on in detail; he is vaguely presented as having defied Saintil and his rule, when being led to the ceremonial location where he is subsequently transformed: "Durant tout le parcours, tu vas crier à haute voix : voilà que passe Clodonis ! Voilà que passe le philosophe de Bois-Neuf ! Le voilà qui passe, le petit impertinent de Bois-Neuf !" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 75). It is unclear whether his designation as a philosopher actually relates to his occupation, or whether it simply serves to mock him as somebody who thinks about issues that are not allowed to be questioned under Saintil's rule. Characterized as impertinent, Clodonis evidently spoke up when he was not supposed to, leading to his punishment of being transformed into a zombie. Later on, Clodonis becomes the key figure in the revolt of the zombies, which takes place towards the end of the novel and which results in the demise of Saintil.

The zombie revolt is initiated by a seemingly inconspicuous event: Clodonis tasting salt (in a dish prepared for him by Sultana), which frees him from his state of lethargy and subordination. In a Haitian context, this attribute of salt is less surprising, as one of the early anthropological studies of Vodou already attests:

> *Their [the zombi's] docility is total provided you never give them salt. If imprudently they are given a plate containing even a grain of salt the fog which cloaks their minds instantly clears away and they become conscious of their terrible servitude. Realization rouses in them a vast rage and an ungovernable desire for vengeance. They hurl themselves on their master, kill him, destroy his property and then go in search of their tombs. (Métraux 1972 [1958]: 283)*

75 Coates' use of 'voice' in this instance does not refer to the narratological concept of 'voice' in a strict sense. Furthermore, to make matters even more complicated, like other structural divisions within the novel, the voices that Coates writes about cannot always be told apart from each other: They can overlap and each one can assume some of the characteristics of another voice which is generally different from it. Cf. also what Benedicty writes in regard to what she sees as different parts within the novel: "[T]hese different *parts* of the text […] are not clearly delineated, for in between these three *parts* […], there are moments of transition that vary in length" (2008: 79; italics in the original).

The idea of the liberating taste of salt is thus firmly rooted in the belief system of Vodou,[76] which is an important component of the novel as a whole (and extending well beyond the theme of the zombies) and which was researched in connection with Frankétienne as early as 1980 (cf. Charles 1980: 397).

The inclusion of Vodou by Frankétienne is not without ambivalence, however. One might be tempted to interpret the references to Vodou and the fact that it serves as a thematic basis for the novel as a common postcolonial literary tool and what has been called a 'strategy of recuperation' by Gareth Griffiths (1994: 73–74), in this case a positive recovery of Haitian culture. However, at the time when *Les affres d'un défi* was written (and *Dézafi* before it), the Vodou religion went through a phase of rehabilitation, which was "initiated by the Indigenist movement, and then affirmed under the Duvalier régime" (Glover 2010: 58), referring to the consecutive dictatorships under François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and then his son, Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier (1957–1971 and 1971–1986, respectively). The appropriation of Vodou by the Duvaliers resulted in the ambivalent status of the religion during this time period:

> *After Duvalierism's exploitation of the practice so as to bolster the image of the dictatorship's dedication to a global African identity, Vodou presents itself as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the word evokes a discourse manipulated by both Papa and Baby Doc, and on the other, it describes a uniquely Haitian aesthetic […], one anchored in the specific predicament of humans newly-freed from extremely terrorizing subjugation, and wondering just how long such emancipation might last. (Benedicty-Kokken 2015: 300)*

Frankétienne's novel accounts for this ambivalence by integrating the conflicting contemporary situation of Vodou into its story: On the one hand, Vodou is incorporated as a productive principle that influences many of the novel's themes and motives. On the other hand, by presenting Saintil as a tyrant whose power relies largely on Vodou beliefs and rites, and who uses Vodou rituals to oppress his subjects, the religion is put in a dubious light.[77] Often the role of Vodou within the novel, both as

76 This idea is repeated in later studies, such as the one by Ackermann/Gauthier, who conducted interviews during which informants reiterated that "if given salt, it [the zombi] would become a *zombi gâté*, or 'spoiled zombi,' and might kill its master" (1991: 485). Furthermore, Ackermann/Gauthier encounter the fact that zombies should not be given salt in 17 studies by 14 different authors (cf. 1991: 481, table 4), and according to four studies that they survey, "[i]f given salt, the zombi awakens, realizes its condition, seeks its grave, and may kill its master in vengeance" (474). Ackermann/Gauthier assert that "the saltless diet of the zombi can be traced back to a Dahomean belief that the dead can be given anything but meat and salt" (1991: 479). For more examples of how this common feature has been taken up in literature and film, cf. Jonassaint 2011: 85.

77 The character Saintil has even been compared to Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier by some commentators: "Saintil could be a figure for the young President-for-Life, not by direct portrayal, but by his

a productive and a destructive force, also becomes manifest on the level of literary sounds.

The importance of sensory experiences such as sound is elevated in *Les affres d'un défi* not least due to the narrative style, which is so evidently marked by a fundamental opacity.[78] In a series of often incoherent events, which reinforces a sense of immediacy (due to the "kind of discursive indeterminacy that brings the entire fiction toward a norm of fuzzy discourse", Frankétienne/Coates 1996: 761), literary sounds become all the more noticeable as clearly recognizable entities in a narrative structure that generally conveys a sense of chaos. Indeed, sound is underscored in connection with many of the characters in *Les affres d'un défi*. Two characters who illustrate the emphasis on sound very clearly, for example, are Jérome and Gaston: Jérome hides in a granary throughout most of the novel and is only connected to the outside world through his sense of hearing (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 43), and Gaston, at one point in the novel, listens to the noise of a passing train and perceives it as speech trying to persuade him to leave the city and go far away (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 54).

The saliency of violence, in its various forms, complements the importance of Vodou and sound in the novel. At times, these three elements are peculiarly interwoven, as in the following quote: "*Pour un enjeu banal, se déclenche un jeu terrible aux poignards. Les tambours résonnent d'envoûtement. S'agirait-il d'une rumeur de danse occulte ou de massacre ?*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 49; italics in the original). This passage in italics is part of two paragraphs that interrupt the flow of the narration about a quarrel between two characters, which resumes immediately after and is presented in a contrasting regular font. The two paragraphs in italics read as a form of free association, a collection of haphazard impressions that resemble a stream of consciousness. The narration also switches from a third-person to a first-person plural narrator, and it is not immediately clear whether it is the perspective of one of the story's characters or whether these observations run parallel to, and independent of the events of the main storyline. The quoted passage details a fight over a trifle that escalates; at the same time, the text stages the beating of drums that has an alluring, bewitching effect. The paragraph ends with an open question addressing the ambiguity of the sound. Whether the noise is part of a dance ritual or of

brutal exercise of power and the mercilessness with which he commands his daughter and his henchman, Zofer, to control and punish the zombi" (Coates 2006: 185). Coates even goes so far as to posit that it "is fairly evident [...] that the zombi, as well as the various characters who are living in mortal fear [...], represent Haitians under the regime of Baby Doc" (Coates 2006: 185).

78 On opacity in works by Frankétienne and other Spiralist authors, cf. also Glover 2010: 20–26, 171–173.

people killing each other remains unresolved. Through this ambiguity, the dimension of sound is imbued with violence and this violence is also linked with Vodou, because the literary sound establishes a resemblance between an occult dance and a massacre. Through thematic elements in the staging of sound, such as drumming and dance, Vodou thus decisively shapes the sonic imagination of *Les affres d'un défi*.

3.4.2 Staging sound through Vodou themes and beyond

Sound is itself a significant part of Vodou and this is also reflected in the way Frankétienne's novel incorporates rituals, traditions, myths and other Vodou elements. Examining specific Vodou customs and recognizing the role that sound plays in them, alongside analyzing literary sounds in the novel, help to understand how the text conveys a world of chaos and discomfort.

One of the most prominent elements in Vodou connected to sound is the importance of music and dance for the belief system. Many activities revolve around sonic experiences; they are often structured by rhythm and vocal expression. One can immediately appreciate how crucial sound is for Vodou by considering the significance of one of its main instruments, the drum. In one of the seminal studies on Haitian Vodou in the 20th century, the anthropologist Alfred Métraux accounts for the key status of drumming in the religion:

> *The drum on which the rhythms are beaten out for the dances symbolizes Voodoo. 'Beating the drum' in popular speech has come to mean 'celebrating the cult of the* loa*'. Whenever the State has tried to suppress paganism it has begun by forbidding the use of the drum. […] The drum is not only a musical instrument, it is also a sacred object and even the tangible form of a divinity. (Métraux 1972 [1958]: 177–178, 182; italics in the original)*

The intricate connection between Vodou and drumming thus becomes evident not just due to the important role it plays during rituals and within the belief system as a whole, but also in light of how drumming has historically been the target of repression directed against the religion and its followers. Historically, and in the context of colonialism in particular, drums have always been means of coordinating resistance and revolts against imperial power (cf. M. Smith 2007: 46–47). Métraux does not specify to which time period he is referring when he writes about the banning of drums, but it still occurred under the US occupation of Haiti in the first half of the 20th century:

> *In an attempt to modernize and rationalize Haitian society as preparation for its integration into international economic networks, occupation officials banned Vodou ceremonies in Haiti. Marines would raid places of worship, called hounforts,*

> *and confiscate drums and other ritual objects ostensibly to interrupt this now illegal practice. (Renda 2001: 212–213)*

Writing about drums in the Haitian context thus unavoidably calls to mind the country's imperial past and the contested status of the instrument throughout time. Incorporating drumming in a postcolonial text is a way of reclaiming it as a source of musical sound that is part of the Haitian culture and history.

Considering the centrality of Vodou in the novel, it is not surprising that *Les affres d'un défi* is full of references to drumming: Like an incantation, the phrase "roulement de tambour" pervades the beginning of the novel in particular and is also repeated multiple times later on (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 11, 12, 23, 25, 29, 177). It often stands at the beginning of a paragraph and punctuates mostly italic (and sometimes bold) passages at irregular intervals. The phrase is such a salient feature in the novel precisely because of the word-for-word repetition amid the ever-changing vortex of loosely connected imagery in the italic and bold passages.

The stylistic device of such a repetition is in itself noteworthy, as repetition is often regarded as an indicator of orality in the context of postcolonial literatures: "[C]ertain literary elements have commonly been perceived as characteristically oral in nature. One such feature is parallelism or repetition [...]. Undoubtedly, repetition plays an extremely important stylistic role in oral literature" (Vakunta 2001: 85). The repetition of phrases such as "roulement de tambour" in *Les affres d'un défi* thus provides the text with characteristics that are usually associated with orality and oral literature. Oral elements also further reinforce the status of Vodou ideas and concepts in the novel because the "teaching of Vodun is transmitted through the oral tradition" (Fleurant 2006: 60) and Vodou largely relies on oral practices. In this way, the repeated reference to drums also alludes to sound on the level of *discours,* as the postcolonial sonic knowledge situates repetition as a marker of oral features which are inextricably linked with hearing and listening processes.

The literary sound of the drum is also an important indicator regarding the background of the text's opaque structure and style, which often leads one to lose track of what is happening. Glissant observes a close relationship between the Creole language and the rhythm of the drum: "Dans le débit du parler créole, on retrouve la hachure même du rythme tambouré. Ce n'est pas la structure sémantique de la phrase qui aide à scander la parole, c'est la respiration du locuteur qui commande cette scansion : attitude et mesure poétiques par excellence" (Glissant 1997 [1981]: 407). The Creole language, in which Frankétienne's text is deeply rooted, highlights a way of communication that goes beyond the meaning of words. By foregrounding drums through the repetition of one and the same phrase, *Les affres d'un défi* ampli-

fies what Glissant describes as one of the most important influences of Creole orality, which enables the use of language to appear not just as the presentation of semantic content, but as a process of producing sound determined not by meaning but by certain rhythms and bodily functions, like breathing. The sequence of thoughts and sensations in the novel's italic and bold passages evokes an associative form of speaking rather than a stringent description of events in a chronological order. Likewise, the variations in the topography of the text have been traced back to an oral configuration of language (Hazael-Massieux 1993: 234).[79] Consequently, the overall form of the novel forces one to let go of the impulse to see the text as a coherent whole and consider it rather as a kaleidoscopic view of a world that is as ephemeral as sound.

Another element repeated time and time again throughout the novel (often in the same or a very similar wording)[80] and also connected to sound is the motif of "une voix de femme", a mysterious female voice in the italic and also the bold passages (later on in the novel). While the meaning and the origin of the voice are not completely resolved, it serves as a sort of guiding force and intensifies the pervasiveness of sound in the text. The voice echoes across entire landscapes and appears to lead the first-person plural narrator towards a certain goal which they cannot understand or see clearly yet:

> Venue de loin, une voix de femme nous parvient faiblement. Nous nous en approchons quelque peu. Au moment où nous pourrions la toucher, elle s'enfuit. Anguille, elle file et glisse entre nos doigts. Puis, à nouveau, nous entendons une voix de femme venue de très loin. Nous bondissons à sa recherche, dans un chemin d'épines et de ronces. *(Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 43; italics in the original)*

This passage conveys a contradictory, almost surreal atmosphere which results from the unusual qualities attributed to sound. The voice of the woman reaches the

79 Cf. also Glover, who connects orality with the Spiralist movement: "The spiral also explicitly informs the writing practice of the three authors [Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Fignolé and René Philoctète] on the level of content and form. It provides the point of departure from which they write the specificity of being and creating in Haiti. The very idea of the spiral recalls the foundations of the Caribbean oral tradition, according to which stories unfold cumulatively or cyclically; are relatively unconcerned with any purely narrative structure or horizontal, linear development; and are subject invariably to the frequent and spontaneous interventions of the public. The interplay of repetition and deviation at work in the spiral form thus provides a structural point of departure that decisively anchors the Spiralists' fiction in a Haitian geo-cultural space" (2010: viii).

80 For example, "[*n*]*ous percevons faiblement une voix de femme*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 94; italics in the original), "[**n**]**ous percevons une voix de femme venue de très loin**" (105; bold in the original), "[*l*]*'oreille attentive, nous percevons une voix de femme qui nous envoûte*" (125; italics in the original), "[**n**]**ous avons entendu une voix de femme**" (127; bold in the original), "[*l*]*e lendemain, au lever du soleil, nous entendîmes une voix de femme*" (143; italics in the original).

narrator and disappears, they try to capture and hang on to it but inevitably fail. They describe how they attempt to approach the sound (rather than locating its source), which is a paradoxical process since sound is not a fixed physical object in space, but a vibration that travels through air or another medium. From this perspective, sound itself is nothing but movement, and trying to get closer to it is thus utterly futile. The moment one tried to approach it, the sound would vanish, and this is precisely what the narrator describes from a seemingly naïve point of view. In order to express the vain attempt to grasp and hold on to the voice, the narrator uses a metaphor and in this way provides the literary sound with characteristics that run counter to sonic knowledge outside of literature: An eel becomes the metaphor for the voice, a slippery creature that can be felt between the fingers as it escapes. The futile exercise of trying to catch the sound reinforces the overall feeling of despair and disorientation within the novel. The arduousness of the narrator's situation is also reiterated at the end of the quote, when they describe how they try again to look for the voice (or this time possibly its source) and refer to a thorny path that leads there. The figurative writing in passages like this gives a rhetorical plasticity and tangibility to sound (i.e., a voice that can be touched), which is a recurring characteristic within the novel, also in connection with violence.

When the eel is taken up again as a metaphor for the voice at a later point, it is described as "**toute de souplesse et de ruse**" and this time, it "**s'est enfuie dans le flou du silence**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 127; bold in the original), an eel that fades and vanishes into silence, just as a sound fades after being heard. The temptation to follow the sound is expressed here through character traits and a certain behavior, adding a personification to the sound metaphor.

The idea of voice as a guiding element can be traced back to Vodou traditions, in which songs and chants are structured in accordance with a call-and-response principle (cf. Wilcken 2005: 195): "A soloist 'sends' (*voye*) the song, and a chorus 'answers' (*reponn*) with either the same melody and text or an abbreviated version of it" (Wilcken 2005: 195; italics in the original). The passages in the novel about the female voice reverberate with this call-and-response structure: A woman appears to call out from far away, addressing a group of people. However, the narrator and the figures who hear the voice do not respond to the call, which is also part of the silencing process that takes place within the novel. The narrator notices the missing response and explicitly comments on the fact that they do not answer the call: "*Nous entendons, venue de loin, une voix étouffée nous appeler dans un govi. Nous n'y avons pas répondu*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 40; italics in the original). The reference to the *govi* in this quote is crucial for the connection between sound and Vodou in the text: As the glossary in the appendix to the novel states, the *govi* is an important ritualistic object within Vodou, a container made out of clay and covered with a cloth to collect

the soul of perished ones, and, most significantly, *loa* spirits and the dead communicate to Vodou followers through the *govi* (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 205). This object is thus fundamentally related to the idea of sound, in that there is a source or a sender and someone who listens and receives the messages. Even in other passages about the mysterious voice where the *govi* is not mentioned, the text plays with the idea of an untraceable source of sound: While the voice is heard through the *govi*, its actual source lies somewhere else and cannot be reached because it is not of this earth.

In the context of the call-and-response principle in Vodou, the omission of a response to the woman's voice is another unsettling component of the restless italic and bold passages. In addition to the inability to talk and produce sound, the narrator suggests remaining calm and finding solace in learning how to truly listen while confronted with a variety of sounds:

> Ne nous hâtons pas de parler, pendant que mugit le vent. Apprenons à discerner les sons et les bruits, pour ne pas confondre la rumeur de la pluie avec le rugissement de la tempête. À peine ouvrons-nous la bouche que les tourbillons de poussière changent de sens et que la fumée se dissipe au loin. Apprenons à observer, à écouter. *(Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 29–30; italics in the original)*

The text points to a fragility of sound and frames the use of language not as a tool of communication that transports semantic information, but rather as a means of producing sound, a sound that joins in with other noise and disappears just as quickly as it appeared, regardless of what its intended meaning was. The narrator proposes that, while they are not able to participate with their own voices in the concert of sound that surrounds them, they should relearn how to listen and attune their hearing in order to be able to differentiate between sounds and understand the sonic subtleties before attempting to produce sound themselves.

The silence on the narrator's part also contrasts clearly with other sounds that directly precede the quote, among which the drums are again an important element and form the opening of the paragraph: "*Roulements de tambours. Grondements de vaksines. Résonances de conques marines*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 29). In addition to the drums, the literary sound of another instrument is staged, the *vaksine*. Its sound is presented as menacing, given that 'grondement' is also used to describe the roll of thunder and generally refers to very loud sounds. The novel's glossary specifies that the *vaksine* is a popular instrument made out of bamboo and used during carnival and *rara* festivals (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 211). It thus complements the sonic imagination of the text with yet another typical Haitian element, which also has overtly political connotations in the context of the above-mentioned

festivities (cf. Averill 1997: 210). The last object in this enumeration of sonic phenomena, the sea shell, foreshadows the narrator's attitude regarding the importance of relearning how to listen: Rather than producing sounds themselves, the sea shells are a space for sound, merely making it resonate.

The mysterious voice of the woman discussed above is not only a guiding force for the narrator, but also fulfills a similar function in the process of reading the text, because one often feels at a loss in the face of the maelstrom of different impressions and often incoherent events. Due to its frequent repetition throughout the novel, the voice almost rhythmically structures the narrative and provides it with a point of orientation, similar to the repetition of the sound of the drums. However, in addition to the apparent unintelligibility and fading of the voice, there is an uncertainty, and even mistrust, about the intention and purpose of the voice: "**Cette voix de femme qui nous arrive de loin, cache-t-elle un piège ou nous transmettrait-elle l'écho mourant des battements d'ailes de l'espoir ?**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 109; bold in the original). Here, sound also serves to enable the metaphoric presentation of hope on two different levels. The 'wings of hope' is an indirect metaphorization that expresses hope through the idea of a bird, elusive and light-footed, comparable to Emily Dickinson's poem "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (cf. Dickinson 1960 [1890]: 116). The echo of hope's wings is the figurative continuation of the woman's voice, as if it resonates with hope. At the same time, the narrator is unsure whether the voice is actually a sign of hope or possibly a trap. The narrator's uncertainty in this and other passages in the novel is often reinforced through another phrase related very closely to another part of sonorous Vodou rituals – dance. Dance is essentially tied to the importance of sound within Vodou and it is one of the means through which the religious practices are passed on: "Vodou adepts are taught that a proverb, a song, a musical rhythm take life only when said, recited, or cadenced in the movement of dance" (Michel 2006: 33). Already earlier scholarship on Vodou in Haiti also noted that "[d]ance is so closely linked with the worship of *loa* that Voodoo can be regarded as one of the 'danced religions'" (Métraux 1972 [1958]: 188; italics in the original).

The narrator frequently uses a phrase, the meaning of which is not entirely apparent. It could both relate to the specific action of dancing, and be a proverbial statement which, from a more general point of view, expresses the uncertainty and the feeling of being lost in the italic passages of the novel: "*[N]ous nous évertuons à chercher sur quel pied entrer dans la danse*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 68; italics in the original), "*c'est que nous cherchons vraiment sur quel pied entrer dans la danse*" (93; italics in the original), "*sur quel pied devrions-nous danser à cet entrecroisement de routes ?*" (162; italics in the original). Like the literary sounds of the drums and the woman's voice, the phrase about dance and its variations is another example of the

use of repetition providing the novel with an almost rhythmical structure. The confusion in the novel about 'which steps to follow' complements the imagery of disorder and chaos, similar to the unintelligibility of the female voice indicated further above: The fact that the narrator is at a loss in a greater sense is illustrated by the fact that they do not know how to approach such a central element as dance, the important status of which is also due to its role in Haitian Vodou.

Vodou and sound are also closely connected in the novel through other instances of the staging of voice. Voice is one of the key elements needed to turn subjects who try to defy the regime into zombies: The speech of the oppressing political forces possesses such powers, as can be seen in the scene where one of the key characters of *Les affres d'un défi*, Clodonis, is transformed into a zombie by Saintil and his servants – "Zofer se précipite au seuil du hounfor, accompagné de Sultana. Ensemble, ils entonnent un chant sacré aux paroles et aux notes macabres. Saintil, à son tour, débite un langage ésotérique, un flux de formules magiques, ponctué de dominantes rauques et gutturales" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 82). Speech and song are attributed supernatural qualities in this quote, and they are an essential element in turning Clodonis into a zombie. The specific sonic properties of Saintil's voice are just as important as the magic spells he uses during the ceremony: The text points out the hoarseness and guttural tone of his voice, along with the 'esoteric language' that Saintil uses. Likewise, Zofer and Sultana's song is not just alluded to for its macabre lyrics, but also for its equally grim sound.

The zombies in the novel are presented with a specific sonic characterization which is also well rooted in the sonic knowledge of Haitian Vodou. Not only are they restricted to mumbling a single phrase, "oui ouan", over and over again, the zombies are also very frequently characterized by their nasal voice, resulting at times in a veritable "**symphonie nasillante oui ouan oui ouan oui ouan**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 164; bold in the original). At one point, before being ordered to be quiet, the zombies unite in a crescendo of nasal cries: "Par des murmures, il commence à gémir d'une voix rouillée. Plaintes étouffées. Voix nasillarde. Voix d'outre-tombe. Oui ouan ! Oui ouan ! Oui ouan !" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 75). What starts out as a murmur, develops into a collective groan that stands out not just because of its nasal tone, but because of a creaking, 'rusty' quality that lets the subdued voices of the zombies appear otherworldly. It is also noteworthy that the repeated exclamations of "Oui ouan !" are not in quotations marks indicating direct discourse; instead, the phrase is quoted in free indirect discourse, transitioning directly from the description of the voice to the audible exclamation.

The description of the zombies' voice corresponds to how the people of Haiti perceive the sound of these beings. Already Métraux writes about the characteristic

voice quality of zombies within the Vodou belief system of Haiti: "*Zombi* are recognized [...] above all by the nasal twang in their voices" (1972 [1958]: 283). More than three decades later, in a survey of scholarly studies on reports of zombies, Ackermann/Gauthier cite a total of seven studies by four different authors that list "nasal voice" as a recurring feature of zombies (cf. 1991: 480, table 4), which is one of the most frequent characteristics in all of the analyzed studies. Zombies are thus strongly associated with a specific sonic behavior that can also be observed in Frankétienne's novel.

The nasal tone of the zombies' voice is also used to generate a parallel between the zombies and the rest of the oppressed people under Saintil's rule. In the novel, the zombies constitute the extreme case of a subjugated collective, as a "[f]igure of exploitation *par excellence*" (Glover 2010: 58; italics in the original),[81] constantly reminding the characters of an even bleaker fate if they do not stay obedient: "Indeed, the literal zombies controlled by Saintil are only the most extreme examples of what is ultimately an entire community of broken beings" (Glover 2010: 66). It is not surprising, then, that members of the rest of the community also exhibit zombie-esque traits without having themselves been turned into zombies: "**Ils ont saccagé et pillé nos demeures / Nasillant comme des idiots, nous regardons passer le vent**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 16; bold in the original). Contrary to what a first reading might suggest, the narrator in this part of the novel is not a zombie, because shortly after the quoted passage the first-person plural narrator refers to the zombies in the third person (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 18). Without directly referring to zombies, the narrator establishes a connection between the direness of their situation and that of the zombies through repeating the sound of the nasal twang that the zombies also produce. A literary sound such as this thus serves as the conjoining element conveying the ubiquity of political oppression which affects every group of the community in the novel.

The formal peculiarities which are characteristic of the literary movement of Spiralism also greatly influence the staging of sound in the novel. These distinctive features can also be noticed in the quote above: Besides the use of bold font, there are slashes separating each sentence, and in other cases, shorter phrases or even single words that do not have any apparent syntactic coherence are separated by the slashes. The use of slashes is often combined with a complete absence of any

81 Cf. also Glover: "[T]he concept of zombification is a situational phenomenon that has served metaphorically to illustrate the various forms of institutionalized oppression suffered by the Haitian population throughout its colonial and postcolonial history. The creature's victimhood, mutism, social disenfranchisement, and infinite capacity for suffering clearly make of it a fitting metaphor for the postcolonial Haitian in particular and the alienated individual in general" (2010: 59). Coates also goes as far as to assert that the zombies "represent Haitians under the regime of Baby Doc" (2006: 185).

other punctuation, as in the following example, where sound plays a particularly important role:

> ***[N]ous habitons nos paroles / hors des masques le travail patient des insectes / nous déchiffrons les signes de la forêt et le ballet des paysages sonores / chevaux sauvages mâchoires d'âne montagnes érodées savanes brûlées morues infectes / déluge / la saison des averses se prolonge par les voix barbaresques de la colère et du sang /*** *[…].* ***(****Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 161; bold in the original****)***

With regard to sound, one immediately notices, firstly, that the narrator states that they "inhabit their speech", which again highlights very figuratively how important voice is in the novel, and that the voice contains a human being's very essence. Secondly, the narrator refers to 'paysages sonores', or 'sonorous landscapes': Commonly associated with the sense of vision, the landscape is here reimagined as a sonic phenomenon, reminiscent of the term 'soundscape' (a concept introduced in the pioneering monograph of 1977 by R. Murray Schafer, around the same time as Frankétienne's novel was published). The text thus directs attention to a specific sonic environment, metaphorizing it as a 'ballet', which is most probably related to the forest in this passage. The narrator goes on to list a variety of animals and other nature images that form part of the landscape addressed in the beginning and that further contribute to the sonic imagery at the end of the quote: They include "wild horses", a "donkey's jaws", "infected codfish", and also "eroded hills" and "burnt savannas". These elements paint a desolate picture of a world in disarray, which is continued in the morbid play on words with which the quote closes: "[L]a saison des averses", referring to the rainy season in French, is said to be prolonged by an outpour of anger and blood (the water imagery also calls to mind the French expression 'déverser sa colère', to pour out anger). This idea is expressed through another metaphor related to the auditory dimension: Anger and blood are described as having a voice, a "barbaric voice", which complements and expands the sonorous landscapes in this passage. The rhetorical language here contributes to the impression that the sustained outpour of blood and anger cannot be differentiated anymore from rainfall, articulated through the sonic imagination in the text. As the prolongation of the rainy season, the barbaric voice of anger and blood also establishes a connection to the word 'deluge' (which stands isolated between two slashes), creating a truly dismal vision. The force of nature that is the deluge is also a continuation of the nature theme in the quote consisting of the landscape, the forest, the animals and other natural phenomena.

The style of this passage is also taken up at other points in the novel and combined with other 'sonorous landscapes', further reinforcing the connection between sound, nature and the horrifying state of the world surrounding the narrator:

"**Cris d'insectes suffoqués / chants d'oiseaux étranglés / hennissement de chevaux crevés / gémissements de voyageurs morts / le désert buissonne de voix éteintes / L'amour ne saurait s'accommoder du truquage**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 89; bold in the original). This passage presents imagery as bleak as in the previous quote, but this time exclusively through the use of literary sounds. The literary sounds are the product of a nature in decline and ruin, extending the agony and distress of the human population in the novel to include the wildlife. The animals mirror the suffering of the people under Saintil's rule, bereft of the possibility to live and communicate freely, as staged here through sound. Besides the song of strangled birds and the neighing of beat-up horses, there are also sounds that are more obscure: The "cries of suffocating insects" is a literary sound that poses a paradoxical problem. Insects produce sound in a fundamentally different way to humans and other animals, and while the 'cry of insects' is a commonly used expression for describing the sound they generate, the idea of a 'cry' in regard to insects can only be metaphorical. Outside of literature, insects do not 'call out' as the other animals in the quote (birds and horses) do, and yet, in the context of the surreal ambiance of these passages, the literary sonic imagination also makes it possible to think of insects crying out in pain. While referring to the 'cry' of insects can be regarded as an anthropomorphism (or, in more general terms, an attribution of traits that are specific to other living beings), a lot of sounds produced by insects cannot be heard by human ears and access to potential insect sounds is gained precisely through the sonic imagination.

In combination with the other literary sounds that follow after the animal sounds, the passage continues to present a dying world, as foregrounded in the previous quote: The groaning of 'dead travelers', which possibly again refers again to the mumblings of zombies, and, even more strikingly, a desert described in a rhetorical figure full of contradiction and unexpected characteristics that also stimulate the sonic imagination. A literal translation of 'buissonner' could read as 'growing in bushes', which suggests that, figuratively, the voices overgrow the desert. By itself, this idea opens up a tension between the desert, which is commonly associated with dry landscapes in which plants rarely grow, and a plant metaphor which conveys the proliferation of voices. However, the fact that the phrase is not simply about voices, but "extinguished voices", adds to the contradictory imagery, either evoking voices that were once there and have disappeared, leaving only an imperceptible, imaginary trace of the sound, or envisioning these voices as dead plants that still populate the desert. This example of another sonorous landscape in the novel uses the sonic imagination to accentuate the devastation that the narrator faces.

The omission of conventional punctuation in this section and its replacement with diagonal slashes generate a peculiar sense of simultaneity (due to the uninterrupted succession of different phenomena), staging the sensation of overlapping sound events perceived synchronously within this sonorous landscape. This effect is further intensified by the fact that the text between the slashes consists in most of the cases entirely of nominal phrases (for more on the use of such nominal phrases in *Les affres d'un défi*, cf. Glover 2010: 201). Avoiding periods and commata in this instance can be considered a concentrated form of intercutting, a literary device used to evoke simultaneity in (written) narrative, which is often characterized by the restrictions of a unilinear medium (cf. Margolin 2014: 778–781). Furthermore, by breaking with the conventions of written language, the text moves closer to a form reminiscent of a narration based on orality rather than literal storytelling – the use of slashes in the quoted passages is even reminiscent of how breaks are indicated when quoting poetry, emphasizing rhythm over syntax and semantic order.

With Haitian Vodou as a thematic starting point, *Les affres d'un défi* stages literary sounds and interweaves sonorous traditions and customs using a very figurative approach to sound. The novel thus expands the connotations of auditory phenomena and integrates them into the overall bleakness of the text. The discussion of the last two quotes in particular shows that sound in the novel is often marked by violent imagery: Ascribing such a meaning to sound is made possible through the literary sonic imagination. The stylistic and rhetorical approach of attributing unusual characteristics to sound that also run counter to extra-literary sonic knowledge plays an important role in conveying violence in general in the novel.

3.4.3 Figurations of sound and violence

The way that violence and sound are connected in *Les affres d'un défi* largely relies on the political status of the voice and the connotations of the use of voice in a broader sense. However, the sonic imagination of the novel turns the abstract, metaphorical idea of voice as agency into a concrete, physical and often graphic matter.

The autocratic tyrant Saintil bases much of his power on the ability to speak and puts his power into effect through monopolizing the right to use one's voice: "Chaque jour, chaque nuit, à toute saison, à toute heure, vous n'entendrez parler que de moi. Mon pouvoir est éternel et sans limites" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 10–11). In addition to the fact that Saintil controls the sonic environment and consolidates his rule through sonic means, sound as a whole becomes a metaphor for power: "La voix de Saintil plane menaçante par-dessus les toits ; son pouvoir s'étend incommensurablement sur chaque pouce de terre" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 84).

Power and sound here are in a parallel relationship: Saintil's all-encompassing rule is illustrated through the unstoppable diffusion of sound ringing out everywhere. Saintil's voice is thus the center of power in the novel and does not tolerate any other sound that could potentially undermine it.

The following quote is but one example of how sound is interwoven with violent aspects in the novel. It shows how Saintil's rule is not just carried out through political oppression, but also directly affects sonic phenomena in *Les affres d'un défi*. The passage is a conglomerate of different forms of violence which complement each other and which are all conveyed with reference to sound or related entities such as speech organs:

> Nous questionnons. Nous palpons la vie avec le désir de lui arracher des secrets. Vaine démarche, puisque notre voix se perd dans le silence. Paroles contradictoires. Nos langues tailladées, mises en lanières, s'effilochent en filandres. Nos mâchoires se disloquent.
>
> Paroles brûlées, réduites en cendres. Paroles vendues pour un plat de lentilles. Paroles étouffées dans le sang. Paroles emportées par le vent. Paroles dispersées dans l'ailleurs. Inflammation des ganglions de l'aine à la suite d'un faux pas. Échec et déception. Pour se moquer de nous, ils tirent la langue, font semblant de nous offrir, sans jamais rien nous donner. Foulure. Nos jointures sont désarticulées. *(Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12; italics in the original)*

The quote demonstrates Frankétienne's explicit and graphic style of writing and combines several layers of violence through the references not just to the sound of the human voice, but also to the bodily means of creating and forming sound (jaw, tongue).

As already discussed further above, one of the cornerstones of Saintil's rule consists of the literal silencing of his subjects by elevating the status of his own voice and imposing himself as the sole legitimate speaker. Thus, one of the effects of this sonic regime is the suppression of other voices. What is probably most striking about the passage quoted above, therefore, is the epistemic violence associated with the process of silencing. The act of silencing, however, is not presented as a merely abstract process, as is often the case in other works of postcolonial literature or in postcolonial theory – a process in which the reference to voice or sound is simply a trope to illustrate oppression and its effects, like a loss of self-determination, a lack of representation, powerlessness or other phenomena.[82] Rather, silencing – while also keeping its figurative meaning as an act of oppression – becomes a physical

82 Ashcroft et al. hint at this fact in their "General Introduction" to *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*: "The 'silencing' of the post-colonial voice to which much recent theory alludes is in many cases a metaphorical rather than a literal one" (2003 [1995]: 4).

process and a process that is very much connected with sound and hearing in the novel.

Building on Gayatri Spivak's use of the term 'epistemic violence', Kristie Dotson gives the following definition of the term: "[T]o communicate *we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us.* The extent to which entire populations of people can be denied this kind of linguistic reciprocation as a matter of course institutes epistemic violence" (2011: 238; italics in the original). Epistemic violence is, therefore, an act of exclusion and marginalization, which consists of the failure to recognize the other, effectively 'silencing' them. In *Les affres d'un défi*, one aspect of this exclusion is the literal prohibition of speech. Saintil's reign of terror goes as far as to force the population to keep silent by means of poison: "**Pour nous empêcher de parler, ils projettent de nous injecter un poison qui aurait pour effet de nous engourdir la langue**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 103; bold in the original). But even when the authorities do not directly impede the people's ability to speak by means such as the injection of a poison that directly targets their tongues, the narrator observes the effects of the regime of vocal sound production based on Saintil's 'sonic monopoly' that excludes other voices. The presentation of the impact of the process of silencing is driven to its extreme in the longer passage quoted above, particularly in the description of the tongue and the jaw: "[*N*]*otre voix se perd dans le silence.* […] *Nos langues tailladées, mises en lanières, s'effilochent en filandres. Nos mâchoires se disloquent*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12; italics in the original). Losing one's voice is presented not just as the loss of freedom of expression, but also as a physical event in the novel. Silencing, then, becomes particularly palpable through the description of bodily injuries: Cut and dissected tongues, dislocated jaws. The oppressive forces within the novel even seem to mock the narrator by sticking their tongue out, showing off that theirs is still intact (unlike the narrator's). This gesture also reiterates the constant feeling in the novel of frustration, of having one's hopes squashed.

The reason why silencing is described in so many different terms lies in the narrative structure of the novel and the succession of varying modes of narration, that have also been analyzed in the respective research literature (cf. Benedicty 2008: 79). It remains unclear whether passages such as the above are a metaphorical expression of the situation of the population under Saintil's rule, or whether these processes do actually take place within the story world. The text does not distinguish between these two possible levels of narration, i.e., there is no indication about whether these are actual events that the narrator lives through, or whether they reflect the immaterial impressions in the narrator's mind, even when the latter is more likely judging by the broader context. Telling these different levels apart is further complicated by the typographic variations in the text, which make it difficult to consistently identify the narrative context of a given passage. However, the

lack of formal uniformity provides a narrative freedom that makes it possible to frequently change the perspective in the narration:

> *On the one hand, […] an* external narrator *recounts the story of the denizens of Bois-Neuf, a Haitian village; this external narrator does not seem implicated in the lives of the characters whose story the narrator tells. On the other hand, the reader also is exposed to a narrator that is very involved in the experiences of the characters whose lives it recounts, and a narrator that defines itself in relation to these characters. (Benedicty 2008: 80; italics in the original)*

The different narrative instances described by Benedicty are also important with regard to how the sonic imagination manifests itself in *Les affres d'un défi*, which is pertinent to the staging of the process of silencing initiated by Saintil: While the first mode is mostly limited to external events, the second mode (often used in combination with italics) can elaborate more freely, in a more associative manner, on the effects of this silencing. This rather introspective, more abstract point of view can introduce the graphic imagery mentioned above of the physical harm associated with losing one's voice. Within this mode, even more unusual characterizations of sound, that decidedly deviate from common sonic knowledge, are made possible and further convey the impact of the process of silencing. The figurative use of the sonic imagination necessitates a closer look at how violence and sound are related here.

The passage from *Les affres d'un défi* discussed above shows not just the mutilation of the parts of the body that are crucial for the vocal production of sound, but the voice itself, as a sonic phenomenon, seems to be directly affected by the gruesome circumstances under which the narrator tells the story: "*Paroles brûlées, réduites en cendres.* […] *Paroles étouffées dans le sang*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12; italics in the original). Speech, in this figurative passage, is presented very much as a tangible, physical entity. Just as the mysterious female voice is characterized through counterintuitive attributes that give it an unexpected tangibility, the rhetorical form of the above passage stages speech – in the sense of spoken words, uttered by a voice – as a material object that not only consists of sound waves that travel through air, but has fixed tangible properties (the integrity of which can be compromised). The way speech and voice are presented here is reminiscent of what Roland Barthes calls 'the grain of the voice', a term which he uses to highlight the materiality that resonates within the voice: "[L]a voix n'est pas le souffle, mais bien cette matérialité du corps surgie du gosier, lieu où le métal phonique se durcit et se découpe" (Barthes 1982b [1972]: 226). However, in *Les affres d'un défi*, the rhetorical framing does not point to the body that produces the sound, but to the sound itself

(and its figurative materiality). The sound is not a substitute for the body that suffers, it is speech and the voice themselves that are destroyed, precisely through how the literary sonic imagination is applied. For this to be possible, the idea of sound is combined with phenomena that can usually affect the body without directly referring to it. Thus, in contrast to the voice of the woman in the novel, which often conveys rather positive ideas such as hope, the physical qualities of speech in this passage are employed to directly expose this sound to violence and broaden the impression of the destructive forces in the novel: Speech and spoken words are staged as being burned and reduced to ashes, as being drowned in blood. How can this figurative coupling of sound and violence be assessed in semiotic terms?

In one of the previous quotes, where the narrator details a sonorous landscape consisting of dying wildlife, the sounds are unmistakably pervaded by a violent dimension noticeable through the description of suffering animals and their cries (suffocating insects, strangled birds and beat-up horses, cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 89). In this case, the sounds that the animals produce indicate that they are affected by violent forces; their cries are a response to or an expression of their suffering, and they are merely the consequence of the experience of violence. These sounds, then, are related to violence in an indexical fashion, the literary sound as the sign and violence as the object can be clearly distinguished from each other.

However, in the passages discussed in the present section, in which only Saintil's voice is allowed to ring out and in which speech is presented as a tangible and disintegrating object, the connection between sound and violence seems to be of an entirely different sort: Here, the sounds themselves are both the target and the medium of violence. Rather than staging the suffering of characters in the quotes given above, it is sound itself – in the form of the voice or speech, for example – that is harmed. Unlike the merely indexical cries of the animals, violence is part of the sound in these examples from *Les affres d'un défi* – the semiotic relation between the sound and violence seems to be iconic, in the sense that (referencing Charles W. Morris as a complementary definition to Peirce's understanding of the icon) a sign is "*iconic* to the extent to which it itself has the properties of its denotata" (Morris 1971: 98; italics in the original). In other words, an iconic sign "can only signify what is like itself" (Morris 1971: 276). The notion of the iconic semiotic relation can rightly be applied to one of the quotes from Frankétienne's novel: It is speech itself – rather than a character using speech – that is burned and reduced to ashes, and thus in this instance sound is directly afflicted by violence. This is further emphasized through the fact that the organs that produce and form speech become the target of violence (the cut up tongues and dislocated jaws): The epistemic violence (of being silenced by Saintil) and the physical violence (conveyed in the description

of speech and body parts related to it) converge remarkably in passages such as this. The overlap between these two forms of violence is pointedly expressed in the following sentence from one of the quotes: "*Nos jointures sont désarticulées*" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12; italics in the original). The use of 'désarticulé', or 'disarticulated', is an intricate play on words, considering the context of the sentence: At first glance, it describes the dislocation of joints (i.e., the joints of the jaw), but there is also a lexical proximity to 'articulation', understood as the production of speech. So 'jointures désarticulées' also hints at the process of silencing, in the sense of dislocated joints that cannot adequately produce speech. The image of these disarticulated joints summarizes once more the physical and epistemic violence that is at the center of the quoted paragraph.

The use of epistemic violence also becomes manifest in the limited mode of expression specific to the zombies in the novel, namely, the invariable repetition of the phrase "oui ouan". Saintil finds it important that the zombies rely exclusively on these two words when they communicate orally, and for good reason: As it turns out, articulating themselves freely leads the zombies at one point to a realization of their situation and to the desire to continue speaking. The following quote also demonstrates how Saintil reacts when his subjects attempt to speak of their own accord:

> *Marco poussa des cris épouvantables : oui ouan ! oui ouan ! oui ouan ! À moi ! À cause de ce dernier mot, Zofer lui arracha la langue. Baignant dans une mare de sang, se tordant de douleur, Marco reprit ses sens à travers un jaillissement fulgurant de conscience. Il regarda Saintil et les zombis. Il les observa d'un regard profond, avec le désir de parler. Quand il ouvrit la bouche, une voix étouffée, enchevêtrée, inarticulée sortit de sa gorge ensanglantée. Saintil, le visage boursouflé de rage, fit craquer le pouce de sa main droite. À ce signal Zofer enfonça le poignard à la tempe de Marco. (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 108)*

Passages such as this elucidate how closely entwined speech and liberation are in the novel. Consequently, Saintil fears and prohibits the free use of one's voice, in order to keep the zombies and the rest of the population docile. To keep them in line, Saintil's subordinates sanction any transgression against this sonic regime with brutal measures, such as cutting out one's tongue, as in this quote. However, once Marco, one of the zombies, speaks the first word that deviates from the phrase he is usually allowed to mutter, Saintil's spell seems lifted – it is thus not only Saintil's speech that has seemingly magical powers, but the utterances of others as well. As soon as Marco says "à moi" (which is also an expression of his individuality), it is already too late to try and regain control over him: Despite the unintelligi-

bility of his speech (due to his injury), he clearly feels the desire to speak and appears to have found a new awareness of the events which occur at that moment. It is as if speaking these two simple words makes it possible for him to rediscover his own free will, making it necessary for Saintil to kill him. From this perspective, the epistemic violence perpetrated against the people under Saintil's rule through silencing them keeps them from knowing themselves and resisting his authority. Sound is thus a powerful phenomenon which is able to reawaken awareness and contains the prospect of freedom in the novel.

Turning again to the iconic quality of literary sounds in relation to violence, the property of sound as the medium of violence is exhibited even more explicitly at other points in *Les affres d'un défi*. As before, figurative speech plays a preeminent role in allowing the sonic imagination to stage sound as a violent phenomenon:

> Une bouche enflammée crache des jets de feu sans jamais s'arrêter. Plus brillante que l'éclair, la langue menace, blesse et foudroie, pire qu'une lame à double tranchant. Plus affilée qu'un poignard, elle crève le cœur, déchire les entrailles. Plus bruyante que l'orage, elle franchit toutes les murailles, enjambe les nuages au-dessus des hautes tours. Plus légère qu'une plume d'oiseau, elle tournoie dans tous les sens. Des amateurs de combat de coqs se lancent des insultes au milieu de l'arène ; ils s'étripent les uns les autres. Soumettant leurs injures au crible du jugement, nous n'en relevons que des paroles incohérentes. *(Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 140; italics in the original)*

3.4.4 The noisy cockfight as a sonic and political paradigm

The cockfight, the element setting the stage for the violent events described in the last quote, recapitulates all of the important aspects that have been discussed up until now: Power and violence, Haitian Vodou and sound all converge in this form of 'blood sport'. Cockfights in the novel are the centerpiece of the *dézafi* festival, as it is defined in the glossary in the appendix:

> *Sorte de foire organisée dans certaines provinces haïtiennes ; à côté des fêtes orgiaques, les combats de coqs en constituent l'attraction principale. Le mot* Dézafi, *dans un sens plus large, signifierait : grand rassemblement ; mouvement populaire ; brassage de foules. (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 204–205; italics in the original)*

The term *dézafi* itself is often translated as 'cockfight' (cf. Douglas 2009: 56–57), and it comes as no surprise that it is also the title of Frankétienne's novel in Haitian Creole which served as the basis for *Les affres d'un défi* (there is even a vague similarity in how the two titles sound). Cockfights even share important underlying principles with Vodou customs, since "Vodou, like the cockfight, is a ritual in which

spirits play out dramas for their human counterparts" (Wucker 2000: 168). Cockfights appear to fulfill a certain function, letting the observers live vicariously through violence and, like Vodou (cf. Wucker 2000: 168), it helps them to make sense of incomprehensible events and the order of the world. In *Les affres d'un défi*, the cockfight is thus also a reflection of the disastrous state of the world in which the characters and narrators live: The cockfight is commonly interpreted as "a symbol for the class struggle" (Lang 2000: 262) in the novel, but this can only be a small part of its significance, because the conflicts within *Les affres d'un défi* go beyond and deeper than the confrontation between social classes, and touch on the hierarchization of society as a whole. In his famous essay entitled "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", Clifford Geertz makes an observation about the cultural significance of the cockfight in Bali and explains how it is connected to hierarchical orders:

> *What sets the cockfight apart from the ordinary course of life […] is […] that it provides a metasocial commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. (Geertz 1973: 448)*

The cockfights in *Les affres d'un défi* also seem to play out the hierarchical conflicts within the novel, but there is a marked difference to what Geertz observes in the Balinese cockfights, namely, in regard to the fact that the "slaughter in the cock ring is not a depiction of how things literally are among men, but, what is almost worse, of how, from a particular angle, they imaginatively are" (Geertz 1973: 446). In *Les affres d'un défi*, the brutal confrontation illustrated through the cockfights is not an imaginative metasocial commentary, but painfully reflects the status quo under Saintil's rule. In line with the grotesque hyperbolism of the novel, cockfights are even taken a step further: Instead of the gamecocks, the people in the arena often fight and slaughter each other during the cockfights. This is a telling detail because even within the established hierarchy, people turn on each other, as intended by Saintil in order to keep them from uniting and revolting against their dictator.

Thus, if the cockfight can be considered a condensed reiteration of the conflicts in the novel, it is easy to see why they are such a noisy occurrence:

> ***Le premier combat commence / Nous allons jauger nos coqs en les plaçant face à face, bec contre bec. […] Une immense clameur s'élève / Le scandale éclate / […] Au dehors, un inextricable enchevêtrement de paroles. […] Concert grinçant des chaînes / […] Le dézafi bat son plein.*** *(Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 89; bold in the original)*

Sound is such an integral part of these cockfights because it is an equally important element in the presentation of the hierarchical order of the novel as a whole. The accompanying noises range from loud screams to a "concert of chains", which in itself is vivid expression of the oppression instituted by Saintil, facilitated by the sonic imagination, and demonstrates once again that the struggle for power and the maintenance of political rule are by no means quiet processes in *Les affres d'un défi*.

On the one hand, sound is one of many elements that reinforce the general ambience of chaos and disorder in the novel, highlighting certain themes such as the Vodou religion and its importance for the content and the form of *Les affres d'un défi*. On the other hand, the most fundamental conflicts within the novel would be unthinkable without sound: The use of the voice is synonymous with power and freedom, and the way literary sounds are staged turns this parallelization not into an abstract political question, but rather into a very physical manifestation. Tying in with the often graphic narration, the figurative transformation of sound is characteristic of the novel's sonic imagination. Through specifically literary means it is possible to also convey violence on the level of sonic phenomena. The literary sounds expand the sonic knowledge, that is heavily influenced in the novel by Vodou, and introduce elements that are either specific to the sonic environment of Haiti (for example, instruments such as the *vaksine*) or are highly significant in the context of Haitian history (such as drumming). Finally, the cockfight emblematizes the amalgam of violence, sound and Haitian culture in the novel. It is also just one example of how instrumental the sonic imagination is in conveying the confrontation between antagonistic political forces in the text.

In concluding the case studies, common aspects and differences in the texts of the corpus will be elaborated in regard to their sonic imagination and how they approach violence through literary sounds.

3.5 A comparative perspective on literary sounds

Each text in the corpus features a unique sonic imagination that becomes manifest in a specific choice of themes and different ways of staging sound. Despite the differences in their approach to sound, which is also due to the varying linguistic and cultural context of the novels, they also have aspects in common, not least due to their shared postcolonial background. The focus on the relationship between sound and violence likewise deviates in many regards, but the analyzed texts also have mutual characteristics.

3.5.1 Differences and similarities in the sonic imagination

One of the concurrences in the sonic imagination in the texts is the frequent motif of a particular type of sound with extraordinary attributes. Characteristic of this sound is that it can be heard across entire landscapes and does not have a discernible source, or is conspicuously detached from its original source. The sound is thus an enigmatic phenomenon that is markedly different from other sonic experiences in each novel. In these cases the sonic imagination creatively incorporates a characteristic of sound which involves its 'spherical propagation', which refers to the fact that "[s]o long as no physical boundaries exist, sound disseminates in all directions, reaching people simultaneously at multiple locations" (Häusermann 2018: 214). This property of sound is a potent idea, especially for texts that are preoccupied with power and different forms of oppression. The composer John Cage also underlines the dissemination of sound, writing that "its becoming is unimpeded, energetically broadcast. There is no escape from its actions. It does not exist as one of a series of discrete steps, but as transmission in all directions from the field's center" (1973b [1961]: 14). The pervasiveness of sound is further amplified by the fact that, unlike eyes, ears do not have lids that could reliably shield the hearer from auditory sensations, thus making the person particularly susceptible to the impact of sounds. The literary sonic imagination takes the pervasive quality of sound another step further.

In Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*, this expansive type of sound becomes manifest through the female voice that often guides the narrator in the italic and bold passages of the novel. It always appears and vanishes unexpectedly (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 143) and its source cannot be located (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 43, 127), giving the impression that the voice can be heard from everywhere. The significance of the female voice is never completely elucidated, rather it functions as an element that reflects the general uncertainty of *Les affres d'un défi* because it fluctuates between being a sign of hope and a trap (cf. Frankétienne 2000

[1979]: 109). It is also reminiscent of Saintil, who wants his voice to ring out everywhere, without any other sound being heard (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 10–11, 84). However, unlike Saintil, the female voice does not assert a political claim to autocratic sovereignty and is instead a sonic counterforce that does not forcibly silence others despite its all-encompassing presence, serving as a point of orientation for the narrator, who seems utterly lost in the hostile world surrounding him. In opposition to Saintil, the female voice exists purely as a sound that is meant to be heard, whereas Saintil wants to elevate himself as the source of a voice that reverberates throughout the country.

The protagonist in Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* experiences a similar sensation when he falls asleep in the village after listening to Erlepes playing the dombra. Yedigei finds himself at the Aral Sea again, having been reminded of it by Erlepes' traditional music (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218), this time in a dream. He dreams that he walks into the water and notices that "доносилась откуда-то музыка… Кто-то плакал и жаловался на свою судьбу" (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 222) ("music was coming to him from somewhere, and someone was weeping and bemoaning their fate", Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 267). Here, Yedigei also hears an ominous voice seemingly from far away, accompanied by a music whose source is unclear. In the dream, it is likely that Yedigei subconsciously remembers Erlepes' performance the preceding evening, but the sonic imagination that becomes manifest here is similar to the pervasive voice in *Les affres d'un défi*: The idyllic scene is engulfed by unusual far-reaching sounds that are difficult to pinpoint.

The literary sounds that ring out through the entire surroundings in both novels establish a close connection to elements of a traditional native culture that permeate the texts: The voice in Frankétienne's novel is described at one point as emanating from the ritualistic object of the *govi* (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 40), which is used in Vodou. The call-and-response principle evoked through the female voice that addresses the narrator is another element which is intricately tied to traditional structures within Vodou. The peculiar auditory environment in Yedigei's dream in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* also calls to mind the native traditions that he is so expressly fond of because of their antiqueness and the wisdom they possess for him (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218, 220): The voice and the music are distant echoes of Erlepes' playing on a traditional lute instrument, singing an old folk song about the bard Raimaly-aga, whose story of lovesickness resonates so vividly with Yedigei's own feelings. In the dream, the distant sorrowful voice thus reiterates his own heartbreak, facilitated by the traditional music that he hears in the village to which he travels to retrieve his camel Karanar.

Towards the end of Aitmatov's novel, the juxtaposition of tradition and sound is upheld by another mysterious voice, whose source is very clear this time: A white

bird suddenly appears alongside Yedigei as he runs through the desert, calling out to him: "Чей ты? Как твое имя? Вспомни свое имя! Твой отец — Доненбай, Доненбай, Доненбай, Доненбай, Доненбай, Доненбай..." (Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 293) ("Whose son are you? What is your name? Remember your name! Your father is Donenbai, Donenbai, Donenbai, Donenbai, Donenbai, Donenbai...!" Aitmatov 1988 [1980]: 351). The white bird is related to the central folk tale in the novel, according to which a young man kills his own mother because he has been turned into a *mankurt* after being enslaved and consequently has lost his memory and identity. When his mother dies, her white scarf turns into the very white bird that calls out to Yedigei (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 293). This legend is an important theme in the text and the symbolic basis for understanding the obliteration of native culture and its consequences (cf. Mozur 1995: 109–110). Blending the mythological plane with the main story, the literary sound of the bird speaking thus suggests once again the intimate link to (pre-Soviet) tradition and native ancestry (both the sound itself and the content of its speech). The voice of the bird is also presented as a prolonged sound, continuing to ring out through the surroundings (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 293).

The Magistrate in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* also refers to sounds that roam freely and ceaselessly through the air after Colonel Joll asks him to explain the meaning of the 'barbarian' relics he collected: The Magistrate claims that the voices of the dead continue to sound forever, and one only has to listen closely to be able to hear them (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 123). These sounds are also unbound by a source, they exist as pure, eternal echoes of people after their death, as if the sound itself would never diminish completely and fade away. Through this notion of a sound, the Magistrate expresses an awareness of the past, highlighting a process of remembering the dead, including those who have lost their lives under Joll's cruel leadership in the frontier town.

In Coetzee's other novel, *Life & Times of Michael K*, there is also a sonic phenomenon similar to the ones discussed above, but which is of a more contradictory nature. In line with the focus on quietness in the novel, the narrator notes that a "great silence reverberated from horizon to horizon" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 106). A 'reverberating silence' is an oxymoron (since silence is the very absence of reverberation) highlighting the unfathomable silence that envelops the environment around the protagonist K. This paradoxical staging of (non-)sound corresponds to other instances in the novel in which silence has an effect akin to very loud sounds, or is presented directly as a very sonorous phenomenon (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 140, 164). In the quote above, the silence is implicitly likened to yet another loud sound that could carry across great distances. Like the other examples from the corpus, this sonic phenomenon is not restricted by any source because the idea of silence

already presupposes that there can be no source of sound. However, to convey this all-encompassing quietness in the novel, the concept of silence is merged with properties that are specific to sound (such as reverberation). The silence here is also markedly different from how profound silence has been described outside of literature in regard to its potential sonic attributes, as in the case of Cage's impressions of the anechoic chamber that he visited at Harvard University. There, he expected to hear nothing, but realized that, against the silent background, he was able to hear his own nervous system and blood circulation in the form of a high and a low sound, thus coming to the conclusion that it is impossible to achieve absolute silence (cf. Cage 1973a [1961]: 8). In Coetzee's text, silence is not a space in which it is possible for more subtle sounds to be heard, but rather the silence itself is attributed qualities that are associated with sound, such as reverberation, resulting in an 'echoing silence' that 'fills' the entire environment.

These examples of wide-ranging sonic phenomena already demonstrate the very important status of sound within the novels of the corpus (and why literary sounds can convey violence so convincingly in the first place), because sound appears here in a pure form, a form which is unrestricted by a source, as a sensation that is not even limited by distance. Sound turns into an 'emancipated' material that creates its own meaning, independent of the way it is produced. A perception such as this, presented through the sonic imagination of the texts, follows a similar direction as that envisioned by the composer and musicologist Pierre Schaeffer in his descriptions of 'sound objects' that become available by means of acousmatic listening, a 'pure' listening that "forbids any relationship with the visible, touchable, measurable" (Schaeffer 2017 [1966]: 65). Within the space of such 'pure' sounds, the aural can develop an impact in the texts which cannot be explained by the processes that generate each sound. Such a staging of sound is particularly characteristic of the aural sensitivity in literary works written during the 20th century, as the perception of sound changed fundamentally due to the technological shifts related to audio recording and playback, which introduced a new sonic paradigm:

> *When sound came into contact with audio technology at the end of nineteenth century, it was technologically imprinted so that it gradually became emancipated from the, so to speak, "natural" attachment to the mode of sound generation […], the particularities of sound generators […], and the conditions set by the spatial relations of its dispersal […]. (Wicke 2016: 24)*

In the literary sonic imagination of the analyzed texts, these properties of sound are even further accentuated to a point where sound becomes independent of its generation and spatial limitations without the additional use of technological means. As such an autonomous phenomenon, literary sounds occasionally also suspend

one of the most fundamental properties of sound, which consists of its unsteady, impermanent nature: At its core, sound is a vibration that cannot be fixed and is bound to get weaker and disappear over time. When the Magistrate in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* talks about the voices that never fully die down, he is reiterating a thought that he formulates for the first time when he is imprisoned in the cell in which 'barbarian' prisoners were tortured. His attempts to imagine the cries that cannot escape the makeshift prison's walls long after the death of the persons uttering them (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87) is much more than an 'auditory haunting' (cf. Daughtry 2014: 28) – as the narrator in the novel, he is truly committed to this thought, "trying to attune" his "hearing" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87), in an effort to actually perceive those cries. At this point, the idea of the cries that never fade is the sole expression of his memory of the prisoners, when even his sense of vision fails him in retracing the "pain and degradation" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 87) that occurred inside these walls.

Other texts in the corpus, however, foreground other aspects of sound that stand in direct contrast to the above notions. The literary sounds in Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, for example, illustrate very palpably the concept of ephemerality, which is an essential feature of how the anxiety and melancholic state of the novel's narrator and protagonist Anna are conveyed in the novel. The ephemeral quality of sounds and Anna's feeling of being overwhelmed are noticeable in the slightest of sounds, such as the sound of a piano inside a house that she passes: Upon realizing that the music is getting quieter and quieter and eventually disappears, she senses "a tight feeling" in her throat, as if she "wanted to cry" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 6). Even the clicking sound of a door makes her become aware of transience (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 31), because it leads her to the realization that she might never again see Walter, the object of her unrequited love. These literary sounds are very unlike the all-encompassing auditory environments in the other novels, which consist of endless echoes and reverberations that defy spatial distance. Instead, Rhys's novel attributes such an infinite quality to the sensory domain of vision: While she reads, Anna comments on the "endless procession of words" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 5). Anna's feelings thus fluctuate between that of transience and that of perpetuation, which come to the fore due to how her sensory experiences are staged in the text. The ensnarement between these two opposites also becomes evident in how she frames instances of sexual intercourse: "You shut the door and you pull the curtains over the windows and then it's as long as a thousand years and yet so soon ended" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 63). Anna's presentation of sleeping with the much older Walter in this quote is just as elliptic as her narration of how she is raped by Carl (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 128), also referring to sex simply by the pronoun 'it'. The simultaneous impression of 'it' lasting what seems like an eternity and ending abruptly is a continuation of

the uncomfortable sentiment arising from her sensory perception, and particularly her sonic experiences.

Despite the emphasis on the ephemerality of sound, the sonic imagination in Rhys's novel also establishes an important link to the past, even if it does so in a different fashion and on a different level than in the case of Aitmatov's and Coetzee's novels. This is most evident when, after listening to the tap-water running in her room, Anna remembers her native country, where she lived before coming to England (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 73). The literary sound of the tap triggers the memory for her, and she relives her carefree childhood, when she was still with Francine, and which contrasts greatly with the arduous life she leads in England. In her memory, the antagonism to her stepmother Hester also becomes manifest through another sensory perception: smell. Pop-flowers grow around the waterfall, and "Hester couldn't bear the scent, it made her faint" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 73). The place Anna cherishes and recalls while focusing on sound is despised by Hester, just as she has little approval of the supposed black characteristics in Anna's voice (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). Another example of a memory trigger in the form of a literary sound is the ticking clock that Anna hears during her delirium after her abortion and which causes her to remember the incident in which Carl had sex with her against her will (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152).

While Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* stages sound by connecting it with traditions that have been passed on for several generations, and Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* directs attention to a secret 'afterlife' of sounds that were produced under physical pain, Rhys's novel highlights the narrator and protagonist's past personal experiences through literary sounds. In this regard, the function of literary sounds in *Voyage in the Dark* is similar to parts of Coetzee's other novel, *Life & Times of Michael K,* in which sound reveals much about the protagonist K's background and his upbringing. When K states that he is "glad that there isn't a radio" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 132) at the camp where he is held towards the end of the novel, and subsequently starts talking about his childhood at Huis Norenius, sound is also the main element connecting the present with his past. The conflicting sonic forces that he witnesses at this institution for "variously afflicted and unfortunate children" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 4) forebode the experiences he is exposed to on the level of sound in the novel: On the one hand, the most important rule that the children have to follow is that "[t]here will be silence in dormitories at all times" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 105), and on the other, "[t]here was a radio playing all the time" and "[t]here was music all afternoon and all evening" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 132), which is supposed to keep the children calm but had the opposite effect on K (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 132–133). Silence in particular, which plays such an important role in his life during the events narrated in the novel, has thus been an important influence on

him since he was young. In this way, this text also introduces K's past through sonic phenomena (or the marked absence thereof).

The noise of different machines and technological apparatuses is also an important part of the auditory environments in the texts and it often has a violent effect. The sound of the radio in *Life & Times of Michael K* is just one inconspicuous example; in the same novel, the literary sounds of firearms, such as machine pistols (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 12), or military vehicles (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21–22) are also sources of distress for the protagonist. In *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, the train is one of the most striking sonic forces (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 163–165), and likewise the loudspeakers at the railway station function as a technological means of sound diffusion that dominates the entire area (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 182–184). Such technological sound sources are contrasted with other forms of sound production, namely, the intimate performance of folk songs by Erlepes which is not mediated by any additional electroacoustic tools and thus retains a seemingly 'natural' characteristic, regarded as more valuable within the novel's narrative. This critical perspective on technology, articulated through the sonic imagination, also becomes apparent when the mythical white bird at the end of the novel calls out to Yedigei against the sonic background of several space rockets being launched at the same time and the immense noise that they generate, creating a truly apocalyptic scenario (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 293). The devastating sound of the rockets also continues the theme of the sonic occupation of Central Asia.

The contrast between technological and natural sounds can also be encountered in the other texts: For example, before the convoy of military vehicles appears in *Life & Times of Michael K*, K finds a moment of peace and quiet and is able to hear birds sing (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21). The overwhelming impact of the ensuing noise from the trucks is thus reinforced through the contrast with the sounds of nature.

A trope related to literary sound that is included in some of the texts resembles the autonomous, 'emancipated' character of the all-encompassing sounds without a discernible source: Different characters observe and hear themselves talk as if from an external point of view. Their voices seem to disconnect from them in certain situations, for example, when Anna is around men and complies with their expectations of her (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 15, 63). Her dissociated auditory sensation corresponds to her reaction when forced to have sex with Carl Redman and she is partly surprised by her own behavior (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 128). The Magistrate has similar experiences at various points in *Waiting for the Barbarians*: He hears his own "voice rise in tone" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 54) when he starts arguing with an officer about the Empire; his own "speech seems strange" (87) to him after being imprisoned and deprived of human contact for two days, and he hears his own words

"emerge thin, bodiless, like words spoken by someone else" (95) in a dream about the 'barbarian' woman. There are many other instances in which he listens to himself as if from an outside perspective. The medical officer in *Life & Times of Michael K* is also surprised by his own speech: "Then I found myself speaking, in no more than a whisper" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 149). It is as if he is not the agent of the speech and is losing control over his own actions. This is a consequence of Michael K's radical refusal to reply to the officer's questions by keeping silent. K's behavior has an influence on the officer and forces him to adapt and speak more quietly himself, which takes him by surprise. Shortly before that, he is not even able to speak at all despite wanting to (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 148). The sensation of listening to themselves thus signals a state of alienation and shock, of being overcome by an emotion that makes these characters feel insecure and not in control of themselves.

Through their staging of sound, the texts initiate a reworking of sonic knowledge: The auditory environments filled with the boundless sounds discussed further above already introduce sonic notions that are not easily comprehendible on the basis of a common understanding of sound. All of the phenomena pose a problem for an implicit knowledge of sound, but within the sonic imagination, they are not inaccurate references, but rather evocative forces that give form to something new, while still maintaining a connection to processes and practices of perceiving and creating sound. The 'sonorous silence' in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* is such an element, presenting itself in contradictory terms, but not devoid of meaning just because it unites seeming opposites. This kind of silence is also shown through the impact on the protagonist K, as when he puts "his hands over his ears" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 25) in an attempt to endure his mother's silence, which is normally a gesture that is supposed to make loud sounds bearable.

The unceasing cries in Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* is another example for the counterintuitive qualities that can be found in literary sounds. In the same text, other cries of tortured prisoners are also characterized in a way that is inconceivable outside of literature: Due to the narrative framing of these sounds, they appear to be there and also not there (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The narrator claims not to hear them but, at the same time, they are presented through the sonic imagination, by means of a 'negative staging' of sound. This oscillation between presence and absence can also be observed in other novels of the corpus, such as Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*. In one of the bold passages, it says that "**le désert buissonne de voix éteintes**" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 89; bold in the original). The expression used in this instance also has a contradictory quality because, on the one hand, the desert is littered with voices (translated more literally, they 'wildly grow' there) but, on the other hand, these are 'extinguished voices' and thus cannot be heard anymore. Since a voice can only consist of an actual sound, the metaphorical

idea conveyed here runs counter to the usual understanding of a sonic phenomenon, and instead, the desolate impression of the world surrounding the narrator is further foregrounded through this paradoxical notion. The image presented in the quote is also reminiscent of the voices that the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* describes while he is imprisoned, because in both cases, the voices seem to have an afterlife, even after fading away.

In some cases, the unusual features of literary sounds still rely on an extra-literary sonic knowledge, but they creatively modify it by illustrative rhetorical means, such as the overwhelming noise in *Life & Times of Michael K*: The convoy that passes by K and his mother is described as producing "a roar of noise that seemed to turn the air solid" (Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 22). This expression emphasizes the property of loud sounds that can be felt by other means than auditory perception (i.e., the sense of touch) and hyperbolically describes them with an attribute that could transform something as intangible as air into a solid object.

The figurative language used in staging sounds, such as in the two examples above, is an important component of the literary sonic imagination that also extends the sonic knowledge. Frankétienne's novel is particularly rich in figurative presentations of sound, such as the eel as a metaphor for the mysterious female voice (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 43, 127), highlighting the elusive nature of the voice. Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* also uses a very figurative style when it comes to the staging of voices: The simile of the "smooth, unclimbable walls" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 122) is a notable expression of how Anna perceives the expectations and assumptions of others through their voices. When she describes her stepmother's voice as having a "sharp, cutting edge to it" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 45), this metaphor illustrates her perception of how a ladylike behavior that judges and mocks others is embodied in sound.

A recurring feature of the figuration of sound in the corpus is an imagery that relies on water. In Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* the idea of water is fundamental in conveying Yedigei's positive experience as he listens to Erlepes perform traditional songs (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 218). The water imagery allows the music to appear as a 'pure', 'authentic' art form and highlights Yedigei's relaxed listening process, in which water waves and sound waves become intertwined. The water metaphors in the passage also enable a transition from the perception of sound to the topic of the Aral Sea. *Voyage in the Dark* likewise incorporates the element of water in multiple instances of staging sound. Anna compares the "tinkling sound" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 6) of a piano with running water, and even the passage of time is presented as a sonic experience through a water simile (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 93). Frankétienne's novel also combines a water imagery with sound through a play on words, in which "**la saison des averses**", or the 'rainy season', is prolonged by "**les**

voix barbaresques de la colère et du sang" (Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 161; bold in the original), in the sense of an 'outpouring' of anger and blood in the form of 'barbaric voices'.

The literary device of onomatopoeia brings language and sound even more closely together, as in the scene which details the arrival of the train in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*: It is noteworthy that the literary sounds used to describe the train are onomatopoetic, adding yet another layer to the staging of sound in the text (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 164–165).

3.5.2 Comparing the sound and violence nexus

The aural sensitivity demonstrated in the texts turns again and again to challenging political settings that are influenced by the postcolonial condition. It is characteristic for these settings that they give rise to various forms of violence: Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* looks at political killings that are part of the suppression of memory and traditions in Central Asia; Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* shows a protagonist who moves from the Caribbean under British colonial occupation to England and experiences manipulation and abuse while trying to establish a new life in a new country; Coetzee's novels consider the brutal and humiliating methods of imperial politics and the arbitrary punishment of individuals during a civil war in an unstable country; finally, Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi* focuses on the despotic rule of a postcolonial dictator and his efforts to silence the population and bend them to his will. The sonic imagination accentuates specific aspects of oppression and resistance in each novel, and while these novels feature vastly different political constellations with their own configurations of power, they have manifestations of violence in common that are expressed through the staging of sound. At the same time, each text has its own approach to conveying violence through literary sounds, and the form of violence also influences how a literary sound relates to it.

Interpersonal violence can be found in many of the analyzed novels, but its shape is always very specific to the story, and likewise the literary sounds connected to this form of violence differ considerably from each other. The staging of the auditory environment of torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* relies on a physical kind of violence that becomes manifest in the screams of prisoners (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The screams are directly related to the act of torture, they are the unfiltered result of physical harm, and the Magistrate immediately knows the source of and the reason for the screams. This is emblematized by his expression of having his ears "tuned to the pitch of human pain" (Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). The 'pitch of human pain' leaves nothing further that needs to be explained about these literary sounds, like the very explicitly stated 'sounds of violence' later on in

the novel (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 23–24). All of these sounds have an indexical relation to physical violence through their directness and unambiguousness, which is also the result of how the Magistrate, as the narrator, frames the violent nature of these sounds. In *Voyage in the Dark*, interpersonal violence also plays an important role, most notably in Anna's memory of having sex with Carl Redman against her will. The interpersonal violence can be further specified as sexual violence by Carl against Anna. This memory is not only triggered by the ticking sound of a clock, it is narrated mostly through aural sensations, similar to the torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians.* One of the literary sounds is contained in Carl's reaction to Anna asking him to stop: "He laughed and it sounded funny" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152). Although there is a clearly identifiable agent of violence in this case as well, the sound of Carl laughing is still very different from the screams in Coetzee's novel. While both sounds relate to interpersonal violence, Carl's laughter does not signal the sexual assault on Anna as directly as the prisoners' painful screams indicate that they are being tortured. The connection between sound and violence relies much more on the context, and on the fact that Anna does not consent to sleeping with Carl. The sign relation is thus more symbolic than indexical in the case of *Voyage in the Dark*, even if the violence conveyed here is also physical and directly targets Anna's body. In contrast to the Magistrate, Anna also does not comment explicitly on the connection between these sounds and the violence that she experiences. There is an almost apathetic quality to the narration because Anna focuses exclusively on her sensory impressions, without any remarks about what is happening to her, which makes the scene even more unsettling. Instead she merely highlights the tone of Carl's laughter, stating that is sounds 'funny'. Rhys's and Coetzee's texts are thus to a similar extent elliptic in regard to the act of violence, apart from the sonic phenomena that surround it. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that compared to the other two authors in the corpus Aitmatov's and Frankétienne's novels do not focus so much on interpersonal violence, when it comes to sound.

The second form of violence conveyed through the sonic imagination is structural violence. It becomes most noticeable in connection to literary sounds in Coetzee's other novel, *Life & Times of Michael K*, and Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. In the latter, structural violence is an important part of the arrest of Abutalip and is accentuated through the sonic characterization of the train on which the secret police takes him away. Abutalip's imprisonment is part of the oppressive measures instituted by the Soviet state, which also target native communities in Central Asia. The violence is already generated within the political structures outlined in the novel, and while Abutalip is not physically harmed during his arrest, the reason why the secret police detain him goes back to the structural violence that pervades

I dol'she veka dlitsya den'. Ultimately, Abutalip dies while he is imprisoned, as a direct consequence of him writing down his memories of World War II and folk tales from the indigenous tradition. The menacing nature of the train ties in with the threat posed by the Soviet regime and its policies, and it is presented this way based solely on the literary sounds that it produces (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 163–165). The sonic imagination thus highlights the train as an imperial tool that disrupts the life of the town's inhabitants. However, the sounds of the train are not the source of the structural violence in the novel; the two are thus symbolically related. It is by pure thematic association that these literary sounds evoke the wider political situation of the story. It is similar in the case of *Life & Times of Michael K*: When K and his mother are held up by the soldiers along the highway, they are also met with overwhelming sounds coming from the convoy and the soldiers themselves, who are characterized by loud behavior (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 21–23). Like Abutalip, K does not experience physical pain and he remains unscathed throughout the confrontation, but he falls victim to the structural violence arising out of the introduction of martial law during the civil war. His powerlessness in the face of the administrative machinery and the military is reinforced through the auditory environment that makes him uneasy and lets him feel the relentlessness of the state's institutions. The literary sounds are not directly related to this kind of violence in this case either, but the staging of sound unmistakably reflects the political configuration within the novel, making sound a symbolic sign of violence here as well. Furthermore, both in Aitmatov's and Coetzee's novel, the opposing side that witnesses the noisy environment is presented as very quiet in order to further highlight the skewed power dynamic through a contrast of sounds. It can be said, in general, that structural violence can only be signified symbolically through literary sounds because, by definition, it does not consist of specific actions between individuals and does not have a clearly determinable source or a single stable target. Rather, structural violence applies to the state and structures of an unjust system that promotes inequality. Thus there cannot be a more direct link between this form of violence and a literary sound because, in order to determine structural violence as the semiotic object of sound, one always needs to consider the greater context in which the sound occurs. Structural violence can be evoked through literary sounds by establishing associations through different themes and creating analogies between sonic behaviors and power structures.

Epistemic violence is another phenomenon that emerges from the staging of literary sounds in the chosen texts. The scope of epistemic violence varies substantially, in the sense that the sonic imagination does not always show the same extent of exclusion, marginalization or disregard for a collective or a character's position. In one of the examples from Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, the sound of the

loudspeakers at the railway station illustrates this epistemic form of violence through the music that even briefly creates the impression that it is commemorating Abutalip's passing, because of its mournful quality (cf. Ajtmatov 1981 [1980]: 184). When it turns out that the music is actually being played in honor of Stalin after his death, the juxtaposition of Abutalip's and Stalin's deaths through the sonic imagination emblematizes the confrontation between the Soviet authority and the native population, in that the death of the leader of the Soviet Union draws attention away from Abutalip, who loses his life because of the policies introduced under Stalin. The auditory environment reinforces the impression that Abutalip's death goes unnoticed: The fact that the lost lives of members of the native population are rendered invisible is part of the epistemic violence in the novel. The sound of the loudspeaker and this epistemic violence are connected symbolically because the music only underlines the 'oblitération culturelle' (cf. Fanon 2002 [1961]: 225) as an idea and is not directly related to it.

In Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*, the epistemic violence that takes place within the text is conveyed differently through the staging of literary sounds. The epistemic violence is a result of Saintil's silencing of the population, and this process is shown directly on the level of sound, enabled by the figurative style of the text: For example, one of the italic passages gives an account of how speech, in the sense of spoken words, is burnt and drowned in blood (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 12). By giving voice unusual, physically tangible qualities, sound itself becomes the target of violence and is affected by destructive forces. The effect of the epistemic violence in this instance is much more concrete than in Aitmatov's novel: The violence becomes manifest through the sound rather than existing independently from it and being merely foregrounded in a symbolic fashion through the sound. The epistemic violence and the sound coalesce and thus in this example the sound is an iconic sign of the violence.

Sound and violence have a similar relation in Rhys's novel, when Anna's stepmother Hester criticizes her for the way she uses her voice (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). Hester's hostile remarks are very much based on her idea of 'blackness' and its sonic manifestation; in her racist attitude, a hierarchy in the production of sound becomes manifest that dismisses and excludes what she perceives as 'black' characteristics in a voice. The 'sonic color line' that Hester establishes prevents her from seeing – and hearing – Anna for who she is, because she is too preoccupied with categorizing her and imposing her ideals of sound on her. Epistemic violence and sound also converge here, forming an iconic semiotic relationship, but with an added aspect: Just as in Frankétienne's text, sound is the target of epistemic violence, but it is also the medium of violence, because it is Hester's own voice that has this marginalizing effect. Hester implicitly frames her use of voice as the proper

way of producing sound, which is very unlike Anna's "awful sing-song voice" (Rhys 2019 [1934]: 52). This 'white' voice constructs itself by identifying its sonic Other, the 'black' voice which Hester hears both in Francine and Anna.

Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* illustrates yet another form of how a literary sound and epistemic violence can relate iconically to each other. K's silence occupies a curious position between sound and non-sound in the novel, because it is at the same time the absence of sound, but staged through characteristics associated with sound. This paradoxical quality is also indicative of the disruptive effect that it has for characters such as the medical officer (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 140). As a gesture of radical abstention, K's silence is itself a violent phenomenon which shakes the officer to the core. Thus, through this literary (non-)sound, K is able to turn the epistemic violence that he has experienced himself on others and make them feel what it is like to be utterly ignored and dismissed. In this case, silence is only the medium of violence, as opposed to the examples from Frankétienne's and Rhys's novels, in which the literary sounds are either the target of violence or both the target and the carrier of violence.

There is yet another dimension of violence that becomes manifest in some of the literary sounds and that goes beyond these three different forms. It is a rather pure auditory violence that can be noticed in the sounds of the train in Aitmatov's novel, the convoy of vehicles in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and also in K's silence towards the end of the novel: These sonic phenomena share disruptive features creating a violence that exists solely on the level of sound and the effect of which is also independent of the political themes and ideas in each text. This sonic violence corresponds to Bijsterveld's characterization of 'intrusive sounds' which "threaten the existence of something or someone that is vulnerable or fragile, such as nature, harmony, or one's heart, mind, body or security" (2008: 44). Such sounds and their semiotic relation to violence come close to Peirce's definition of a 'pure' icon: "[A] pure icon does not draw any distinction between itself and its object. It represents whatever it may represent, and whatever it is like, it in so far is" (Peirce 1994: 5.74). In this case, violence is such an inherent part of the sounds that it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between the sign and its object. The literary sonic imagination stages these violent sounds through the overwhelming impact they have on the characters in the text.

In comparing the semiotic properties of literary sounds in relation to different forms of violence, it is important to note that interpersonal, structural and epistemic violence rarely occur in isolation within the sonic imagination of the discussed works. For instance, Anna's experience of sexual violence is also intertwined with an epistemic violence that consists of Carl ignoring and downplaying

the vocal utterances through which she expresses her objections. To refer to another example, the structural and the epistemic violence in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* also rely on and influence each other, and the literary sounds of the novel evoke the two types of violence in equal measure. Each form of violence highlights a particular aspect of a complex political configuration, whose parts are unavoidably interrelated. However, the comparison of the broad variety of literary sounds and their semiotic qualities in regard to specific notions of violence shows the multifarious ways in which the sonic imagination and political phenomena are interwoven in postcolonial prose fiction.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The violence of sound in the postcolonial sonic imagination

The literary sonic imagination is a driving force behind the generation of meaning on a political level in the chosen works of postcolonial prose fiction: By combining elements specific to each postcolonial configuration of power with the staging of sonic phenomena it imbues sound with a political significance. Literary sounds are the textual material produced by the sonic imagination and the basic literary means by which political meaning can become manifest in conjunction with ideas about sound in the text. On a fundamental level, literary sounds are not 'real', audible sounds, but intermodal references to aural sensation in visually perceived texts. The sonic images created in the mind through the staging of literary sounds do not, however, simply reproduce extra-literary sounds but rather form entities of their own that – in analogy to Sterne's general definition of sonic imagination – occupy "an ambiguous position between sound culture and a space of contemplation outside it" (Sterne 2012: 5), performatively incorporating and expanding sonic knowledge.

What the texts by Aitmatov, Rhys, Coetzee and Frankétienne have in common is that they stage literary sounds that problematize different aspects of imperial confrontations and the lasting effects of colonial legacies. At the same time, each variant of the postcolonial sonic imagination has its own focus and its own approach to the political significance of sound, to reiterate what Radano/Olaniyan write in regard to 'audible empire': "The distinctive feature of the sound of empire—the sound that creates and is created by empire—is its constitutive productivity, its multiple transformations and effects across vast and diverse boundaries" (2016: 17). The sonic imaginations of the novels attest to these manifold manifestations of sound against a postcolonial background.

As early as 1934, Rhys's novel "critically [...] scrutinizes the colonial relationship" (Boehmer 2005 [1995]: 3), which Elleke Boehmer cites as an important characteristic of postcolonial literature (which also cannot be defined as "simply being the writing which 'came after' empire", Boehmer 2005 [1995]: 3). Important aspects of the colonial relationship, such as the political category of race, are approached on the level of literary sounds, and the sonic imagination expresses the process of critical scrutiny in the text. The conflict between Anna and her stepmother Hester is symptomatic of the broader political stakes, which are the result of a slowly changing colonial world order: Hester's ideas about sound are deeply entrenched in an ideology of white supremacism, and it is not surprising therefore, that she does not accept Anna for who she is, since Anna's family background (which is

shaped by the colonial history of the Caribbean) does not conform to Hester's ideal of 'racial purity'. Hester expresses her contempt and disdain through her negative assessment of how Anna uses her voice, framing it as a 'black' voice, which she interprets as the result of having a Creole mother and being influenced by Francine, the black household servant whom Anna liked as a child. The sonic imagination foregrounds Hester's racist mindset, which is epitomized in her expectation that Anna should sound 'white'. Anna's experience of moving from a colony of the British Empire to England also encompasses other political facets that relate to categories of social identity other than race, such as gender and class, and which also become manifest through literary sounds in *Voyage in the Dark*. She notices how others adapt the way they produce sound to fit a certain role in society and she is constantly confronted with other characters attempting to discipline her voice, with the goal of making her more 'ladylike'. Anna is torn between the various expectations of her, and the sonic imagination highlights her overall in-betweenness.

Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* likewise examines a colonial order through the staging of sound, focusing on Soviet repression and the sonic occupation of Central Asia. The train constitutes an important example of the critical perspective on technology explored in the novel, and the sounds associated with the railway system underline the impact of Soviet policies, that contribute to the cultural eradication of the native population, their customs and traditions. The text contrasts the soundscape of contemporary life with the intimate performance of folk songs that represent the 'wisdom of antiquity' in which the protagonist Yedigei takes comfort during a time of emotional distress. The sound of the indigenous culture that existed prior to the colonization of Central Asia by the Russian Empire in the 19th century and Soviet rule in the 20th century shows what is at stake in the suppressive memory politics portrayed in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. The appreciation of traditional music is already signaled in the way the sounds and their perception are staged in the text, namely, through an 'organic', 'natural' imagery that also evokes other central topics, such as the Aral Sea. The sonic imagination is thus part of a "symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings" (Boehmer 2005 [1995]: 3), which is so important for postcolonial literature. Historically, the assumed 'backwardness' has been a legitimizing argument for the conquest of Central Asia and for reeducation under Russian and Soviet domination. The novel reevaluates the attachment to the past and reformulates it not as a sign of 'primitivity' but as a source of cultural identity, which is increasingly at risk due to the political measures taken by the Soviet state. Against this background, and further developing a culturally pessimistic narrative, the auditory environment of the railway stands for a growing mechanization and the pitfalls of modernization, when people become alienated from one another and forget their own history.

The sonic imagination of Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi* also revolves heavily around an element of contested cultural heritage, Haitian Vodou. Vodou is contested in its political significance because of the changing status it occupies throughout the colonial and postcolonial history of the country, from the Haitian revolution to the despotic rule of the Duvaliers. Thus Vodou is also an ambivalent concept in the novel – both a destructive, oppressive force and a productive, creative entity that provides many impulses for the form and content of the text. As a vast belief system, Vodou has its own approach to sound, which plays a crucial role in many of its practices: Rites and rituals rely on the playing of instruments such as the drum; they frequently involve dancing and singing, and orality is an essential tool in passing on Vodou teachings. These sonic elements, as constitutive parts of Vodou, inform the themes, events and style of *Les affres d'un défi*, and the literary sounds illustrate the dual character of the religion within Haiti: The songs and speeches during the ceremonies conducted by Saintil and his followers present sound as a dangerous phenomenon because it possesses the power to turn disobedient citizens into apathetic zombies, while on the other hand, the mysterious female voice that harks back to the call-and-response principle within many Vodou chants gives guidance to the narrator, who feels utterly lost amid the chaos surrounding him. The almost word-for-word repetition of phrases relating to sonic phenomena, such as the woman's voice, is not just a point of orientation within the otherwise disorientating style of narration, it also introduces an element which is often thought of as characteristic in certain areas of postcolonial literature, namely, the inclusion of an attribute taken from oral literature (which, in itself, also relies very much on sound). The literary sound of drums is another example for a verbatim repetition that enriches the sonic imagery of the novel. Written in the (former) colonial language of French, *Les affres d'un défi* adheres to a Spiralist literary style that is very much influenced by Haitian Creole. Thus, also in this case, "the vernacular appropriates the language for the task of constituting new experience and new place" (Ashcroft et al. 2010 [1989]: 56), giving rise to a form of postcolonial sonic imagination in which the staging of literary sounds is specific to Haiti and its cultural cornerstones, such as Vodou.

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* approaches imperial rule and its brutal effects on an indigenous population from the perspective of a colonial administrator who is troubled by a bad conscience. The inner conflict of the Magistrate is articulated in the novel through the sonic imagination: He is sensitive and attentive to sounds that relate to the 'barbarian' prisoners, and having tried to ignore them, he eventually becomes obsessed with these sounds, to a point where he tries to make out the echoes of the screams and cries, long after they have died away. By focusing on literary sounds, the text keeps a narrative distance to horrific processes such as

torture and avoids the voyeuristic appeal of graphic descriptions based on visuality. The literary sounds of *Life & Times of Michael K* highlight the struggle of a protagonist who is trying to survive in apartheid-era South Africa during a fictional civil war. The deep-rooted inequality and injustice which the protagonist K faces become palpable through the confrontation of different sounds. This 'sonic conflict' reflects the power dynamic which has a crushing effect on K, illustrated by the overwhelming sounds of the bureaucratic machine and the military and their contrast with K's silent behavior. Over time, K's silence takes on a resistant, subversive quality, which is still expressed in very sonorous terms. K remains a disenfranchised figure, but one who knows how to turn the radical undecidability of the silence that has been forced upon him against those trying to humiliate him further.

The comparison between the texts also shows common themes developed through the sonic imagination, such as the idea of an unbounded sound that, counter to a common understanding of sound, is not limited by its physical source or spatial distance, or other forms of 'emancipated' sonic phenomena, such as the seemingly autonomous voices of characters. Literary sounds are also important elements in establishing a connection with the past in most of the texts, for example, by introducing memories through 'sonic triggers' or signaling traditions and customs that have been passed on for many generations through sonorous practices.

A major component of the political significance of literary sounds in postcolonial prose fiction is also their relationship to violence. Rob Nixon's remarks about literature and violence offer further insight in this context: "In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses" (2011: 15). The imaginative writing about sound in postcolonial literature does exactly that: The sonic imagination foregrounds violence and makes it comprehensible on another level, it relates violence to an immediate, sensory experience, linking processes that cause harm with the perception and production of sound. In other cases, the literary staging of sound can obscure the occurrence of violence, making the effects of violence more unsettling, such as when sonic phenomena entirely replace other aspects of this violence, or sound even becomes a violent force in its own right.

Violence permeates the sonic imagination of all the analyzed texts: Literary sounds are entwined with different forms of violence, be it interpersonal, structural or epistemic. The literary means by which sound and violence become interconnected vary considerably and encompass narrative, rhetorical and thematic devices and structures which influence how violence is conveyed through a literary sound. An example of a staging of sound that omits many details of an act of violence is the

scene in Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* where Carl continues to have sex with Anna without her consent (cf. Rhys 2019 [1934]: 152). This incident is narrated with a great emphasis on sound, so much so that the act itself is obscured, while the sexual violence committed by Carl becomes noticeable through the literary sounds in the passage. Sound is staged here through direct discourse (when Anna asks Carl to stop and he mocks her) and the description of sonorous events, such as Carl laughing. Moreover, as a narrative framing device, Anna's memory of the incident is triggered by her perception of the sound of a ticking clock. The event also reiterates the novel's theme of women's voices not being taken seriously. A similar narrative strategy is applied in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which also uses a homodiegetic first-person narrator. Since the Magistrate is not allowed to be present during the interrogation of the prisoners, the extreme physical violence of torture is circumvented by letting their screams be the only indication of what is happening inside the prison cell (cf. Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 5). Literary sounds act as a proxy for the direct presentation of violence in this instance. Frankétienne's novel *Les affres d'un défi* takes an entirely different approach to conveying violence through sound: The highly figurative style is used to make the epistemic violence of the process of silencing experienced by Saintil's subjects less abstract and more graphic. Through rhetorical transformations, sound itself is given unusual properties enabling it to be affected by violence and destruction. The connection between sound and violence is thus much more palpable in this text. In Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*, the contrasts between literary sounds correspond to the thematic development of Soviet oppression in the novel. Consequently, the menacing sonic qualities of the train and other literary sounds are reminiscent of the structural violence that is one of the central elements of *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. These examples from the case studies illustrate the diverse literary means used to convey violence through sound in postcolonial prose fiction.

Due to the different notions of violence and the multifarious ways in which they are rendered through literary sounds, sound and violence enter into varying semiotic relationships. Analyzing the semiotic relation between a literary sound and violence as its object uncovers different layers of the political significance of sound in a particular text. The two entities can be connected either vaguely, or more directly, depending on the literary means used to establish this connection. Differentiating between the types of semiotic relationships, therefore, demonstrates how literary sounds become signs for violence in postcolonial prose fiction. First, literary sounds can be a direct result of violence, which makes them indexical signs in relation to violence. Examples from the corpus include the screams of the tortured prisoners in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (which is further underscored by expressions

such as "sounds of violence", Coetzee 2000 [1980]: 23–24), the gun sounds at the beginning of *Life & Times of Michael K* (cf. Coetzee 2004 [1983]: 11–12) and the suffocating cries of animals in *Les affres d'un défi* (cf. Frankétienne 2000 [1979]: 89). Second, when literary sounds themselves display violent characteristics (either as carriers or targets of violence), they become iconic signs of violence. The figurative imagining of speech in Frankétienne's text is an example of this, as well as K's silence towards the end of *Life & Times of Michael K* and Hester's voice in *Voyage in the Dark*. Third, as symbolic signs, literary sounds are associated with violence through an idea (or a set of ideas). When a sound is symbolic of violence it requires an interpretation that identifies this connection based on parallels between how the sound is staged and separate manifestations of violence. So a symbolic connection is different from an index or an icon because it does not rely on a causal relationship or a similarity of properties between sound and violence. This type of semiotic relation is most notable in the sounds of the train in *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'* and the noise of the military convoy in *Life & Times of Michael K*.

The categorization of these literary sounds does not determine their semiotic properties in absolute terms. Rather, the analysis observes certain semiotic tendencies in relation to a specific form of violence. Liszka remarks that Peirce's classification should not be considered "as distinct types of signs but the manner in which a sign can be abstracted, emphasized, or perspectivized for certain purposes" (1996: 47). Therefore, to a certain extent, the other types of signs also play a role in how a literary sound conveys violence, even if it is less evident. Likewise, in each case, another form of violence is potentially also important, but not as apparent within the staging of sound: For example, the interpersonal violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* also involves structural violence on a different level due to the imperialistic nature of the conflict in the novel. The semiotic analyses in the case studies merely determine the most dominant form of violence conveyed by a literary sound.

Far from being neutral sensory phenomena or simple descriptive embellishments within the story, literary sounds are complex and significant elements of the analyzed text which, by conveying violence, generate political meaning. They reinforce the central conflicts of each novel and introduce new motifs that highlight a specific political configuration. The idea of sound lends itself to dealing with political themes and topics because it can be such a visceral experience that is hard to escape, while also being constitutive of how one perceives the world: "Klänge tragen [...] Bedeutungen – vermutlich mit die machtvollsten, die durch Mark und Bein gehen" (Schulze 2012: 4). Sound is inescapable because one cannot choose not to hear as freely and reliably as one chooses not to see by simply closing one's eyes. The equivalent of eliminating all auditory stimuli can only be achieved through additional tools and instruments, and even then it is difficult to be entirely cut off from

the auditory environment. This is also the reason why music has been increasingly used as a means of torture in recent times (cf. Suisman 2010: 1–2). The postcolonial aural sensitivity is very aware of the intrusive force of sound and how it pervades everything, presenting it almost as a sensory metaphor for power. Sound functions here not just as a side effect of more tangible phenomena, rather it creates its own dynamic, which can dominate or subvert social and political structures. Schafer expresses a related thought about the influence of sound not necessarily being dependent on its source:

> *[N]oise is so important as an attention-getter that if quiet machinery could have been developed, the success of industrialization might not have been so total. For emphasis let us put this more dramatically: if cannons had been silent, they would never have been used in warfare. (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 77–78)*

While Schafer's statement is undoubtedly exaggerated, he makes an insightful point about the impact of sound that goes beyond what the intended use of its original source might have been, establishing domination on a sonic level as well. It is for this reason that the sonic imaginations of the discussed texts attribute so much significance not only to the sounds of noisy machines, but also to the violent dimension of the human voice and even of silence. The sonic imagination of postcolonial texts articulates very clearly that "sound has power and is woven into a host of other social, political, and economic power relations" (Suisman 2010: 3).

4.2 Towards a postcolonial literary sound studies

The present book has been able to provide only a small insight into the sonic imagination of postcolonial prose fiction. The examples in the corpus can be seen merely as part of a broader consideration of how sound and empire are entwined in literary text, and only through further research would it be possible to develop a more comprehensive perspective on the significance of sonic phenomena within postcolonial literature on a global scale: To approximate what the postcolonial sonic imagination and its characteristics are would only be possible by examining the literary sounds in texts by other postcolonial authors from different linguistic and cultural contexts. A more systematic study of the postcolonial sonic imagination would also need to pay closer attention to other aspects of literary sounds besides their role as signs of violence: As the case studies have shown, sound also has very positive connotations in the texts, such as the musical performance by Erlepes in Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlitsya den'*. Sound is staged in these instances as a phenomenon that makes tangible alternative orders of sonic knowledge that are able to withstand oppressive sonic regimes. Literary sounds in postcolonial literature,

therefore, are not limited to their destructive or harmful quality, and the full extent of their significatory potential remains to be studied in more detail.

Rediscovering the various functions of sound itself (apart especially from musical sound, the research of which is proliferating within ethnomusicology) is of particular interest in postcolonial contexts because within Western thought the auditory has been associated for a long time with 'primitivity' and contrasted with vision, as the assumed primary sensory mode of modernity, thereby also furthering preconceived notions about cultural difference (cf. Sterne 2012: 9–10). Steingo/Sykes likewise affirm that "[a]s negative figures of their respective binary relations, sound and the [global] South historically have been positioned as resistant to analysis" (2019b: 2). This traditional view has undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the study of sound cultures still remains largely Western-centric, which is also reflected in literary studies.

Literary sound studies can contribute to the research of postcolonial sound cultures by considering past and current notions of sound in conjunction with postcoloniality through the lens of literature. Literary sound studies are still a relatively unexplored field, but as an analytical framework situated between culture studies-informed sound studies and literary studies (cf. Mieszkowski 2014: 9), it has the potential to widen the scope of the scholarly research on sound and be part in the greater goal of "exploring the specific social and cultural functions of sound in a particular time and space, across different media formats, production environments and listening habits" (Maier 2016: 179). In advancing literary sound studies, it is important to consider not just the role of sound in canonized literature of the West, but also other "sonic ontologies [...] that cumulatively make up core components of the history of sound in global modernity" (Steingo/Sykes 2019b: 4). The sonic configurations of power shown in postcolonial literature confront the ways colonial and imperial orders are upheld through specific auditory environments and modes of producing and perceiving sound, which is also of particular interest for postcolonial studies.

The definition of literary sounds as intermodal references can be used to unite similar research interests in sound within literary studies, as it is a concept which clearly delineates an object of investigation that differs from the research on audible features of literature (e.g. in audio books or other genres of performed literature). The literary sonic imagination is not just the formative principle behind the staging of sound in texts, it also links fiction to sound culture at large and introduces new possibilities of thinking about and interacting with sound: "[S]onic imaginations rework culture through the development of new narratives, new histories, new technologies, and new alternatives" (Sterne 2012: 6). Within literary texts, the

creative potential of the sonic imagination stems from the distance to 'real', audible sounds, generating new ways of engaging with and expanding sonic knowledge.

Focusing on the sonic imagination also offers new ways of analyzing political constellations in literary fiction. The semiotic analysis of the relationship between sound and violence can also be applied to other texts that do not necessarily have a postcolonial background, in order to determine the interfaces between sonic and political phenomena in literature, such as oppression and resistance, in more precise terms. This approach accounts for the ever-growing politicization of sound and directs further attention to contested areas of sound culture.

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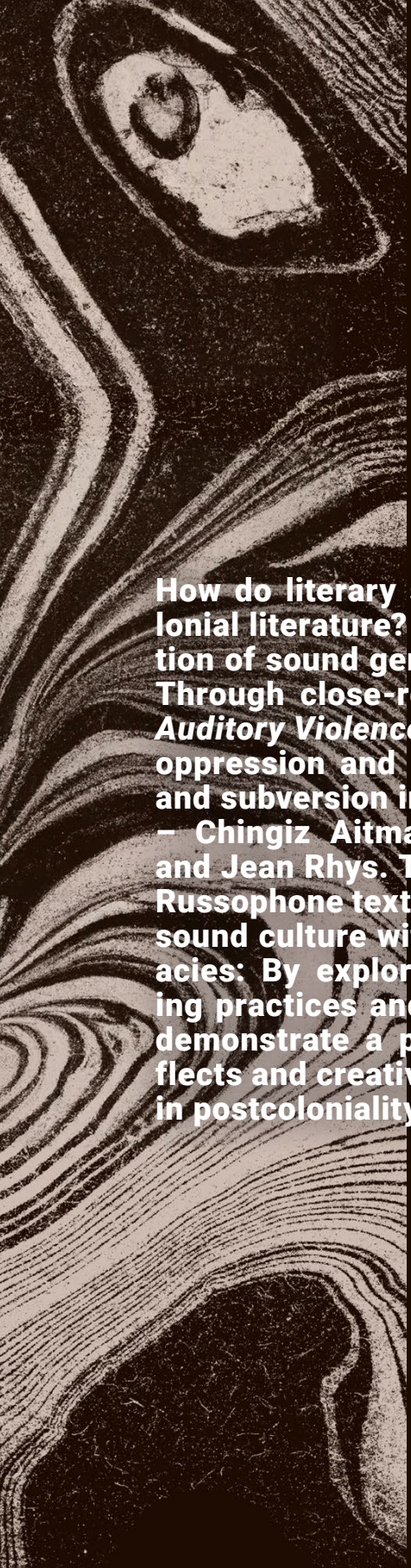

How do literary sounds convey violence in postcolonial literature? And how does the literary imagination of sound generate meaning on a political level? Through close-readings and comparative analyses *Auditory Violence* examines sonic manifestations of oppression and domination, but also of resistance and subversion in postcolonial texts by four authors – Chingiz Aitmatov, J. M. Coetzee, Frankétienne and Jean Rhys. Their Anglophone, Francophone and Russophone texts problematize the entanglement of sound culture with imperial orders and colonial legacies: By exploring auditory environments, listening practices and modes of sound production, they demonstrate a particular aural sensitivity that reflects and creatively expands sonic knowledge within postcoloniality and beyond.