## Digitizing the Sound Explo sions of Anglophone Caribbean Performance Poetry

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The Internet offers new performance platforms for Caribbeanpoets who prioritize oral expression. One group realizing this potential is the youthled artist collective The Cents Movement, based out of Trinidad and Tobago, who circulate their video poems on social networking sites. Through their DIY approach, they are building a broader youth audience for their work. More generally, Caribbean poets are often underrepresented in online poetry resources, particularly in institutionbased Internet audio archives. This article uses The Cents Movement as a preliminary model to un derstand how Internet audio archives can be redesigned to amplify the total expression of Caribbean poetry. Admit tedly, The Cents Movement offers a partial solution to a much bigger problem however, this article demonstrates the value of examining poets engagements with digital technolo gies to develop better archival standards and practices in sync with the politics of the work.

### Introduction

If Louise Bennett, the prolific Jamaican artist, were still alive and performing today, how would the Internet fit into her cre ative practice Would she post poetry recordings on Facebook Would children play with a Miss Lou app Would Aunty Roachy deliver wisdom via Twitter Since she embraced emerging tech nologies to teach her audience about the value of the Jamaican language, social media likely would have played a prominent role in her education activism. She turned to performance early in her career to build an inclusive audience, and her media projects for the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporationher childrens televi sion show Ring Ding and her radio program Miss Lous Views gave her an expanded terrain to develop her callandresponse po etics. Unfortunately, searching for Louise Bennett online today yields few actual sound recordings of her poetry. Bennetts under representation onlineor, more aptly, her silence, since her words can be found but rarely her voiceis characteristic of Caribbean po etry more generally. This article stems from concern about who has the power to define poetry in virtual spaces and whose voices receive airtime. As Kamau Brathwaite establishes in his ground breaking lecture History of the Voice, Anglophone Caribbean po etry should be celebrated for its sound explosions, yet it has re mained relatively quiet online.

Internet audio archives for poetry have flourished in recent years. Websites such as PennSound, The Poetry Archive, the Po etry Foundation, the Academy of American Poets, and UbuWeb have provided excellent resources for contemporary poetics. These twentyfirstcentury openaccess collections offer both live and stu dio recordings, roundtable discussions of poetry, lectures, and taped interviews. While these digital platforms promise democra tization, they often repeat the exclusions of print archives. Many of these collections, which now determine the content of poetry syllabi in university classrooms, reinforce the United States as the dominant center of Anglophone poetry in the Americas.http/ /www.upenn.edu/pennnews/news/pennsoundtransformshowpoetrytaughtworldover. For example, the Poetry Foundation has, author pages, almost half of which are devoted to US poets. The site features only eleven poets from the Caribbean region, excluding many major voices from the region, including Louise Bennett. Of the eleven Caribbean poet pages, none include audio poems and only seven of them include actual poetry texts the other four just feature short author bios. Not only are Caribbean poets underrepresented in these curated collections but their on line presence is often sparse, limited to random YouTube videos.

 $Edward\ Kamau\ Brathwaite, History\ of\ the\ Voice\ The\ Development\ of\ Nation\\ Language\ in\ Anglophone\ Caribbean\ Poetry\ London\ New\ Beacon\ Books,\ ,\ .\\ See\ PennSound\ Transforms\ How\ Poetry\ Is\ Taught\ the\ World\ Over,\ Penn\ News,\ June\ ,$ 

For a discussion of race in digital canons, see Amy E. Earhart, Can Informa tion be Unfettered Race and the New Digital Humanities Canon, in Mathew

Despite their underrepresentation in webbased audio collections, many contemporary Caribbean performance poets have embraced digital technologies to build their audiences. These new digital poetries offer a solution to what Laurence A. Breiner has characterized as the halflife of Caribbean performance poems. According to him, readers unable to attend a poems live recitation are always at a disadvantage, because things like tone, gesture, and the poets relationship with her audience also determine mean ing. In terms of distribution, digitized poetry recordings, unhin dered by shipping fees and trade tariffs, surpass print books in their international portability, making them more accessible to Caribbean diasporic communities.



Figure Cents Movement Poet

This article examines one of the best examples of innovative dig ital poetry in the Caribbean the youthled artist collective The

K. Gold, ed., Debates in the Digital Humanities Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, , Open Access Edition, http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu. Earhart urges that we need to examine the canon that we, as digital humanists, are constructing, a canon that skews toward traditional texts and excludes crucial work by women, people of color, and the GLBTQ community.

 $Laurence\ A.\ Breiner, The\ HalfLife\ of\ Performance\ Poetry, Journal\ of\ West\\ Indian\ Literature\ ,\ no. \quad .$ 

Cents Movement, based out of Trinidad and Tobago, who use so cial networking sites to circulate their video poems. Students at the University of the Southern Caribbean started the movement in, and their activities have strengthened youth enthusiasm for spokenword poetry. Some of their activities include islandwide school tours, openmic nights, slam contests, television and radio  $broadcasts, video\ production\ of\ poems,\ and\ student\ poetry\ work$ shops. They present themselves as a movement to align their po etry with social change. Their digital recordings become modes of production, publication, distribution, preservation, and commu nity activism. Their populist approach builds on the vernacular pedagogical dynamics of performance established by figures like Louise Bennett. By using these technologies to integrate creative and political praxes, The Cents Movement realizes Brathwaites theory of nation language and his argument that sound repro duction technologies can be used to reinvigorate Afrocentric oral traditions.

Brathwaite identifies how nation language poets challenge the way that paper records were used to discredit oral ways of know ing and uphold institutional power during colonization. When a  $dub\ poet\ like\ Linton\ Kwesi\ Johnson\ recites\ definitive\ works\ such$ as Reggae Sounds, lines such as footdrop find drum, blood story  $/\ bass\ history\ is\ a\ moving\ /\ is\ a\ hurting\ black\ story\ attack\ print$ centric forms of knowledge. He builds on a history of Caribbean people using performance to circumvent the print archive to pro duce, record, and transmit knowledge through embodied acts. Such knowledge depends on the interaction between the performerand her audience. The format of Bennetts Ring Ding, where she would invite children from the studio audience to join her on stage to recite poetry with her, exemplifies this well. Such communal pedagogies also extend to adult audiences. For exam ple, Oku Onuora defines the goal of dub poetry as consciousness raising It also mean to dub out the isms and schisms and to dub consciousness into the peopledem head. Performance creates

Brathwaite, History of the Voice, .

 $Linton\ Kwesi\ Johnson, Mi\ Revalueshanary\ Fren\ Keene,\ NY\ Ausable\ Press,\ ,$ 

Here I draw on Diana Taylors analysis of what she calls the repertoire to char acterize how performance acts create cultural memory in the Americas. See Diana Taylor, The Archive and the Repertoire Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas Durham, NC Duke University Press, .

 $Quoted\ in\ Mervyn\ Morris,\ Is\ English\ We\ Speaking\ and\ Other\ Essays\ Kingston\ Ian\ Randle\ Publishers,\ ,\ .$ 

 $what \ Brathwaite\ characterizes\ as\ total\ expression,\ engendering\ a$   $space\ for\ collective,\ politicized\ vernacular\ consciousness\ to\ take$  shape

The other thing about nation language is that it is part of what may be called total expression. . . . Reading is an isolated, individ valistic expression. The oral tradition on the other hand demands not only the griot but the audience to complete the community the noise and sounds that the maker makes are responded to by the audience and are returned to him. Hence we have the creation of a continuum where meaning truly resides.

Although Brathwaite seems to be arguing here that the full experience of the sonic continuum depends on live interaction, he actually emphasizes the opposite. A central point of his text, originally titled an electronic lecture for his Harvard presenta tion, harnesses the potential of sound reproduction technologies to create new pathways for total expression. For him, they inten sify the detonations within Caribbean soundpoetry that have im ploded us into new shapes and consciousness of ourselves. Brath waites combustion metaphors of detonations and explosions re veal his prioritizing of electronic sound. As Jonathan Sterne establishes, All soundreproduction technologies work through the use of transducers that convert acoustic waves into electronic impulses. Brathwaite suggests that these energy conversions am plify total expression rather than weaken it, which The Cents Movement substantiates.

So much scholarship focuses on written documents and tech niques from the past, yet many digital humanists are early adopters. They embrace the unfinished, they invite collaboration, they move us off the page, and they aim to build things for the future. In spired by this approach, this article uses The Cents Movement as a preliminary model to understand how Internet audio archives can be redesigned to amplify the total expression of Caribbean poetry. Admittedly, The Cents Movement offers an incomplete solution to a much larger problem however, I argue that we need to begin by examining poets engagements with digital technolo gies to develop better archival standards and practices in sync with the politics of the work. In this collaborative spirit, I also invite readers to click on the links as they read this article, to

Brathwaite, History of the Voice, italics in original. Ibid., .

Jonathan Sterne, The Audible Past Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction Durham, NC Duke University Press, , .

immerse themselves in whats already online, and to think about how we can build on this virtual world of Caribbean poetics.

Part of what makes Brathwaites History of the Voice an im portant catalyst for building digital archives is that he avoids the tendency in oral scholarship to fixate on the live event. For exam ple, Hugh Hodges stresses the difficulty of studying performance poetry, lamenting that we typically examine only the textualized trace of it. He considers sound and video recordings as texts, be cause he argues that the total expression of the live event does not get captured on them. Similarly, Peggy Phelan claims that what she calls liveness disappears in recordings of a performance. As Sterne puts it, this attitude upholds facetoface communica tion and bodily presence as the yardsticks by which to measure all communicative activity and defines sound reproduction neg atively, as negating or modifying an undamaged interpersonal or facetoface copresence. Brathwaite takes a more innovative approach to sound reproduction technologies by highlighting their capacity to challenge printcentric aesthetics. The Cents Move ment demonstrates how digital technologies provide even more  $opportunities\ for\ this\ through\ their\ use\ of\ music\ videography$ and microblogging. However, what Brathwaite envisioned over years ago through resonating tapes, eight tracks, and LPs has yet to be fully realized in the broader terrain of our research methodologies and poetry resources.

Critical approaches to performance poetry have been slow to develop because of the Western assumption that the text of a poem that is, the written document is primary and that the recitation or performance of a poem by the poet is secondary and fundamen tally inconsequential to the poem itself. While the digital should free us from our obsession with a textbased idiom in literary

Hugh Hodges, Poetry and Overturned Cars Why Performance Poetry Cant Be Studied, and Why We Should Study It Anyway, in Susan Gingell and Wendy Roy, eds., Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond Interfaces of the Oral, Written, and Visual Waterloo, ON Wilfrid Laurier University Press,,. As Phelan describes, Performances only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the cir culation of representations of representations once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. Peggy Phelan, Unmarked The Politics of Performance New York Routledge,,.

 $Sterne, The \ Audible \ Past,$  .

Brathwaite, History of the Voice, .

Charles Bernstein, ed., Close Listening Poetry and the Performed Word New York Oxford University Press, , .

studies, it has yet to do so.http//www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/// .html. As this article demonstrates, even the designs of most online poetry audio collections still privilege the methodology of textual close reading rather than encourage us to develop new soundbased methods of analysis. In a similar vein, recent efforts to build Caribbean digital archives have focused on converting print documents and have not engaged as much with sound media. Resources and funding certainly drive this, since print materials are easier and cheaper to digitize. Yet given the oral dimensions of Caribbean cultures, we must address how to represent and archive performance to overcome the structural biases of print archives.

## $\begin{array}{c} Creating\ Digital\ Griots\ The\ Cents\ Move\\ ment \end{array}$

Scrolling through The Cents Movements Facebook page reveals a vibrant online poetry community. As of December, they have more than, followers, and their page includes announcements about upcoming performances, photographs of performances, political news updates, links to livestream their events, and video poems. Its campus origins explain why Facebook, a social net working site designed for college students, has played a central role in the development of the movement. The founder, Jean Claude Cournand, an undergraduate at the time, sought to build a stronger intellectual youth cultureto invite youth to put in their two cents by expressing their views on current issues ranging from marijuana legislation to homophobia through spokenword poetry. In an interview, he explained that they chose to go into the digital habitat rather than trying to reach people through events

For a discussion about the neglect of sound analysis in digital literary studies, see Tanya Clement, David Tcheng, Loretta Auvil, Boris Capitanu, and Megan Monroe, Sounding for Meaning Using Theories of Knowledge Representation to Analyze Aural Patterns in Texts, Digital Humanities Quarterly, no., Although I do not have the space in this article to explore their work, study ing the standards and practices developed by music historians for online col

ing the standards and practices developed by music historians for online collections such as the Naxos Music Library would be another fruitful line of inquiry to help literary scholars move beyond textbased approaches.

While there are Caribbean sound archives, such as RadioHaiti, in Caribbean literary studies print archiving is much more prevalent. For example, ma jor collections, such as the Digital Library of the Caribbean, while excellent, primarily hold literary materials converted from print documents.



Figure Audience Interaction

alone, in order to attract a youth audience.http//www.guardian.co  $.tt/entertainment//notafraidput their quote\ cents.\ Their\ best known$ projects are the Intercol and Verses national slam competitions, held annually as part of the Bocas Lit Festival Verses was re cently renamed the First Citizens National Poetry Slam. The two different slamsIntercol features high school teams, and Verses features prominent poets who compete individually reflect their mentorship structure. The winner of the Intercol slam, Michael Logie, got to pick a Cents Movement poet as a mentor to work with him for a year to help him develop his poetry.http//www . guardian. co.tt/lifestyle//logietopsschoolsspoken word quote~intercol.The Cents Movement has also collaborated with the Trinidad and Tobago Radio Network on the Free Speech Project, where young artists recite their poems weekly on the radio. These po ems are also produced as videos and archived on the networks YouTube channel. The majority of the movements activities are coordinated and advertised online, and major events like the slam contests can be livestreamed. They exist solely through freely ac cessible sites and do not have their own server or domain name,

Quoted in Bobielee Dixon, Not afraid to put in their cents, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, July,

 $<sup>\</sup>label{logical_logical} \textit{Logie Tops Schools Spoken Word Intercol}, \textit{Trinidad and Tobago Guardian}, \\ \textit{April} \; ,$ 

which suggests that a lack of resources does not need to be an obstacle to building an online presence for Caribbean poetry. In addition to reaching youth in Trinidad and Tobago, they have gained an international following by circulating their poetry on social media.

Their Twitter and Facebook updates for their Courts Bocas Speak Out Tour of more than fifty secondary schools demon strates their use of these platforms to enhance audience inter action. During this tour, some of the nations best performance poets mentored high school students as they wrote and performed their own works through performances and workshops. These school visits provided a way for The Cents Movement to promote the Intercol slam competition. Photo livetweets of their tour performances often focused on the students actively participating in the audience rather than on the poet performing. In these shots, the camera points at the audience, often catching only the performers back or the corner of her shoulder.

The online viewer gets to stare out at the auditorium filled with students, which allows her to occupy the performers gaze but also view a students face as a mirror, inviting her to identify with both the performer and the audience. This elaborates on the pedagogy offered during the tour, where the poets performances provide students with a model for their own poetry aspirations. Visually, Twitter and Facebook followers become situated in the continuum of total expressionin the reciprocal exchange between performer and audience.

High school students who attended a Cents Movement performance at their own school could then follow them on Twitter and Facebook and connect these images to their own participation in the live event. The photos and the movement as a whole downplay individual author celebrity in favor of building a student focused collectivity. The Cents Movement uses Twitter and Facebook to create a constancy of presence to link together different high school communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Although these social media platforms governed by the commer cial needs of USbased multinationals certainly hold limitations, rhetoric scholar Kevin Adonis Browne stresses the possibility

See their Twitter page https://twitter.com/CentsMovement. See also their individual albums on their Facebook page, where some of their school tour photos are collected. For example, see the album Five Rivers Sec Speak Out Tour Day https://www.facebook.com/media/set/seta...type.

 $<sup>\</sup>label{lem:continuity} Dhiraj \, Murthy, Twitter \, Social \, Communication \, in \, the \, Twitter \, Age \, Cambridge, \\ UK \, Polity \, Press, \, , \, .$ 

#### Digitizing Sound Explosions

name: audience\_interaction1.jpg
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 $Figure \quad Audience \ interaction$ 



Figure Poet performer

 $for \ subversive \ adaptation. \ Examining \ Caribbean \ Internet \ users$ 

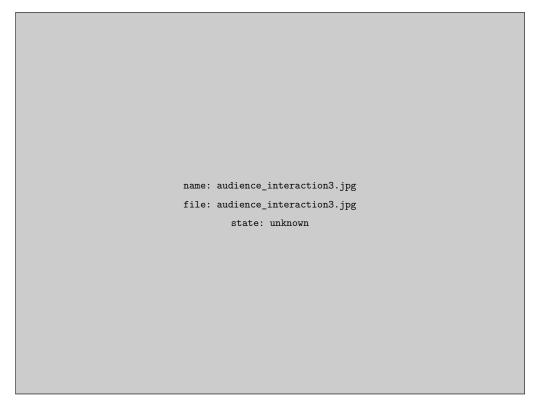


Figure Audience interaction

chatting, blogging, and videosharing practices, he illustrates how  $users\ adapt\ every day\ vernacular\ practices\ to\ assert\ their\ presence$ in digital public spaces that often render them invisible. While his argument relates to individuals everyday encounters online rather than largescale digital projects, the parallels he establishes between a carnivalesque imperative and the Internet lend insight into The Cents Movements adaptation of social media to expand on the power of total expression in online environments. Rather than view Caribbean folk cultures in opposition to digital forms, Browne views the inventiveness of both as part of what makes them compatible. He demonstrates how communal vernacular practices easily translate to an online environment because they emerge out of a history of adaptability necessary for those who have had to find a way or make one when none seemed avail able. For example, in the colonial era, musicians invented steel pan drumming to get around the ban on using actual drums and managed to make noise in a colonial environment that aimed

 $Kevin\ Adonis\ Browne, Tropic\ Tendencies\ Rhetoric, Popular\ Culture, and\ the\ Anglophone\ Caribbean\ Pittsburgh\ University\ of\ Pittsburgh\ Press,\ ,\ .$   $Ibid.,\ .$ 

to silence them. Corporate social media platforms also curtail creative expression through their circumscribed structures. Such restrictions often reinforce the majority voice, yet Facebook and Twitter have also proven themselves useful for the growth of subcultures and movements.

Media scholars have identified how Facebooks interface en courages users to adopt neoliberal values. The anthropologist Alex Fattal draws a connection between a users desire to gain as many likes and friends as possible and Facebooks corporate desire to become the most dominant social network in the world, characterizing this as the unspoken logic of accumulation and curiosity that undergirds the platform. To what extent can this logic of accumulation and curiosity, which sounds eerily similar to older imperial impulses, be disrupted By using social media to augment their performance events, The Cents Movement in tercepts this logic of accumulation by bringing users into the dynamic of total expression. While scholars often critique Face book for weakening facetoface sociality, The Cents Movement reveals how it can be used to deepen social connections.

Through social media, they also make their performances part of everyday life. People browse Facebook as they ride the bus to work, or as they wait in line at the grocery store. The Cents Move ment often depicts the performance dynamics of such quotidian spaces in their studioproduced video poems available on YouTube. For example, their most popular video poem Maxi Man Tracking School Gyal originally titled Yankees Gone, by Crystal Skeete, takes place on a Curepe street and on a bus. Skeete addresses her concern about adult males sexually preying on underage school girls by writing a poem in the voice of a teenage girl who refuses their advances. Similar to earlier women poets like Miss Lou and Jean Binta Breeze, she uses the dramatic monologue to give voice to women who are denied respect in the public sphere. Through  $social\ media\ her\ video\ becomes\ even\ more\ impact\ ful\ because\ a$ viewer might be in that particular social space as she watches the poem and even be witnessing what Skeete describes. This re stores an important aspect of Caribbean oral traditions, where

Alex Fattal, Facebook Corporate Hackers, a Billion Users, and the GeoPolitics of the Social Graph, Anthropological Quarterly, no. See also Ilana Ger shon, UnFriend My Heart Facebook, Promiscuity, and Heartbreak in a Neolib eral Age, Anthropological Quarterly, no.

For a critique of Facebook as a community building form, see Jos Marichal, Facebook Democracy The Architecture of Disclosure and the Threat to Public Life Abingdon, Oxon, UK Ashgate, .

yard performances blend into everyday practices rather than be come isolated special events. Miss Lou had a similar aim in her market women poems, yet her ability to connect her audience to her settings was often restrained by the artifice of the theater stage. By creating a tangible bond between their reallife users and the mediated voices in their poems, The Cents Movement invites users to do more than merely like their status updates and continue scrolling.



Figure Embedded video. Youtube url https://youtu.be/OAeLoPylU

In addition to microblogging their performances, The Cents Move ments video poems, like Skeetes Maxi Man, demonstrate how au diovisual recording technologies can be used to enhance the com munal dynamic of total expression. Their videos challenge the idea that poetry depends on print publication, since many of their wellknown poems are available only in this format. By getting us off the page, their videography expands the possibilities for how we might edit and archive performance poetry. Released in, Skeetes video went viral on social media and received more than, views on YouTube. Her poem exemplifies the Cents Movements approach, in that she initially attended one of their workshops as a medical student and she is now a leading poet in the movement. She won the Verses poetry slam with her performance of this poem however, the popular version on The Cents Movements

Crystal Skeete, Maxi Man Tracking School Gyal, YouTube video, ., posted by The Cents Movement, June, https://www.youtube.com/watchvOAeLoPylU.

YouTube channel is a studio recording made by BeatOven Productions with videography by Denithy. Rather than aim to recreate the experience of the live performance event, the video invites a viewer to feel included in the street scene being depicted. Through their synthesis of the dramatic monologue form and the music video genre, Skeete and the Cents Movement team cultivate a sense of audience connection and encourage dialogue beyond the space of the poem.



Figure Maxi man cast

Skeete dresses in a government school uniform to play her char acter in the video. Her embodiment of the character creates a dialogic relationship between her persona and her words because her recitation critiques the behavior that she acts out. The dra matic monologues implied addressee is another high school girl who is swayed by a maxi mans advances. The speaker warns her that these free rides are going to end in horror / trust me / with that ninemonth sentence things does go sour. Skeetes conversa tional style, enhanced by the video editing and camera angles, encourage the viewer to feel as though Skeete is speaking directly to her. Standing in the middle of the street, Skeete begins with the lines, Posing on every street corner / this is the resurrection

Skeete, Maxi Man hereafter cited in text. Since I transcribed the quotations from a recording, any inaccuracies are mine.

of Jean and Dinah... No Yankees here / only maxi man conductor. Referencing Mighty Sparrows calypso hit Jean and Dinah, about how the presence of a World War II US army base led to prostitution in Trinidad, she draws attention to how girls getting free bus rides from maxi men for sexual favors recreates a similar dynamic. Through an intergenerational call and response, she situates her poem in the Trinidadian oral tradition. Skeetes poem exemplifies how The Cents Movement aims to cultivate a socially conscious form of learning that values vernacular language and knowledge.

Similar to music videos, Skeetes recitation alternates between a voiceover and her character speaking onscreen. By playing with the boundaries between diegetic and nondiegetic sound, the edit ing capitalizes on sounds permeability, encouraging her virtual audience to feel a closer connection to her words. Skeetes voice extends beyond the boundaries of the video and infiltrates the listening space, collapsing the distance between the onscreen per formance and the audiences experience of it, especially if they happen to be in a similar setting.

In the narrative that unfolds, the camera angles accentuate  $Skeetes\ embodied\ performance.\ While\ conventional\ music\ videos$ often sexually objectify womens bodies, the jump cuts between medium shots, medium long shots, and closeups often from a slight low angle emphasize Skeetes power as she dramatizes her characters selfactualization and encourages other girls to do the same. Skeetes words combined with the camera work challenge the male gaze to create a virtual space of female community. This reaches its peak when the speaker sits in the back of the van reciting her critique and a reverse shot depicts the maxi man gaz ing at her in the rearview mirror. His gaze is literally reflected  $back\ at\ him, while\ the\ speaker\ verbally\ refuses\ his\ objectification.$ In the middle of the van, a girl flirts with another maxi man. Throughout the poem, the speaker seems to completely condemn this behavior however, the poem ends with a surprise twist. As she gets out of the maxi mans van, she tells the audience, This brownskinned gyal / going home and mind she child, indicating that her advice is based on her own mistakes with a maxi man Skeete. This surprise ending builds the speakers authority not by separating her from her community but by underscoring her participation in it and encourages schoolgirls watching the poem to trust her advice.

In the live performance of Maxi Man Tracking School Gyal, Skeetes critique of sexual harassment is likely powerful however, the video format allows a viewer to experience with greater clarity the embodied experience of resisting sexual harassment on the street. For female viewers who went through something similar, the recreation of the scene and its provocative ending deepens their identification with the speaker. Like a griot, Skeete speaks for a community of young girls, or rather speaks with them, as her performance encourages them to bring their experiences into their interpretation of the poem.

Unlike many poetry recordings available online, which are taped at live events, The Cents Movement engages technologies as part of the artistic composition of the poem through their studioproduced poems. By borrowing from music videography, they invite us to see performance archives as something more expansive than as a place to simply store copies of original live events. This moves us move beyond what Sterne characterizes as the preoccupation with fidelity, which advertisers established early on in sound reproduction history. Sterne reveals how sound fidelity is a story that we tell ourselves to staple separate sonic realities together. It maintains the illusion of reproduced sound as a mediation of live sounds however, the medium does not nec essarily mediate, authenticate, dilute, or extend a preexisting social relation. Rather than only view an archive as a space to preserve former instances of total expression, we should also view them as an opportunity to engender new forms of it. Rather than use recording technologies to recover or preserve a lost his tory of the voice, they can be used to actively construct a history of the voiceto create a sonic reality where new social relations can take shape.

# $Redesigning\ Internet\ Audio\ Archives\ for\ Caribbean\ Poetry$

The Cents Movements DIY approach to digitizing poetry illus trates that a lot can be accomplished by adapting existing plat forms and with limited resources however, the underrepresenta tion of Caribbean poetry online will not be solved solely through social media and the free culture of the Internet. Merely up loading more poems to YouTube will not be enough to overcome the structural biases that silence and drown out Caribbean per formance poetry online. As Rick Prelinger establishes, YouTube has become in the eyes of the public, the default online moving image archive. Yet it lacks many of the defining characteristics of archives that make them valuable, such as a focus on longterm

preservation and strictly codified lines of conduct that have been carefully developed through academic practice and intellectual debate. The underrepresentation of Caribbean poetry in Internet audio archives is also symptomatic of the global digital divide, which is especially acute for Africadescended populations. How ever, Curwen Best points out that the flip side to the notion of the digital divide is therefore the formation of strategic space. It is this strategic space that opens up an area and arena of knowledge about evolving technologies. To take advantage of this strategic space, this section of the article evaluates the standards and practices that have been established by existing Internet audio archives and considers how a Caribbean poetry collection could be organized to realize total expression.

 $A\ discussion\ about\ archiving\ poetry\ recordings\ would\ be\ incom$ plete without a consideration of the achievements of PennSound. As the leading US collection, it has quickly become the standard for how to create a webbased poetry audio archive. University of Pennsylvania professors Charles Bernstein and Al Filreis started the collection in primarily for classroom use. It holds over, poetry recordings available for free streaming and down load. Their files are downloaded roughly four million times a month.http//www.upenn.edu/pennnews/current//features/pennsrichpoetrylegacy. For poetry, this number is astounding when one considers the limited print runs and book sales for contempo rary poetry. Although US poets and avantgarde aesthetics tend to predominate, the site includes author pages for some prominent Caribbean poets, including Brathwaite, and M. NourbeSe Philip. They also hold some of the few Bennett recordings available on line. The site uses the following archival taxonomies authors,

Rick Prelinger, The Appearance of Archives, in Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, eds., The YouTube Reader Stockholm National Library of Sweden,

Frank Kessler and Mirko Tobias Schfer, Navigating YouTube Constituting a Hybrid Information Management System, in Snickars and Vonderau, The YouTube Reader, .

Mary F. E. Ebeling, The New Dawn Black Agency in Cyberspace, Radical His tory Review Fall . For a discussion of the global digital divide, see Pippa Norris, Digital Divide Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the In ternet Worldwide New York Cambridge University Press, .

 $Curwen\ Best, The\ Politics\ of\ Caribbean\ Cyberculture\ New\ York\ Palgrave\ Macmillan,\ ,\ .$ 

Tanya Barrientos, Penns Rich Poetry Legacy, Penn Current, May,

series, anthologies, collections, groups, and classics, which pro vide the user with a variety of ways to study a poets work. The PennSound Manifesto is worth examining because it has set the precedent for subsequent Internet poetry collections. They pro vide the following criteria for poetry audio It must be free and downloadable It must be MP or better It must be singles It must be named It must embed bibliographic information in the file and It must be indexed.http//writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/manifesto.php. These criteria have proved successful in terms of encouraging widespread use, particularly on college campuses. They archive each poem individually rather than entire events, because this makes them easier to find, access, and download, and it allows listeners to create their own playlists. In their own words, they adapt a consumeroriented MP file exchange approach for a nonprofit library. By embedding bibliographic information in the file and naming each one, they uphold archival standards and ensure that future researchers will have access to informa tion about the context for the recording, something a social media platform like YouTube does not always provide. Their straightfor ward interface, which lets users select from an alphabetized list of authors, also erases implicit hierarchies that come from the  $emphasis\ on\ accumulation\ in\ social\ media\ sites\ where\ voices\ are$ forced to compete with each other for likes and views.

While Penn Sounds open access model holds a lot of poten tial for Caribbean performance poetry, their prioritizing of free resources may not be as easy to achieve for Caribbean poetry. An extreme example of this free culture ethos is represented by Kenneth Goldsmith, the founder of UBUweb, who for awhile maintained a page on the site called the Wall of Shame, where he would publically condemn any artist who asked for her work to be removed from the site by writing her name on the wall. Unlike Goldsmith, PennSound strives to ensure that all of their recordings are cleared for copyright to be distributed free for noncommercial and educational purposes. While this democratic and anticapitalistic approach may seem appealing for Caribbean poetry, in practice it may be more difficult to implement, particularly for poets who view performance as a central part of their artistic production. In the manifesto, Bernstein states that the

 $Charles\ Bernstein,\ PennSound\ Manifesto,\ PennSound,\ ,$  Ibid.

Astra Taylor, The Peoples Platform Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age New York Picador, , .

Bernstein, PennSound Manifesto.

debates about file sharing in the music industry do not apply to poetry One of the advantages of working with poetry sound files is that we dont anticipate a problem with rights. At present and in the conceivable future, there is no profit to be gained by the sale of recorded poetry. Yet Caribbean poets such as Mutabaruka and Linton Kwesi Johnson built their careers through their affil iation with the reggae recording industry and make money off of their albums. The Cents Movement offers their recordings for free however, as a group of younger poets, they may be more willing to share their work online to build their reputation.

The subject of copyright and fair use for Caribbean perfor mance poetry is a complex issue, which deserves its own treat ment in a separate article. In terms of the current discussion, it offers another example of the persistence of printcentrism in poetry scholarship. The emphasis on free recordings implicitly upholds the idea that the artistic labor of poetry is more worthy of payment when it is printbased. Moreover, it demonstrates how we define poems as texts rather than as performances. The Poetry Foundations Code for Best Practices in Fair Use For Po etry underscores this point. A group of poets, editors, and pub lishers met at the Poetry Foundations Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute and collaborated with American Universitys Center for Social Media and its Washington College of Law in to create the guide. Although they outline their purpose as identifying obsta cles preventing poetry from coming fully into new media and, where possible, imagining how to remove or mitigate these obsta cles, almost none of their examples involve poetry audio. Yet for Caribbean poets a major stumbling block to coming fully into new media is a clear set of fair use practices for performancebased work. In the Poetry Online section, their examples pertain to the appearance of text on websites. The document concludes with a section on Literary Performance however, it only addresses poets who incorporate poems by other artists into their readings. This document becomes completely irrelevant for groups like The Cents Movement who rarely produce text versions of their poems.

This printcentrism also extends to the design of audio collections. I agree with Kate Eichhorn, who argues that most poetry sound archives both digital and analog have yet to realize the potential of archiving sound due to the widely held assumption in literary studies that the archive is necessarily a space of writing

Ibid.

 $Code\ for\ Best\ Practices\ in\ Fair\ Use\ For\ Poetry\ Center\ for\ Social\ Media\ and\ the\ Poetry\ Foundation,\ , \verb|http://www.poetryfoundation.org/foundation/bestpractices.|$ 

and, hence, opposed to speech and other performative acts. Eich horn proposes that we need to create a sound archive designed to recover and preserve the embodied, interactive, and present na ture of the performed word. In her assessment, archived poetry recordings too often become flat and lifeless artifacts. Although Eichhorn focuses on avantgarde poets, her arguments apply to Caribbean poets who foreground sound as an integral part of the poems meaning. Such work accessible in an archive designed to disrupt our textbased conceptions of archival knowledge would undoubtedly lead us more assertively into other forms of knowing rather than allow the digital to reconsolidate print paradigms.

One notable exception to the underrepresentation of Anglo phone Caribbean poets in Internet audio collections is The Poetry Archive, supported by the Arts Council of England. This site features more Caribbean poets than most, because the Caribbean Poetry Projecta group of scholars and poets from the Cambridge University Faculty of Education, the Centre for Commonwealth Education, and the University of the West Indiescollaborated with The Poetry Archive to improve access. Out of poets, twenty three are from the Caribbean region. While this is not a huge percentage, it is considerably more than most sites, and every Caribbean poet page has sound recordings that can be streamed for free or downloaded for a fee of .. The Poetry Archive, like many Internet audio archives, specializes in classroom resources. They have a special page for teaching Caribbean poetry with a selection of sound recordings and A Guide to the Language of Caribbean Poetry. The Caribbean Poetry Projects work with The Poetry Archive demonstrates how crossdisciplinary and cross institutional collaborations help to break down Anglocentrism.

Yet analyzing the design of the Poetry Archive author pages re veals that we need to do more than add voices to existing archives. As Amy Earhart cautions, for digital recovery projects for writ ers of color to be successful, we also must theorize the technolog ical with the same rigor as we theorize the content. If one compares the recording of Linton Kwesi Johnson reciting Di Great Insohreckshan on The Poetry Archive with a YouTube recording of him performing it at an outdoor festival in Venezuela in , the total expression feels much more resonant in the YouTube

 $Kate\ Eichhorn,\ Past\ Performance,\ Present\ Dilemma\ A\ Poetics\ of\ Archiving\ Sound,\ Mosaic\quad.$ 

Ibid.,.

Ibid., .

version than on the Poetry Archive site. I make this comparison to illustrate how the design of the Poetry Archive page mutes the insurrectionary tone of Johnsons poem about the Brixton Riots, not to demonstrate that the YouTube platform is inherently better at representing total expression. Obviously, the YouTube video allows one to see Johnsons body and facial expressions, which one cannot get from the Poetry Archive audio recording, but it is not as simple as video versus audio. Although the sound quality lacks the clarity of the Poetry Archive recording, the un even audio levels provide a more authentic experience of what hearing this poem in a large crowd at an outdoor festival would have felt like. The spontaneity of live performances, includ ing sound glitches and background noises, becomes part of what Brathwaite characterizes as the sonority contrasts of total ex pression. As Eichhorn points out, these intruders are precisely what sound technicians often seek to filter out as they prepare recordings for the archive. The Poetry Archive version of Di Great Insohreckshan follows the predominant soundediting style for Internet audio archives. Martin Spinelli describes this style as the seamless edit, designed to highlight the poets voice and minimize all other distractions, including the recording scene whether live or instudio and the material elements of their pro duction.http//www.ubu.com/papers/object/spinelli.pdf. Spinelli criticizes poetry sound editing for being too influenced by traditional re

quotation the seamless, invisible, inaudible edit which dislodges nothing, which interrupts nothing, which is in fact deployed to remove interruption, to remove digression and to clarify.

In addition to using conventional soundediting, Johnsons au thor page follows the standard visual design that can be found on The Poetry Archive as well as other online poetry collections

, questioning why most archived poetry recordings present sound as though it we

thor page follows the standard visual design that can be found on The Poetry Archive as well as other online poetry collections such as PennSound. His page features an author portrait rather than a performance action shot, a biography, and links to individ ual poem tracks. Beneath the poem title and author name, one can click the play button and listen to the recording. The Poetry Archive uses a simple audio player that allows a listener to start, pause, and stop the track. Johnsons author biography explains

 $Linton\ Kwesi\ Johnson,\ Di\ Great\ Insohreckshan,\ YouTube\ video,\ .,\ posted\ by$   $Oscar\ David\ De\ Barros,\ January\ , https://www.youtube.com/watchvIUNQSPwwu.$   $Brathwaite,\ History\ of\ the\ Voice,\ .$ 

Eichhorn, Past Performance, Present Dilemma, .

Martin Spinelli, Analog Echoes A Poetics of Digital Audio Editing, Object Cyberpoetics, UbuWeb Papers, May,

that his poems on the site were recorded from live performances and come from his CD LKJ A Cappella Live. Despite the claim that the energy of his live recitals gives the recordings a unique electricity, interspersed with the laughter and applause of audi  $ences\ around\ Europe,$  the  $seamless\ editing\ of\ Di\ Great\ Insohreck$ shan allows one to listen to Johnsons entire recitation before realizing that it is a live performance.http//www.poetryarchive .org/poet/lintonkwesijohnson. Once the poem ends, the only au dible audience noises are a cough and polite applause that slowly fades out. Rather than convey a unique electricity, the cough suggests a subdued audience who tried to remain silent until the end of the performance. The page provides no information about the specifics of the event or who the European audience was, al though it sounds like it might be a poetry reading in an academic setting. The track certainly holds no trace of a communal dub consciousness. By not clearly identifying the track as a single performance, the archive presents it as the authoritative audio version. In the lefthand margin, under the heading About the Poem, it lists the themes as social, unrest, race, and Caribbean but provides no information about the Brixton Riots.

Derek Furr notes that while online poetry collections devote at tention to different aesthetics, what unites them is the idea that hearing a poet voice her own work is crucial to understanding the poem. Yet despite the interest in vocalization, collections tend to downplay the setting of the poets performance by providing little information about when and where the reading occurred and why this particular event was recorded. While certain sites, such as PennSound, make sure that all of the bibliographic info is embedded in the single file with accurate metadata, often all that this provides is the date and physical location of the reading. By divorcing the poem from its contextual setting, this approach erases the reciprocal relationship between the poet and her audi ence. Furr proposes that poetry recordings both live and instudio become valuable because when we close listen, we hear not only the sounds of the poem and the poets voicing of them, but also the echoes of previous scenes of reading and listening. Through webpage design and sound editing, The Poetry Archive downplays the previous audiences of Di Great Insohreckshan so that the

 $<sup>\</sup>label{linton Kwesi Johnson Author Page, The Poetry Archive, accessed \ July\ , \\ Onuora\ quoted\ in\ Morris,\ Is\ English\ We\ Speaking,\ .$ 

Derek Furr, Recorded Poetry and Poetic Reception from Edna Millay to the Circle of Robert Lowell New York Palgrave Macmillan, , .

Ibid., .

while The Cents Movement illustrates how cinematic approaches can be used to deepen total expression, the Johnson example illus trates the value of preserving the ephemeral qualities of a live performance in a recording to enrich the listening experience. Furr borrows Charles Bernsteins term close listening to charac terize how a user should engage with audio recordings. Based on his experience with PennSound Bernstein proposes close listening as an alternative to close reading, where one prioritizes the materiality of sound and the aural experience. Yet, in practice, how much does close listening actually deviate from close reading on Internet audio archives

Annie Murray and Jared Wiercinski, curators of SpokenWeb, a collection of recordings of a Montreal poetry reading series from to, point out that while most Internet audio archives make listening the focus, their structure makes them multimodal. Ac cordingly, they stress that the visual elements of online poetry archives need careful consideration. They explore what kinds of site navigation, audio visualization, design elements and func tionalities could be offered by a Webbased spoken word inter face, and how these might enhance the listening process and, ultimately, the scholarly endeavor.http//firstmonday.org/ojs/ index.php/fm/article/view//. Because very little scholarship exists on how people engage with sounded poems, they acknowl edge that their suggestions for a sound archive recipe that other cultural heritage institutions can follow are based on established  $reading\ practices.http//digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol///.htmlp.$ They make some helpful suggestions, including using a waveform display for sound visualization, and providing listeners with a media player that allows them more control over the playback. They also suggest incorporating any available images and videos of the performance event, much like The Cents Movements photo documentation on Twitter and Facebook. However, other sugges tions such as tethering audio playback with a written transcript keep the primary focus on reading rather than listening. For ex ample, on the Poetry Archive site, beneath the link to play Di

See Bernstein, Close Listening,.

 $Annie\ Murray\ and\ Jared\ Wiercinski,\ Looking\ at\ Archival\ Sound\ Enhancing\ the\ Listening\ Experience\ in\ a\ Spoken\ Word\ Archive,\ First\ Monday\ ,\ no.\ ,$ 

Annie Murray and Jared Wiercinski, A Design Methodology for Webbased Sound Archives, DHQ Digital Humanities Quarterly, no.,

For a summary of their specific suggestions for visual design, see Murray and Wiercinski, Looking at Archival Sound.

Great Insohreckshan, one can also click on a Read this Poem link. This encourages scholars to engage in what is, for many, the more familiar interpretive practice rather than to develop new modes of analysis based on sound. In digital archives, Bern stein suggests that poems, set adrift from their visual grounding in alphabetic texts, might begin to resemble the songs from which, for so long, they have been divided. However, to achieve this we need to be wary of a onesizefitsall approach, and carefully de sign visual elements to encourage sonic engagement rather than to reify a visual economy of text. Such a divide between song and poem has never existed for Anglophone Caribbean performance poets, yet colonial legacies continue to dictate that we read rather than listen to this work.

Even when one is only listening, Internet audio archives often recreate the feeling of reading alone. Clicking on the link and listening to the poem while one looks at the author portrait simi lar to the style found on book jackets mimics the experience of solitary reading, where one feels in private conversation with the author. Simple audio players that have only a linear timelapse bar rather than a more complex waveform display encourage the eyes to move from right to left, as they do in the act of reading. When a poem is presented as a decontextualized single track, a lis tener is encouraged to adopt a new critical approach and treat the poem as a selfcontained object. Listening, like reading, becomes an isolated, individualistic expression rather than a communal endeavor. Sound reproduction technologies have also encouraged our hearing to become more individualistic. Using headphones as his example, Sterne argues that such devices encourage listen ing to be more orientated toward constructs of private space and private property, which encourages sound to become a commodity.

In contrast, The Cents Movement recreates the communal experience of listening to a poem, which is a key part of total expression. Their photo tweets and poetry videos make online members a part of their participatory audience. We have much work to do to figure out how to build Internet audio archives that recreate this communal experience of listening. Everything including sound editing, interface, database design, navigation system and copyright issuesneeds careful consideration to realize the digital potential of total expression. To embark on this work,

 $Charles\ Bernstein,\ Making\ Audio\ Visible\ The\ Lessons\ of\ Visual\ Language\ for\ the\ Textualization\ of\ Sound,\ Textual\ Practice\ ,\ no.\quad ,\ doi./.$ 

Brathwaite, History of the Voice, .

Sterne, The Audible Past, .

it is crucial that we turn to the poets themselves and build on their education legacies.

So much of the history of the voice has already been lost, or muted, by the ongoing colonial bias toward nation language, as well as limited resources and funding. Caribbean poetry record ings that survive buried in dusty boxes in attics and library stor age rooms sit silently waiting for new audiences to return to them the noise and sounds that the maker makes. Since these reeltoreel tapes, cassettes, eighttracks, CDs, and LPs are fragile media, threatened by technological obsolescence and sometimes the tropical Caribbean climate, we must make digitizing this vital record of Caribbean poetry history a priority.

 $Brathwaite,\, History\ of\ the\ Voice,\, .$