

Imaginations and Speculative Writings: Reinvesting Post-Colonial Possibilities and Subjectivities in Kaie Kellough's *Dominoes at the Crossroads*

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Abstract Recent studies on speculative literature emphasise the narrative presence of postcolonial thinking that proliferates within the genre. It is the case in the collection *Dominoes at the Crossroads* (2020) by the African Canadian writer Kaie Kellough, which attempts to re-imagine and tell the story of the black diaspora in Montreal, other than under a colonial spectrum. The short stories use a variety of speculative strategies: whether it is reinvesting a marginalised figure of a classic Quebecois novel or imagining the setting of Montreal's future in which marginalised populations own a majority of the properties. The analysis of these stories will allow us to show how speculative literature is fertile ground for postcolonial potentialities, by allowing us to project elsewhere. Since speculative literature is a broad genre whose definition is not circumscribed, we will see how reflecting on the alternative postcolonial imaginings through such narrative allows for a rewriting that makes it possible to go beyond the colonial paradigms.

Keywords Postcolonial theory. Speculative fiction. Montreal black diaspora. Decolonial thought. Kaie Kellough.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Investing Potentialities and Retelling the Past: Kellough's Tio:tià:ke and Future(s) in *La question ordinaire et extraordinaire*. – 3 Material Vortexes: Crossed Histories and Remembrances. – 4 Floating and Drifting Around Language: Musicality and Speculative Experimentation. – 5 Conclusion.



Peer review

Submitted	2021-07-15
Accepted	2021-09-06
Published	2021-12-20

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Citation Sbih, M. (2021). "Imaginations and Speculative Writings: Reinvesting Post-Colonial Possibilities and Subjectivities in Kaie Kellough's *Dominoes at the Crossroads*". *Il Tolomeo*, 23, 103-118.

DOI 10.30687/Tol/2499-5975/2021/23/020

1 Introduction

Even if the term ‘speculative fiction’ is culturally and historically less charged than its eminent companion science fiction, with which it is still relentlessly compared, we tend to observe a need to affix a stable meaning to this term by defining parameters which in turn can be used to determine the inclusion or exclusion of specific works within the genre. Speculative fiction has at first, beginning in the 1940s (Oziewicz 2017), repeatedly been identified and made into a fixed category intrinsically linked to science fiction, either considered as a subgenre or its counterpart. Recently, the term has been increasingly invested with a broader and more inclusive sense. When we think about a speculative action, it inherently presumes a discursive space in which topography is not only impossible but undesired, since it is a cognitive territory where thought experiments, the value of potentialities, and re-configurations/compositions are key to project into the future and revisit a certain past. This temporal reconfiguration can generate new narratives untangled from certain structural, social, imperial, and colonial political biases. Aimee Bahng states that speculative fiction is:

a more expansive term that might include related genres such as fantasy, horror, and historical fiction; and that highlights the speculative mode of the “What if?”. (Bahng 2017, 13)

Accordingly, it is important to move away from a narrow and limiting taxonomy of the term in favour of an open category that allows for the inclusion of a wide range of works that correspond to this idea of new or unheard speculative visions of the world, and thus welcoming a majority of works made in the margins of any kind (e.g., racial, cultural and sexual). Therefore, it is not inappropriate to note that a tremendous amount of these efforts has been made by marginalised subjectivities, notably Black and Indigenous people, and People of Color more broadly. Speculative practices carried out by racialised minorities and from postcolonial and decolonial viewpoints seek to fully consider the perspectives and potentialities of writing and re-imagining settled and established realities, thus opposing and disputing the structural and hermeneutical hegemony and limits of Western biases and imperialist horizons.

By considering speculative activities, writings, and fiction beyond a limited and limiting genre, we can grasp their ability to enhance marginalised voices and subjectivities that are external to prevalent Western limits and narratives. Undeniably, speculation performances within the margins manage to do more than rewriting history outside colonial and neo-colonial existences: they redeem the narratives that were and still are erased and silenced.

In his collection of short stories *Dominoes at the Crossroads* (2020), the Tio:tià:ke¹/Montreal-based author Kaie Kellough, from western Canada and of Guyanese origins, tries to render visible and yet creates new and unique narrative spaces where a plurality of voices from the Canadian and particularly Quebec black diaspora express themselves and their realities and history. Kellough's collection achieves a peculiar and impressive form of speculation: concomitantly by its language as well as its narration, it creates a moment of meander, a space between the articulation of past, present, and future where new forms of stories, potentialities, and existences are revealed. Kellough is thus able to critically consider and rewrite the history of neocolonial Canada and Quebec, by constructing a narrative including plural black voices and standpoints.

In this essay, I intend to explore how speculative writing, understood and attempted in a multifaceted way in *Dominoes at the Crossroads*, enables an understanding of the speculative as a unique way of engaging with marginalised voices and subjectivities by displaying alternative ways of entering the future, remembering the past, and writing the present.

2 Investing Potentialities and Retelling the Past: Kellough's Tio:tià:ke and Future(s) in *La question ordinaire et extraordinaire*

One of the speculative strengths that *Dominoes at the Crossroads* manages to perform through its twelve short stories does not seem to heavily depend on nor uniquely consist in the constant creation, anticipation, and conception of different futures. Instead, Kellough sets up a device that not only documents the Caribbean diaspora in a plurality of cities in Canada, South America, and the Caribbean and recounts their stories. He makes these scattered places, people, and moments coexist in an extended and unfixed new space continuum. Thus, he allows for the possibility of fiction and reality to interact with each other in a movement that creates a speculative fictional space, where anything could have already existed or is possible.

1 Tio:tià:ke is the Mohawk name of the Indigenous unceded lands where Montreal is located. Since Kellough mainly refers to Tio:tià:ke/Montreal as Montreal, I will do as such. However, it is important to acknowledge right from the beginning that I am on unceded territories. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognised as the custodians of the lands and waters on which I live and write today.

Cf. <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/montreal-in-mohawk/>. See also <https://www.concordia.ca/indigenous/resources/territorial-acknowledgement.html> for further information about the importance of acknowledging settler presence on unceded territories from Indigenous Nations and First Peoples.

It is also a space where silenced voices can finally tell their story. In other words, through narrative inscription, voices from the black diaspora portrayed in Kellough's stories can be contextualised in the liminal space² between a colonial narrative in which they are "consistently marginalized" (Kellough 2020, 22) and new futures, consequently enabling hopes, as well as unique and liberating narratives, to be envisioned.

This possibility is manifest in the first story, "La question ordinaire et extraordinaire" (The Ordinary and Extraordinary Question),³ which is conceived as a lecture from the future, where the speculative future of the city Milieu (Middle), which corresponds to Montreal in the present time, is imagined. Written 150 years from our current time, the lecture has been elaborated using stories from (present day) Montreal and its black diaspora which effectively highlights its active participation in Montreal history and helps to understand how much this contribution been silenced today. Namely, one of Montreal's neighbourhoods, Little Burgundy, was one of the most important scenes of afroactivism in Canada in the early 20th century, without it being duly presented in the official history of the city of Montreal (cf. Mathieu 2010).

In this lecture, the narrator from the future exposes and ponders on the past substantially through the work of his great-great-grandfather Kaie Kellough:

a 21st-century author who wrote several books before the gradual collapse of publishing in the first half of that century. (Kellough 2020, 12)

At the very beginning of this story, we as readers already notice an uncertainty that is placed upon us as a condition of reading, concerning the distinction between truth and fiction. Kellough is both present and absent in a story, in which he stages his present, which corresponds, in this future era, to his (our) past, setting the tone for the rest of the stories of the collection. For instance, readers are surrounded by both historical elements that they can verify and fictions, even if the act of distinguishing reality from fiction is neither easy nor obvious. In particular, the narrator's reading is followed by doc-

2 I use the term liminal space as employed by Cree intellectual and artist Neal McLeod in the article "Coming Through Stories". The term allows schematising the very way in which one can inscribe oneself materially as well as through imagination and thought, within the spaces that have been torn away by European colonisation in the North American Indigenous context. Thus, finding "home" in this particular context involves a memorial inscription that can only occur through the creation of literature and the transmission of narratives (cf. McLeod 2011, 24).

3 All the French quotations are translated into English by the Author.

umented and fictional notes that coexist in the same material space, that of the book page, as clarifications. Subsequently, the game of speculation is not only part of the story itself, but a cornerstone of the narrative. It implies that the reader also enters into a game of speculation and decides to welcome the possibilities narrated by the speaker. Moreover, witnessing them enacted reinforces the power of speculation when it is used to make minoritised narratives into stories that seize their power not only to evoke but to project one's self beyond the erected colonial boundaries.

In any case, the further distinction between fictional and actual archived elements and information throughout *Dominoes at the Crossroads* seems of little importance, since we are attentive to the potentialities and speculations that are going to be set up in Kellough's narration. In fact, "La question ordinaire et extraordinaire" comments and reflects simultaneously on two principal aspects. On the one hand, it considers how Black narratives and histories in Milieu's past were constantly conceived as minor narratives existing in opposition to the official history of Quebec, therefore existing at the margins of the white majority and its dominant narrative. On the other hand, it orchestrates a vision in which black history, together with its contribution to Quebec and Montreal's history, plays a part in a tangible version of the future. As stated by the lecturer:

Kellough's notion of the future is informed by the city's black history. The future is included in the past, and in certain events that decide our lives for us. (Kellough 2020, 22)

It is interesting to note the inversion carried out by Kellough in this setting: this new consideration and inclusion of the past contributions of black and racialised minorities within the city and its evolution and transformations forcefully contributes to the actualisation of the future. The fact that it is through a new recognition and therefore a new reading of the past, which does not ignore the histories of marginalised subjectivities, that this speculated future can be written is not insignificant. This necessarily implies that the future, even if established as a speculative space, has never been neutral and is limited and written by the dominant narrative that precedes it. As Bahng states, "the future is an always already occupied space" (2017, 12). This assertion draws attention to some of the already colonised terrains of speculation. This, in terms of how speculation has and still invests colonial tropes and praxis to fuel the vision and actualisation of a future that extends and invests the structures of racial capitalism, to name but one (Bahng 2017, 69).

Accordingly, it is thought-provoking to reflect more extensively on the fact that in our neocolonial realities and contexts, the future is al-

ready being mapped by a certain white master narrative,⁴ where the hegemonic power is conferred and imposed by the figuration of the 'human'. This "overrepresentation" (Wynter 2003, 262) of the white European 'Man' prevails as that stable, immutable, and objective category, thereby eradicating and obliterating other existences of humanity (Wynter 2003; Quijano 2007; Odyseos 2017).

Therefore, to situate oneself through writing as a colonised and/or marginalised subjectivity implies the elaboration of several techniques: a methodology, to create a liberated space, to navigate as freely as possible in enunciation within the colonial literary space, seizing the potentialities offered by speculative avenues to disrupt the immediate colonial reality and narratives.

In "La question ordinaire et extraordinaire", the lecturer informs us that as a result of melting ice from 2040 onwards, many upper-middle- and upper-class areas became flooded and as a result were rendered uninhabitable. The inhabitants had to move and became "a displaced class" (Kellough 2020, 21). This displacement to the more northern, multicultural areas of Montreal implied that it is the racially diverse minorities who found themselves owning power and financial capital:

The once-wealthy descendants of Wolfe and Montcalm found themselves applying to Haitian landlords. (21)

The narrator insinuates that his great-great-grandfather Kaie Kellough, even as an author committed to envisioning the alternative possibilities that would articulate the future of the city of Montreal, could not have foreseen this profound upheaval of the city and its socio-cultural-economic dynamics. This is evocative of the continuing colonial gestures that make it impossible to contemplate an alternative world, where racialised and cultural minorities are an integral part of the economic power, never mind if they are the majority holders of it. Speculative writings and staging hence make it possible to deviate and become involved in a real "engagement or social critique" (Gill 2013, 79) of the contemporary world and to make the reader see its flaws and limits. And, also, to understand, through the exploitation of an alternative reality where the dominant groups are downgraded, what racialised minorities undergo every day.

Apart from creating from the ground up a future Montreal in which the contributions of Black diasporas and other racialised minorities are highlighted and play a significant role in his projection,

⁴ "Master narrative is defined as the social mythologies that mute, erase, and neutralize features of racial struggle in ways that reinforce ideologies of White supremacy" (Woodson 2017, 318).

Kellough employs what I will call a postcolonial and speculative ruse. This ruse emerges in his rewriting of history by reinvesting historically marginalised figures, allowing him to make use of the

cognitive value of speculative visions of the world formulated from a postcolonial or minority perspective. (Oziewicz 2017, 17)

This is notably the case with his depiction of Marie-Joseph Angélique, a black slave who was reputedly responsible for the 1734 Montreal fire when she set fire to her mistress's house, concomitantly burning down a substantial part of Old Montreal (cf. Cooper 2007). In Kellough's *Milieu*, Angélique is a revered and esteemed ancestor, bearing in mind that "her act forced the citizens to reimagine and rebuild" (Kellough 2020, 22). Hence, this portrayal is diametrically in contrast with her real treatment: she was accused, tortured, and condemned to death on June 21, 1734. I should also add that Kellough is not only offering a reversal of the dominant-dominated dyad: *Milieu* is a Montreal where there is no longer a racial or dominant majority that has the power to oppress others and marginalise their existence and contributions. This enables a revisiting of history and of the official way in which it is written, allowing for a future that is open to all, without implying that social power, force, and even violence must necessarily be present or used on one side or the other. This is best metaphorised by the new city's name, "reflection of there being no center" (Kellough 2020, 21).

3 Material Vortexes: Crossed Histories and Remembrances

Besides cognitively and creatively engaging with the future, speculative writing and activity has the grand "potential for challenging consensus reality [...]." (Oziewicz 2017, 19) It displaces traditional and inherited values and display modes of knowledge or realities other than those maintained by colonial discourses and state power. As Bhabha demonstrates, to exclusively value what has purportedly always been there, namely the dominant standpoint, is a discursive strategy of colonial discourse. Certainly, it is a rhetoric which erases any subjectivity or alternative perspective in a limited and discriminating systemic way of understanding the "other" (2004, 94-120). Consequently, speculation from a minority perspective proves to be a successful counterstrategy to make other perspectives or realities visible. Speculative writing facilitates a kind of remix, a way of imagining a re-composition of the world as well as the existence of a whole new one, which provides not only an opening to other possibilities but also a representation and an illustration of how it is necessary to be open to unexplored, forbidden and potential spaces. The stories

composing *Dominoes at the Crossroads* have a certain way of depicting how a plurality of potentialities, memories, resistances, and existences are interconnected: this is also the case in the construction of the collection itself. Whether it is through people from the Black and Caribbean diaspora in Canada or memories and objects that re-surface in unexpected ways, the stories welcome those that precede and those that come after, which provokes a surprise effect through the reading. Moreover, it underlines the eminent materiality of the story, since the places, characters, and objects that Kellough presents make it possible to leap from one story to another and therefore from one perspective to another. The intertwined stories act as material traces that allow one to go back and forth, to go between past and future, and even rewrite their possibilities and conclusions.

The story “Porcelain Nubians” clearly plays with this tension between the present and the past through the neo-colonial context transposed to Canada, and with how the past that is abandoned or the one we thought was revoked comes back in the form of material relics that we now seek to acquire. In this story, the Haitian-born narrator who grew up in the multicultural neighbourhood of Saint-Michel recounts their⁵ memories of the neighbourhood and the market. The memories they share with readers are mainly related to moments with their grandfather, a family member who gives the impression of being the sole individual specifically connecting him to Haiti. They describe the weekly, almost ritualistic visit to the flea market where they accompany their grandfather, since he appears to be fond of acquiring old antique radios and landscape paintings, of which he has an impressive collection. After their grandfather's death, the narrator tells us that they no longer go to the Saint-Michel Flea Market and move out of the neighbourhood. Saint-Michel underwent changes and gentrification, on which they comment by telling the reader: “I didn't care. I was relieved to see the old neighborhood change” (Kellough 2020, 28). This appears to display an unambiguous way of dissociating themselves from their past and the places they frequented and lived, but also from their experiences, probably influenced by their identity as both Canadian and Haitian. This is followed by a story of economic ascent in which the narrator, who has inherited their parent's house and an apartment building from their grandfather, becomes a real estate agent who sells and acquires compulsively, without any second thoughts or remorse, solely motivated by profit.

5 I think it is quite interesting and telling that most of Kellough's narrators cannot be identified by their gender, given that the narration is in the first person. I think that amplifies the sense that the intersecting stories are shifting and cannot be confined to one space or one fixed identity of the Caribbean diaspora.

Those homes were my final tie to the old neighborhood, the immigrant neighborhood, the point of arrival. It hurt to sell, but only because I was losing an opportunity for growth. (Kellough 2020, 34)

The narrator participates in a rather active way in the gentrification of their original and other neighbourhoods, propelled by a sordid form of greed. However, two specific objects seem to divert the course of the character's thought and to take them back to a series of interwoven reflections on the past and its intertwining with the future, in particular the slavery past and its continuum, the profit made on the backs of the slaves, and the ever-present trace that bears vivid testimony to this matter. The objects are two porcelain figurines of presumed Nubian slaves sold in an auction by the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in 2008, and of which their grandfather had mysteriously framed a copy of an article from the auction that curiously mentions them. The article reveals that the figurines were in front of the hotel's lift at the time, as if they were surrogate butlers or elevator operators. The narrator imagines the life and dialogues between these objects, these slaves rendered eternal by their immobile nature, considering they were posted in a hotel where they were still in full view of everyone. In such manner, they are strangely continuing their lives as servants, from the hotel visitor's perspective. The figures discuss the intertwining and continuous dialogue that unites past and present by examining and relegating themselves to the status of relics, "a surviving memorial of something past" (Kellough 2020, 32). These figures appear to pose as a portal to a slave-owning past, a past that is not quite over, and whose effects are still affecting the present.

The past continuous is a verb tense that describes actions that began in the past and that are continuing now. (31)

The story concludes when the disillusioned character tries to acquire a luxurious property since they are "tired of the stuffy Montréal apartment" (34). This action, contrary to the collecting habits of his grandfather, seems to once more underline that the character wants to distance themselves from memory, from a past that is necessarily brought back into the present, as the objects can bear witness. Looking at one unit, they recognise in the photos one of the Nubian figurines, and the story culminates when they show a fierce desire to acquire the unit, notably for the figurine. This could be interpreted as a reenactment, to a certain extent, of the purchase of a slave, or rather, in this case, the reacquisition of memory via the object. Through the notion of the material and concrete presence of objects, their phantoms, and what they are still causing in terms of actual thoughts, Kellough is capable of showing, "how the past sometimes follows the future" (78), how relics of colonial memory and past cleave to a present

and are now part of the same continuum. In addition, it is all the more significant to mention that, at the very beginning, the narrator tell us of their youthful habit of submerging themselves in contemplation of their grandfather's paintings, a contemplation of the object that allowed them to extricate themselves from their present and simultaneously to provoke dreams akin to nightmares. Once night has fallen, they are imprisoned within a completely different existence, exhausted and running for their life as men and mastiffs are chasing them, in what seems to be a representation of a marronage, where

I knew that only a little farther and I might enter the future, where
I could stop running. (27)

The material objects in Kellough's various narratives and contexts seem to produce a speculative vortex, conceived to be a living and porous archive that allows us to see that, in the postcolonial existence and the living memory of Kellough's characters, individual, diasporic, second-generation, transnational and colonial memories co-exist within objects and humans. This is further accomplished, as mentioned earlier, if we examine the very structure of *Dominoes at the Crossroads*. As Glissant mentions

Mais nos histoires diversifiées dans la Caraïbe produisent aujourd'hui un autre dévoilement : celui de leur convergence souterraine. Ce faisant elles nous enseignent une dimension insoupçonnée, parce que trop évidente, de l'agir humain : la *transversalité*. [...] Ce n'est pas cette histoire qui a ronflé sur les bords de la Caraïbe mais bel et bien des conjonctions de nos histoires qui s'y sont faites souterrainement. (2008, 230)

In *Dominoes*, we witness a plurality of characters who, each in their "own" narratives, interrogate themselves about the very same object. This facet amplifies the growing sensation that there is an intrinsic bond between a variety of disparate tales and thoughts within the Black Canadian diaspora. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see similar images and moments at work in one story and almost identical ones at other junctures, thus reinforcing the idea not only of continuity but of collectivity in the legacies and mythologies at work in the characters' present existence. For instance, in "Smoke and Thundered" Kellough tells the story of Kaie who, at one point, having found the book *Slave Old Man and the Mastiff* (*L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse*) in his aunt's house in Georgetown, briefly summarises for us as best as he can a moment when the Martinican character

was running away from his plantation, and his owners loosed a young mastiff after him. (Kellough 2020, 195)

This passage and this escape bring us back to that of the narrator of “Porcelain Nubians”: Kellough is then again weaving and hoisting bridges between various past narratives, communities and countries such as Martinique and Guyana, all ending up in a noisy room in a Montreal neighbourhood. This instance in which the object is a vortex between a plurality of realities, spaces, and fictions is also articulated in Kellough’s use of the neoclassical painting *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) by artist Benjamin West, depicting the death of General Wolfe together with the British Empire Victory against the French Empire, in the 1759 Battle of the Plains of Abraham, during the Seven Years’ War.

In the short story “Shooting the General”, Kellough portrays Canadian Senegalese fictional character Hamidou Diop, one of the only black characters in Quebec literature of the 20th century, who was relegated to the margins of Quebec history and oblivion. Instead of his fleeting appearance in Quebecer novelist Hubert Aquin’s landmark work, *Prochain Épisode* (1965),⁶ Diop is granted an important role in Kellough’s narratives. In “Shooting the General”, the spy makes an ekphrastic description of the painting and thoroughly examines the colonial painting and its depictions, openly asking and declaring: “Why should we want this man to live? These questions abide, as others arise.” (Kellough 2020, 39)

Alternatively, the story “Capital” briefly exposes the strained relationship between two characters during a visit to the National Gallery of Canada, where the painting is on display in the permanent collection. Like Diop, the narrator of “Capital” also engages in an ekphrastic description of the painting, commenting on the native figure, speculating on his intentions within the scene on the Plains of Abraham, along with his present and future intentions as a character in the painting:

will he suddenly turn to face the person viewing the painting and say, “make sure that this painting stays in the basement of the National Gallery forever”. (Kellough 2020, 159)

These cross-views and critical analyses through the prism of marginalised characters around the same colonial object, coming to life in a different manner and space, in both cases allows for this speculative staging of what turns out to be more than a response to colonial structures and artistic traditions. The varied literary expres-

6 I do not have time to discuss it further here, but Kellough makes an interesting investment in a character who has been relegated to the sidelines of Quebec’s white literature, reoffering him his role as a spy in a new significant way and combining it with a real presence in contemporary Montreal as the owner of a shop selling African objects and artifacts, in Montreal’s undergrounds.

sions of these realities do not simply consist in a “decentering” of the Western mimetic tradition. They are also productions that result from an understanding and inclusion of several realities parallel to those erected as norms that can now be expressed freely and created within the text.

In the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon exhorts:

Fuyons, camarades, ce mouvement immobile où la dialectique, petit à petit, s’est muée en logique de l’équilibre. [...] Reprenons la question de la réalité cérébrale, de la masse cérébrale de toute l’humanité dont il faut multiplier les connexions, diversifier les réseaux et réhumaniser les messages. (Fanon 2011, 675)

Kellough manages to reveal, through an extended and vivid narrative structure, that there are intersections that bring together several subjectivities. This is accomplished by showing the existence of diverse and connecting networks within the black Canadian diaspora. It is then possible to reflect on the movement of migration as well as on the movement of thought and, additionally, on the speculative movement.

4 Floating and Drifting Around Language: Musicality and Speculative Experimentation

How does one navigate a language that, through its very devices, strives to erase marginalised existences? A language in which it is legitimate to ask whether it has ever taken into account minoritised and marginalised existences, in its unfolding? In the wake of the French translation of his collection in the winter of 2021, Kellough recounts in an interview in Quebecois’s newspaper *La Presse*:

Je crois que je me suis tourné vers l’écriture parce que c’était un outil accessible, afin d’essayer de trouver un langage, un vocabulaire pour mon expérience. Aussi pour me convaincre moi-même que j’existais, me rappeler ma propre existence. (Guy, Kellough 2021)

At the core of literary inscription lies the possibility of situating oneself not outside the world, but in what appears to be an interstice between the abrupt reality of a postcolonial existence and the hope of an elsewhere. The free-floating narrative ‘territory’ that the malleable nature of language can produce allows for the narrative creation of an in-between space, where the potentialities of a future diverging from the one generated and expected by the coloniser’s frame take place. Kaie Kellough is a novelist, poet, and renowned sound performer, whose artistic speculations on language, movement, and sound

alone, are wonderfully implemented through the reflections he provokes within *Dominoes at the Crossroads*. As mentioned above, the short stories are entangled in a complex and collective relational network where crossed temporalities and possibilities emerge through an ambiguous way of narrating memories, past, present, and future times. This literary architecture can only make us reflect on the question of movement, meandering, and the role of language itself.

For example, although all the stories in *Dominoes at the Crossroads* involve the question of a speculative movement where different identities, spaces, and times co-exist, some of them, including “Petit Marronage” (Small Marronage) and “Navette” (Spaceship/Shuttle), explicitly reflect on the question of drifting, which, musically, linguistically and existentially, requires one to meander. To meander, so that language and its acknowledgment of the very existence of diasporic, racialised, and marginalised subjectivities does not manage to define them by the existing static, dominant, and neocolonial structures in place.

In “Navette”, the Montreal narrator, child of Haitian immigrants takes a part-time job as a taxi driver. We are faced with a narrator who, rather than stopping at a destination, an expected endpoint, chooses a kind of balance and freedom in this constant movement. Accompanied by the radio’s music and the various sounds of the city he likes to surround himself with and whose movements and jolts delights him, Kellough evokes cinematically and poetically that narration itself is reproducing this state of continuous drift. As the musician-character of “Petit Marronage” says,

I would need to create my own genre, and not be content to mimic the established vocabularies. (Kellough 2020, 185)

In “Petit Marronage”, depicting the memories and ongoing meta-reflections of a touring musician and “stereotypical Easterner with immigrant parents from the Caribbean” (111) on the freedom of rhythms and the dynamism that their repetition offers, we reflect on the indefinite configurations inextricably linked to musical movement as a form of freedom. Indeed, the narrator confides that

This sense of drift is why I like extended forms because drift cannot be contained in a three-minute sound. (109)

This allows us to reflect on the state of drift as *an ethos*, where subjectivity breaks free from the genres and imperatives that compartmentalise it into a well-defined idea, identity, or category. To seize a newly conceived freedom and to conceive oneself through a yet unexplored relationship with the diasporic self and with others implies a movement that I would say is powerfully linguistic, without neglect-

ing the strictly material concerns. This movement seems linguistic since it commits us to divest ourselves mentally and practically from the existing paradigms, by turning to something else and, ultimately, to highlight this “something else”, so that the configurations and structures – socio-political, in particular – that have been set up can be radically called into question. Indeed, any reality or existence whose decolonial posture and situation demand the complete renovation of the narrative structure of a reality elevated into a precept intended to control and enslave a population becomes that thought experiment which, by producing its own narrativity (Elgin 2014, 230) allows, through its creation and expression, new horizons of speculations and possibilities. To seize the powers of literary, theoretical, and musical intersections allows Kellough to tell and invent stories through a language that reinvents itself and appears to allow the reader to engage more actively in the stories. Mbembe, commenting on his own essayistic writing, evocatively exposes the powers of allowing oneself to speculate through language itself:

Il me semblait qu’une manière de sortir du carcan était d’expérimenter avec la langue, et d’abord tenter de la dynamiter. Ce travail de démolition, j’ai essayé de l’accomplir par le biais de raccourcis, de répétitions, d’inventions, une manière de raconter qui fait usage tant de souvenirs et de digressions que de phrases qui se voudraient claires, ‘scientifiques’, alignées les unes à la suite des autres. (Mbembe 2020, 23)

5 Conclusion

If “la trace suppose et porte non pas la pensée de l’être, mais la divagation de l’existant” (Glissant 1997, 69) (the trace supposes and carries not the thought of being, but the divagation of being: Author’s trans.), it can be said that this is also the commitment of any posture that is maintained or exists, through the deconstruction of normalised, imposed, and internalised epistemic imperial structures. This idea of wandering, of disorientation as a process free of any ambition or notion of finality does not betray a weakness, but rather a fluidity of thought that is acquired and essential to any decolonisation movement. In other words, a shift that would lead to a collective struggle against perspectives and structures governed by a matrix derived from coloniality. Subsequently, this would imply, at the same time, a desire to achieve a critical awareness of one’s enunciation, an enunciation necessarily resulting from certain presuppositions. The articulation between speculative action and language per se might therefore consist of that moment when writing no longer settles for normalised enunciative structures and allows itself an evolution that

takes shape through experimentation with language as a floating and evolving space in which to situate marginalised experiences.

Speculative writing allows this confrontation to take place appealingly and effectively. It opens up new possibilities for storytelling that at the same time broaden our perceptions and understanding of reality. Seeing ourselves confronted with a plethora of perspectives on the world and ways of inhabiting it, staged in such a way as to overturn or upset a hegemonic idea of the colonial and racist powers in place, makes us retreat from the legitimacy that certain structural categorisations and hierarchies, inherited from colonial thought, may occupy, the assimilation of which makes us almost forget their origin. This may allow us to rule out this universal and neutral vision of humanism, whose exaggerated use and defense have allowed us to enter the world without situating ourselves, in the way that the colonial enterprise was justified.

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