

Parabole

2016, Rivière-Pilote, Martinique

(Film-) Installation

by Rahel Hegnauer

Media: roofing battens, black theatre curtains, video- /audio-projection (full HD, stereo, duration: 5 min, loop), portable record player, record, leaflet A4 (versions: German, French, English)

Size of installation: basic area: 16m2, height: 3.20m

Parabole examines power structure occurring on different levels: language, geography, religion, nationality. The centre of the work is a long-playing record with an original recording dating back to 1917.

The 3-minute-recording tells the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the Gospel of Luke. It is told by François Joachim-Arnauld, an Antillean sailor, in his native language Creole (Antillean Creole French). The recording was made in a room next to the theatre shed at the prisoner of war camp in Münster, Germany. 1)

The present long-playing record is not the original record but a newly pressed one with the digitized version of the unaltered original recording. (the original record residing at the sound archive of the Humboldt University Berlin HUB.) It therefore not only features the man's voice but also the crackling noises from the original analogue record. 2)

The film shows the moment when the record was played in Rivière-Pilote on the Antillean island Martinique. By going back to François Joachim-Arnauld's place of birth with a portable record player and a record (the original carrier medium with his voice) - in a performative act - and letting it play by the priest, the attendant of the local museum, the librarian (and local radio journalist) and finally by his great-great-grandson, the context of the original recording is revealed and questioned.

The quotation by Frantz Fanon (1925 - 1961) heading the film figures as an invitation to leave the biased and hierarchical system of the European imperialism (that is the discrimination on the grounds of skin colour) in order to develop an autonomous culture and identity without adopting eurocentric elements nor creating one's identity merely in opposition to the dominance of the white race.

Frantz Fanon was born and raised in Martinique as well. He belongs to the earliest protagonists of the discourse on issues of decolonisation analysing and criticizing the European culture of colonialism and the resulting loss of identity or rather the resulting split into an identity as a black person within a black environment and a second identity as a black person within a white environment. 3)

With the presentation of the film *Parabole* in a specially built room resembling in shape the big top of a circus or a zoetrope (an early device used to project pictures), I question as initially mentioned the power structure (then and nowadays) as well as research activities and its preservation and presentation methods.

1) One of the hundreds of thousands of "temporary" migrants from Asia, Africa, Oceania and America used as soldiers and war workers by the European colonial empire; at that time prisoner in Germany

2) During World War I German linguists continued their research in prisoner camps as their research activities in far countries were no longer possible. For their research texts from the bible were used, the standard method in European dialectology research of that time.

3) see keywords *hybridity* and *creolization*: Tracey Nicholls: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fanon/>

Participants Rivière-Pilote:

- Monsieur Le Père Wilfried Bannais, Eglise Immaculé Conception
- Guide of the Ecomusée
- Monsieur Hervé Zénoki, Bibliothèque populaire Frantz Fanon and RLDM-Radio Lévê Doubout Matinik
- Monsieur Miguel Georges Joachim-Arnauld, great-great-grandson of François Joachim-Arnauld

Acknowledgement:

Jenson Anto, Francis Bovet, Marie-Louise Bahnik, cmunz artists, Lilian Hasler, Dolores Hegnauer, Michael Nitsch, José Scarabello, Marisa Unholz; Marie-Theres Weiss, Marina Gentile

Idea, concept and realisation: Rahel Hegnauer

Audio editing and mixing: Lukas Unholz

By courtesy of:

© Sound archive, Humboldt-University Berlin:

Audio recording: French-Martinique, Parable of the Prodigal Son, PK 744 (No. 11040)

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Original title: "Peau noire, masques blancs", © Editions du Seuil, Paris 1952