Sound Acts, Part 2: Copresen(t/c)ing Vibration

Caitlin Marshall, Patricia Herrera, and Marci R. McMahon

Dear readers, if you are just tuning in to this ongoing jam session, we invite you to get (un)settled and listen to the frequencies tapped herein. You can always replay our opening salvo to sound and performance studies in Sound Acts, Part I or immerse yourself in the melodic lines of argument put forth in this second issue.

Since the last issue, there have been many changes: births, deaths, continued and new pandemics of systemic racism, conservative backlashes against critical race theory, the war in Ukraine, and the continued violent assault on reproductive justice and LGBTQ+ lives. The heightened vulnerability of bodies laid bare by the pandemic seems ironically to have produced an insistence on the manifold vulnerability of those always already in the crosshairs of power. This is the calculated effect of a neoliberal society charging full speed ahead toward "normalcy," erasing white supremacy's systemic realities (before anyone can notice).

In the first issue, we claimed that vibrating bodies perform and that the sonic is a constellation of acts. The digital presence of our current historical moment calls us to realize that sound acts—the performance of vibration—are social and therefore exist under specific material conditions. As the pandemic moved forward and our modes of coming together shifted online, we experienced time, distance, sound, and sociality differently. We came to understand the incredible potentiality of live digital performance and what it means to create in mediated real-time. Namely, as three friends and coeditors who have worked solely over Zoom in the past two-plus years, we understand at a molecular level that physical presence is not inherently more intimate than mediated copresence. We also came together with the authors of this two-part special issue on Zoom during the American Studies Association conference in November 2021. We have thus spent an enormous amount of time socially distanced and (by technical necessity) in a single stream sound. Yet we must acknowledge that even when live and copresent, what digital performances mediate is the palpable, cavernous space and time between bodies. On Zoom, we cannot yet produce live, synchronous musical theatre. It is not yet possible to speak simultaneously or in chorus with others, per a script's direction. We can't even sync up the familiar refrains of "Happy Birthday" without a delay, a lag, an echo of time that signals the space/time between our gathered, live, and copresent bodies. We are reminded of Masi Asare's podcast, "Voicing Across Distance," in which she explores how technology has altered our perceptions of time, sound, and distance as we experience sonic glitches, sonic tics, and lag times on Zoom.

Caitlin Marshall is a senior lecturer in Theatre History and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her writing appears in *Postmodern Culture*, *Sounding Out!*, *Twentieth Century Music*, and *Journal of American Musicological Society*. **Patricia Herrera** is an associate professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance, and in the American Studies and Women, Gender & Sexuality Programs, at the University of Richmond. She is the author of *Nuyorican Feminist Performances: From the Café to Hip Hop* (University of Michigan Press, 2020). **Marci R. McMahon** is a professor in the Literatures and Cultural Studies Department at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and the author of *Domestic Negotiations: Gender, Nation, and Self-Fashioning in US Mexicana and Chicana Literature and Art* (Rutgers University Press, 2013).

In this ongoing pandemic of cautious coming together with ebbs and flows of masking or not masking and hugging or not hugging, we recognize now more than ever that sound is an embodied act. In claiming sound as embodied, we recognize the fragility and vulnerability of bodies differently situated whose personhood, including their visibility and audibility, is constrained by hegemonic structures. When Asare urges us to "liv[e] in the space of that gap" between sound and body (Episode 1), she heeds us to pay attention to the effects of power that play out inequitably over differently situated bodies: deaf/hearing, incarcerated/de-incarcerated, homeland/diaspora, academia/grassroots, archive/lived past, individual/collective, and Indigenous/settled. The gap—one felt globally by a pandemic and failed governmental responses—is, for many, an echo of conditions that necessitate the routine mediation of space and time as a fact of daily survival.

As we have come to understand that the conditions of possibility for sound acts are fraught and fragile, we have learned new ways of attending to how vibrating bodies perform.[1] To transmit this new apprehension to you, our listeners-cum-readers, we ask in this issue: What is the nature of relation in vibrational performance? What can sound acts teach us about the work of relation and coalition, in daily life and in radical scholarship? How do sound acts work across distance, over time, and through mediation? What is the ontology of a sound act? Sound acts are techniques enabling performances to travel over geographic and temporal spaces that account for power and privilege. Our desires to *sound with* one another draw attention to the inherent sociality of sound as vibrational performance.

This whole issue scores the vibration of performance as an improvisational art of living and being with others. As we prepared this introduction, we re-read together out loud the works that anchored our 2020 *Revolutions in Sound Symposium*, which are reproduced herein: the keynote duet delivered by Alexandra T. Vazquez and Christine Bacareza Balance and Iván Ramos's Introduction to the duet. It was so emotional to receive these works in person. It felt like sustenance or a parachute before the cliff of the pandemic. These works have continued a tether of life support over the past difficult years. Ramos's concept of "listening together," a shared sonic practice that activates care and sustains affinities across differences, amplified difference. More than two years into a pandemic, listening and sounding are tenuous and delicate collective processes, a web of performed relations that stretches across distance and time. We thank Iván for reminding us that the keynote speakers were great friends and that their intimacy was a significant part of their intellectual work.

The performance of relationality that Vazquez and Bacareza Balance's duet offered was, and continues to be, instrumental in our conception of the call back. In our first issue, we defined "calling back" as "a citational method of doing and making knowledge collaboratively, with care and attentiveness to receiving, registering, and reflecting radical thought across distance, difference, and time" (Marshall, Herrera, and McMahon 2020, 1). As we recently revisited Vazquez and Bacareza Balance's words—our own practice of calling back—we found greater nuance in our previous framework. More than a dialogue, which establishes the fundamental foreclosure of two or more individuals following the same script, a duet accommodates another's vibration and validates multiplicity over the promise of dialectical harmony. A duet requires an improvisational arrangement of oneself vis-à-vis another's vibrational presence. It draws attention to togetherness *because of* difference, facilitating radical possibilities for listening and readerly participation. Listening to the keynote through the filter of the past two years, we recognize calling back as an act that fundamentally unsettles the epistemological and ontological certainty of a listener through a practice of attending, ethically, to the specificities of another's presence and the way they receive and reflect vibration. If "[c]alling back is a long-term ethical commitment to interrupting oppression through

revolutions in sound" (1), we realize that calling back does this by a commitment to a radical opening of self that, while laying open vulnerabilities, is importantly also a mode of survival.

Bacareza Balance's words "I can never abandon my embodied knowledge" melded into our bodies and intimately called us back to the flesh as we crafted this opening (15, this issue). Our first special issue linked sound and performance studies through their mutual investment in material bodies (human or non-) and insisted on sound—the physical phenomenon of bodies in vibration—as sites of enactment (Marshall, Herrera, and McMahon 2020, 3). Two years later in the wake of tremendous global loss, we ask: What does it mean to call back those who vibrate in presence with us, even if that presence is not copresence or copresent? Calling back hails one to receive the vibrational presence of another and to find a practice of being with another even when that other is no longer in your present and/or corporeal presence. We feel another even when their vibration reaches us over Zoom, through the page, or across the great divide of death. And here we pause this jam session to presence the vibration of those who have passed in the intervening time, those whose beings still resonate with us:

Ernestine
Vincenza Alessi
Maggie Alvarez
Phyllis Ama
Custudio Canares
Carmen Alivio Canton
Po-Hsien Chu
Donna Thompson-Coons
Marco Espinosa
Mary Louise Espinosa
Warren Fraleigh
Eduardo Alvarez Gastelum
Lucia Herrera
Miguel Herrera
Riad Ismat
Esteban Jauregui
Walter Johnston
Toño Morales
Kimarlee Nguyen
Luisa E. Padilla
Edward L. Robinson Jr.
Diane Rodríguez
Raúl Zamora

In this issue, we recognize more fully the potential of sound to *act* over significant expanses of space and time. Sound acts decay but persist in their slow attenuation. Herein lies a central intervention of sound acts to our home discipline of performance studies: sound acts offer tools and techniques for attending more fully to the wholeness of embodied, vibrational presence as it resonates after the fact of a body's dematerialization.

Vazquez and Bacareza Balance performed this calling back beautifully in their keynote, as they duetted not only to one another but also to their late mentor, José Muñoz. Muñoz is alive in their

duet, in their attending to and radical reflection of traces of presence. Their duet reminds us that the ethics of calling back are a radical, antioppressive citational praxis that revises the self through careful attending to another across and because of difference. Calling back unsettles knowledge formation within the academy and approaches sound acts not as sites of study, but as differential modes of intellectual being: calling back is a mode of feeling toward the production of questions rather than a production of knowledge. The current ways of thinking and writing about sound are Socratic, hierarchical, and polemic. Vazquez and Bacareza Balance warn against this extractive paradigm for newer scholars.[2] We too yearn for more improvisatory disciplinary relations that inform the whole stewardship of this issue. Sound, in all its complexity and analytic slipperiness, allows us to demand more from scholarship: tenderness, care, and friendship as embodied knowledge. This issue itself is an example of that embodiment. Like a trio of authors crafting a single voice, our writing practice unsettles our listening positionality and acknowledges our relations to one another. The Sound Acts call for papers, the *Revolutions in Sound* symposium, and the introductions of this two-part special issue came into being out of radical relation with each other.

We acknowledge that the passage of two years since our gathering at the symposium and the accrued effects of being *in* and *with* the sound acts published here have, by necessity, shifted how we hear, perceive, and are in relation to the work presented in this special issue. In Part 1, our investigation of ethics offered up "sound methods for ethical interactions with the past, power, and subjugated knowledges" (Marshall, Herrera, and McMahon 2020, 4). Using the call back as an overarching intellectual schema, essays in that section deployed sound as a new modality to increase academic purchase toward broad social justice, actions that require scholarship to engage in a critical, reflective practice. Part 2 of our special issue calls back to the conceptual frameworks we inaugurated in the first issue: ethics of performance and scholarship, hermeneutic loops, and ear training. Here, we offer new ways to think about sociality and the performance of vibration under precarious conditions. Sound acts gathered herein investigate the vulnerability and fragility of bodies and how they manifest across shared times and places. Sound acts have always troubled these very assumptions about the fundamental philosophical linchpins of how we understand performance.

Ethics of Performance and Scholarship

It may come as no surprise that at this moment in our essay, we announce that every part of the introduction has been a meditation on the ethics of sound acts. Ramos's "listening together" is instruction for being together and honouring relationships that thrive despite social distance and differential temporalities. His work improvises mentoring as a mode of intellectual inquiry, scholarship as a structure of care, and friendship as theory. In "Giving/Taking Notice," Dylan Robinson explores his listening positionality in relation to the recording "Round Dance" by Cree-Mennonite cellist Cris Derksen on their album *Orchestral Powwow*. Robinson's methodology of "critical listening positionality" offers an openness to the multiple and shifting coordinates and axes of epistemic and ontological engagement. Going beyond the mere words of the recordings of Indigenous songs, he models a "listening-witnessing," which pays attention to songs as "law, medicine and historical documentation and yet still songs" (28). Robinson's work models how we have to witness ourselves in constant improvisation each time we see relation and negotiate our identities.

In their keynote duet, Vazquez and Bacareza Balance redefine listening as an intimate act driven by the embodied vulnerability of the global majority. They harmonize the soundtracks from their

shared homeland politics of Cuba and the Philippines. Describing their connected web of musical engagement, Bacareza Balance uses the term "colonial counterpoint" to identify the global reach of imperial projects in the "American Tropics." She explores the structures of disidentificatory feelings that connect subjects through soundtracks that travel overseas and back across the transatlantic and transpacific pathways of diaspora (20). These colonial counterparts invoke the physicality of sound as it moves between listening and (re)sounding bodies. Writing on this sense of connection across distance, Vazquez calls back to Bacareza Balance's notion of knowledge that resonates across generations. She describes the physical vibrations that travel between (re)sounding bodies and the feeling of "company," of being in and with the presence of others even when they are not in shared copresence with us.

Vazquez inter-animates visual, musical, and performative sites across different temporal moments and geographic locations, listening to the violences underlying a textile, recording, and live music: a Nasrid Tile; the album Lole y Manuel, *Nuevo dia*, c. 1975; and the composition "Stride" by Cuban composer, conductor, programmer, and 2021 Pulitzer Prize–winner Tania León. Vazquez accompanies the synesthesia of colors from the Nasrid Tile with sound and movement, calling back the violence of the Muslim and Jewish evictions. She then turns her ear to the album *Nuevo dia,* knitting these sounds from one violent history to another. Through this imagined, inter-animated listening, Vazquez allows an emotional opening to capture the tiles reverberating the vestiges of historical violences, traumas, and beautiful moments across time.

Bacareza Balance excavates the ethics of embodied intimacies through popular music, emphasizing in particular Filipino structures of feeling and relation through sonic sutures across diaspora, generation, and American (neo)imperialism. Bacareza Balance captures the "world-making magic of community and music" by adopting a writing structure informed by "The Songs We Carry," a 2014 project of critical karaoke with LA Music Center and Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA). Engaging with this form, she takes her readers to a 2019 Philippine Independence Day block party, sharing how the Filipino community affectively responds to Belinda Carlisle's "Heaven Is a Place on Earth," and other Manila sounds. She attends to the sounds that ground her students and reflects on the way Frank Sinatra recordings presence her father, singing along to "All the Way."

Both Vazquez and Bacareza Balance call back to the presence of their teacher José Muñoz, instructing us to constantly seek *relation* because relationality is the fundamental activator of knowledge. However, they recast "interlocution" not as an extractive mode of relation, but as an unfixed stewardship, one that values fluctuations, improvisation, and inchoateness of performance that arise with vulnerability and fragility (and thus the necessity of mutual care) as a certainty and given. Here, sound acts are performances that bring bodies into relation and therefore, in that act, offer ways of creating different futurities.

Hermeneutic Loops

The "ethics of performance and scholarship" section troubles academia's siloing of knowledge production with essays that offer relational and improvisatory modes of inquiry. In this same vein, hermeneutic loops tackle another pernicious divide within the academy: the seemingly intractable epistemic schism between what is included and not included in the historical record. Archives of vulnerable communities have often been neglected, and when they have been seen and heard, they have been entrenched in hegemonic carceral practices. Works in this section create hermeneutic

loop(holes) of retreat for enslaved persons in the archive and for incarcerated Indigenous and Black people. The works in this section replay sound's potentiality to generate strategies of fugitivity and freedom across time and space.

Danielle Bainbridge's essay traces the "aural fugitivity" of nineteenth-century Black enslaved performers, whose sound acts resist archival capture. In "Staging Aural Fugitivity through Nineteenth-Century Freak Show Archives," Bainbridge listens to conjoined twins Millie Christine McKoy, whose improvisational and ephemeral speech acts served as the catalyst for her 2018 performance piece *Curio*. Bainbridge's performance transmits the soundscapes of slavery for a twenty-first-century audience, highlighting the McKoys' soundscape of aural fugitivity as enfreaked performers before emancipation. Bainbridge's *Curio* offers a hermeneutic loophole of retreat from the seemingly totalizing power of slavery's archive. In this loophole, the McKoy twins' performance practices sound out a "conditional freedom from an all-encompassing archival capture" (38).

In "Surface Listening: Free Association in the Wooster Group's *The B-Side: 'Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons' A Record Album Interpretation*," Julie Beth Napolin investigates the Wooster Group's *The B-Side*—a performance piece that features Eric Berryman, Jaspar McGruder, and Philip Moore as they simultaneously listen to and sing an ethnographic artifact, the 1965 LP *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons*. This album is a collection of work songs recorded in a segregated prison by a white ethnographer. Napolin's essay amplifies the album as a different, alternative set of ethical implications that imagines Black personhood beyond the carcerality of the "record." Through the group's embodied and mediated encounter with the artifact, *The B-Side* becomes a historiography of Jim Crow–era segregation, the sonic tradition of the Black Atlantic, and white American cultural appropriation and consumption. Napolin invites readers to listen to *The B-Side* as a singing "cure" for the violence and racial trauma played by the record—both the record of the Wooster Group's racial past through their enactment of blackface and the white supremacist ethnographic practices of *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons*. The performance of free association that vibrates through *The B-Side* thus becomes a hermeneutic loop(hole) between past, present, and imagined future.

In "Listening to Country: Immersive Audio Production and Deep Listening with First Nations Women in Prison," Sarah Woodland, Leah Barclay, Vicki Saunders, and Bianca Beetson share their work with incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre (BWCC) in Australia. Led by an interdisciplinary team of four non-Indigenous and Aboriginal artist-researchers, the essay documents the team's creative collaborative praxis that produced "Listening to Country," a one-hour immersive audio work based on field recordings of natural environments requested by the women inside the prison. The essay shares the team's art-led process and meditates on the ethical implications of working in coalition with Indigenous collaborators across incarcerated and decarcerated (but still penal) colonial spaces. "Listening to Country" aspires to combat the traumas felt by incarcerated Indigenous women who experience separation from family, community, and Country.

Ear Training

The essays in "Ear Training" amplify the formal aesthetics and properties of sound-making practices often overlooked because structural racism, compulsory heterosexuality, and able-bodiedness position them as decidedly *unaesthetic, untechnical,* and *unvirtuosic*. The authors rehearse ear training by exploring the sonic, visual, and kinetic archives of popular culture by BIPOC, Latinx, Japanese, crip,

and feminist cultural producers. Authors in this section train our ears to listen to sound acts that position popular culture—whether through social media, material culture, television, or theatre—as spaces of refusal, resistance, and destabilization.

In "'I'm A Stripper, Ho': The Sonics of Cardi B's Ratchet, Disaporic Feminism," Karen Jaime attunes our ears to the sonic feminist strategies of refusal by Bronx-raised working-class Black Dominican/Trinidadian rapper and songwriter Cardi B. Listening attentively to Cardi B's lyrical cadence, rhythmic delivery, and sartorial presentations, Jaime demonstrates that Cardi B unapologetically refuses the relegation of women to sex objects. Through sonic rejections of respectability, Jaime highlights how Cardi B champions women's sexual agency, pleasure, and frivolity. Drawing on Brittany Cooper's and Nikki Lane's critical interventions on ratchetness, Jaime trains us to listen to Cardi B's performance of her subaltern feminist subjectivities.

In "The Right to Remain 'Silent': Deaf Aesthetics in *GANGSTA.*," Aidan Pang analyzes the 2015 Japanese anime series *GANGSTA.* (ギャングスタ), demonstrating how the show creates a flexible representation of deafness outside binary constructions of able-bodiedness and disability. Pang contextualizes the significance of the Japanese anime show's representation of deafness via the "third ear" (Kochhar-Lindgren 2006) against Japanese television's typical representations of disability within Western models. Pushing against audist conceptions of deafness, Pang analyzes how the anime series trains audiences to register deafness as a socially constructed relationship between character and audience.

Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr.'s "Embodied Collective Choreographies: Listening to Arena Nightclub's Jotería Sonic Memories" calls back the aural experiences of queer conviviality as youth dance their heart out at Arena, an iconic Los Angeles nightclub demolished in 2015. Using queer oral histories, ethnographic interviews, archival material, social media content, and performance analysis, Alvarez Jr. enacts jotería listening as a practice that trains the "ear" (and the whole body) to document and archive what the sound acts of queer nightlife do to dancing bodies, choreographing ephemeral moments of queer Brown euphoria and freedom. Arena's sonic memories, as Alvarez Jr. argues, are embodied forms of knowledge—whistles, foot-stomping, and clapping—that archive jotería life, queer histories of the city that have been erased, forgotten, or razed.

In Mariel Martínez Alvarez's interview with Nelda Castillo, the director of the Havana-based theatre company El Ciervo Encantado, she listens to the embodied and sonic practices of the theatre company that expand our understanding of Cuban identity at different historical moments of the island. The company's pieces *Departures* and *Arrivals*, based on personal testimonios, train our ears to listen to not only the stories of different generations of Cubans who left the island—and keep leaving—but also to stories of resistance and belonging. El Ciervo Encantado's methodological approach to sound amplifies noise and sonic dissonances as beautiful, harmonic, and proper. Their work is focused on the relational and the fragility of performance, allowing for the possibilities of sound to capture the multilayered experiences of violence, memory, and belonging in post-Soviet Cuba.

Conclusion

For all the vibrating bodies evoked heretofore in this introduction, sound acts and calling back inaugurate a copresence and copresent despite (or in the midst) of death, disease, and disability, of

gentrification, of transphobia and homophobia, of anti-blackness, of respectability politics and misogyny, of inhabiting neoimperial spaces and spaces of exception, such as prisons or reservations/reserves, of the silencing power of enslavement, and of the archive. It is also, of course, a political necessity when doing the work of antiracism and social justice to point to the joy, the revolution, the alternative, and radical worlds of global majority sound practices. This is to say that even before the pandemics of 2020 and their aftermath, sound acts always already call back and riff across power's rifts of distance and time. Sound acts call back against power's grain and model a promiseful being together in the face of beings' extinction.

This jam session started over five years ago, in January 2017, as a tentative coming together of three kindred spirits who gravitated toward sound. Listening together takes sustained, long-term commitment: no surprise since ethical antioppressive practice requires the time to forge deep relation. Calling back is and has always been a long arc. But this is not the end: we leave you, the listener, with the work of jamming oppression with the resilient tools of calling back sound acts.

Notes

1. In 2021 and 2022, for instance, we have seen an unprecedented wave of new and revived work on Broadway either by Black creators or that dramatized Black life: the 2022 Tony Award–nominated *Paradise Square* (Natha Tysen and Masi Asare); *A Strange Loop* (Michael R. Jackson); *Kimberly Akimbo* (Jeanine Tesori and David Lindsay-Abaire); and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide* (Ntozake Shange, choreographed by Black choreographer Camille A. Brown), among others. The infrastructure to support and sustain the ongoing production of Black art on Broadway is fragile, however, due to the structural racism of the theatre industrial complex. Even as we want to celebrate these Black cultural productions, we note the structural vulnerability of the Black cohorts that brought these works to the stage.

2. Dylan Robinson, in his essay in this issue, "Giving/Taking Notice," also argues against extractive, settler paradigms of knowledge production.

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Introduction to Keynote Duet

Iván A. Ramos

As Caitlin Marshall and I began conceptualizing the shape of the in-person element of the symposium, we almost instantaneously landed on who we wanted to deliver the keynotes, as well as a format that would capture the spirit of intellectual camaraderie we hoped to produce. We thought that there could be no better way to upend the format of the keynote talk than asking our speakers to enter into conversation together, what we called a duet. Christine and Alex, perhaps as we hoped, exceeded our wildest expectations and delivered a keynote duet that was both intellectually rigorous and deeply moving. As Balance and Vazquez mention in their own preamble, this was the last opportunity many of us had to be together in person before the global COVID-19 pandemic hit. I could go on about how that final moment of being together helped sustain me in the year and a half that we could have never imagined was coming, or the bittersweet reality that this event would be one of my last times on campus at the University of Maryland before starting my new position, but for now, I can only celebrate that their generous duet can be shared with the rest of the world with these words that I was fortunate to share to introduce our speakers.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that I owe much of my relationship to the field of sound studies and, in fact, the ongoing trajectory of my own scholarship at the intersection of sound and performance studies to the work of Alexandra Vazquez and Christine Balance. In what feels like a lifetime ago, I was a graduate student struggling to write a dissertation prospectus, drawing out the process over months while looking for the key piece that would allow me to articulate how exactly I would approach my objects and wondering if a coherent argument would ever come together. I knew that I was engaging with an emergent field called "sound studies," and although the field had by then produced its first few canonical texts and even an invaluable anthology edited by Jonathan Sterne, I wasn't sure if my project was "sound studies" enough. Even as the field was still taking shape, it was recent enough to generate scholarly suspicion from many quarters. Would sound studies continue to find its place in the academy, or would it turn out to be a passing interdisciplinary fad? And even beyond the distrust that tends to follow burgeoning fields of inquiry, I wasn't sure if my collection of sonic objects fit among the earliest major books and essays in the field, which felt overwhelmingly white or at least disconnected from the Mexican and Latinx context that my work engages with. On top of my uncertainties about sound studies, I also wasn't quite sure where it connected with my intellectual home, performance studies, as I wondered if managing two interdisciplinary fields would eventually damn me to accusations of being too broad, too ungrounded, perhaps not serious enough.

I laboured over that prospectus to the point of exhaustion, at one point scrapping it altogether in favour of directions that, although less exciting, at least felt more grounded. But as the drafts accumulated and I got closer to surrendering, Alexandra Vazquez's *Listening in Detail* was published. I remember reading it over a couple of sittings, struck with the excitement of a young scholar who suddenly found a spark of recognition that in turn opened a whole new world. Here was a book that brought together my many fields, the model that I had been searching for. My dissertation was now possible, no longer lost in the wilds of uncertainty. "Listening in detail" captured the thing that I had been chasing, a methodology that, although equally rooted in performance and sound studies,

Iván A. Ramos is an assistant professor in the Department of Theatre Arts & Performance Studies at Brown University. He is the author of *Sonic Negations: Unbelonging Subjects, Inauthentic Objects, and Sound between Mexico and the United State*s, forthcoming from New York University Press.

exceeded their disciplinary boundaries to explain the experience of listening that I knew intimately but had failed to find a name for. Not only that, "listening in detail"—the book and the concept—emerged from the specificities and the quandaries of transnational Latinidad. After all my searching, I had before me, all of a sudden, a version of sound studies that could include me. Vazquez's intervention felt so revelatory and urgent that I wanted to shout it from the rooftops, which led to getting over my fear of publishing and completing my first publication, a review of *Listening in Detail* in *E-misférica*.

In the spirit of Vazquez's careful and rigorous attention to the power of the detail, I particularly remember feeling hailed by the final chapter and her mention of a care package that a friend had sent from California, which led to a reflection of the bonds produced by listening together across difference, in this case the ways in which sonic gestures allowed the "cold war kids" of the Caribbean and the Asias to find affinity, perhaps a sort of recognition, that exceeded the confines of history and geography. That package articulated the boundedness between sound and care that had first led me to my project but whose sounds remained faint.

That package, I found out soon after, had been sent to Alex Vazquez by Christine Bacareza Balance. I was living in New York at the time, and I had heard of a legendary friendship they had forged during their time at NYU as students of José Esteban Muñoz. But what I could never have anticipated when I first read that chapter is just how much this personal and intellectual bond would extend in even more unexpected ways to myself and my work until I read Balance's *Tropical Renditions*. I had a book that captured the unruliness of listening, the way it exceeds the certainty of identity, and its resistance to becoming folded to national or ethnic scripts. "Disobedient listening" accounted for how minoritarian subjects, in this case Filipino musicians in the diaspora, use sound and music to stand up against the constant onslaught of state violence. In the years since, I have remained especially indebted to Balance's deft and caring critique of the demands that "authenticity" makes upon subjects who live between nations, worlds, and genres. This argument, Balance's powerful defence of inauthenticity, which she frees from negative associations and sees instead as an aspirational method and way of being, has sustained my writing. As someone whose rejection of nationalist and identitarian sonic scripts has always come with accusations of being a "bad" Mexican subject, *Tropical Renditions* invited me to embrace this accusation and assured me that by doing so, a new critical language of refusal to the norms of identity could emerge. Disobedient listening offers a capacious soundscape that understands how those of us who fail to be beckoned by the fiction of belonging end up finding other homes in other worlds, brought together by forms of listening that we come to invent together. I can only begin to articulate here what a radical act of generosity Balance's book has been for me in moments of uncertainty as I walk around the edges of unbelonging.

If this brief introduction risks the solipsism of entwining the critical interventions of these two scholars to my experience of them, it is because I remain firm in a conviction that the best scholarly work moves beyond conventions of distance, opening instead new directions for understanding our place in the world, making sense of the difficulty of subjectivity toward something more capacious, a place where intellectual rigour and the experience of selfhood become inseparable. In that spirit, I close and make way for the beautiful intervention in the following pages by acknowledging that beyond the intellectual domains Alex Vazquez and Christine Balance have made possible, I have also been incredibly fortunate to know them as two of the most generous and caring interlocutors and mentors in what often feels like the solitary project of a scholarly career. Over coffees, drinks, and sometimes brief and sometimes extensive chats across hallway encounters at conferences and

beyond, Alex and Christine have also modelled for me what it means to extend the work of listening together beyond the page and toward breaking down the institutional walls of the academy. In other words, I want to thank them not only for their work but for all of the times when their attention has taken the form of simply and sincerely asking how things are going and the generosity of extending their friendship in both personal and professional realms, a generosity I know they have offered to so many others who have followed the paths they have carved through their work and mentorship. This duet is our dream come true. Thank you, Alex and Christine, for showing us how the revolutionary dreams conjured by acts of listening (and thus being) together, even when faint, allow us to glimpse into the horizon of a world yet to be.

"Revolutions in Sound": Keynote Duet

Christine Bacareza Balance and Alexandra T. Vazquez

The authors were honoured by the invitation to present a dialogic duet keynote for the *Revolutions in Sound* conference beautifully imagined by Caitlin Marshall, Patricia Herrera, Marci McMahon, and Iván Ramos. Their collective generosity included not only food, travel, and an honorarium but also some much-needed intellectual sustenance: they provided us with several prompts to work with for our remarks. You will find their questions below in bold and our respective answers to follow. It was a moving experience of turn-taking in the live, of singing in round, rather than a masterful display of individualistic pontification. The authors would like to extend our infinite thanks for the organizers' thoughtful questions and for giving us such rich soil to plant future idea seedlings. For many of us, this was our last moment of being with others before the isolation of the pandemic took hold, and it is partly for this reason we have left our remarks mostly unedited. Here they are published very much as they were delivered in the live so as to record that moment of togetherness and to also remind of a polemical mode that is possible when in an actual room with others that you can see, hear, and feel. There is thus a palpable sense of safety-in-experimentation in our remarks.

I. Why sound? What openings did/does sound provide your scholarship? What formations of thought or feeling were lacking in other tools/methods that were only possible through sound?

Response by Alexandra T. Vazquez

What are we talking about when we evoke the word sound? Sound is often used to announce, over and over again, a disciplinary formation. When you say or hear "sound," our reflexes have been trained to append "studies." It seems now you can't say or hear one without the other. This willing or unwilling codification of an emergent discipline tries to rein in things that have been a little unruly for the writing about music. "Sound" as a critical molecule is made to take in and quickly attach to both "studies" and "unruliness," which is a lot for a little word. Transformed into a frustrating contradiction that tugs between the impulse to tame and the more principled letting be, sound has become the paralyzing variety of scholarly operatives. It has been used to quickly name the stuff they didn't want to hear. For example, to English departments, sound said and says: "books make noise." To musicology departments, sound said and says: "there is more to the score." Let me be clear that these bountiful intrusions have been at work for many decades. And yet, "sound," which had been perforce a way to represent all that couldn't be named, has now become a way of naming what isn't given enough time or space to be said. In English, "sound" may have been heard, but not all the way, and somehow removes the bodies and ghosts from what we meant as noise. Similarly, in musicology, "sound" often replaced a focus on "the work" with a strong preoccupation with equipment rather than people. Related to all this, we find in sound an auto-shorthand for a website or c.v. that organizes vast interests into a marketable lure for professional opportunities, to attract

Christine Bacareza Balance is an associate professor of performing & media arts and Asian American studies at Cornell University, the author of *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America* (Duke University Press, 2016), and co-editor, with Lucy Burns, of *California Dreaming: Movement and Place in the Asian American Imaginary* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020). **Alexandra T. Vazquez** is an associate professor of performance studies at New York University and the author of *The Florida Room* (Duke University Press, 2022) and *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music* (Duke University Press, 2013).

students to our seminars, to perform public readiness that you bear some nontraditional approach to music, or listening, or more generally, to mark a capaciousness for objects of study.

What is made possible when we don't care to make any discipline feel better about the various silences they are so invested in continually suppressing? Or, for that matter, making sound work as various examples for all the Studies, rather than assuming that sound models, in advance, the pleasures and difficulties of survival and coalition? And so, why not play and thrive in sound involvement with all the implied stuff that refuses a name and doesn't need permission to matter by a Studies Reader. What is made possible when we don't force sound to the frontlines of the disciplinary interventions that junior, adjunct, and contract faculty are under tremendous pressure to make all the time? This "Revolutions in Sound" symposium offers a wondrous and wonderful occasion to work with other senses of sound in ways that keep in ear, all the time, what is really and actually important, which I might posit as people, plants, animals, water. Sound as wonder-word of approximation, as in "sounds like" or "they sound"; as sinew that might strum some thinking on the relationship between a song and to its seemingly incongruous bust-a-move part. And how to feel sound as that which gives a sense of precious significance to those things thought to have none: the weird aside a performer will make, or that feedback pierce that tells the guitarist about themself.

I still want to think about how all this sound has and continues to take place in song. Song, as sign and thing, may have fallen out of fashion, but it has been unfairly abandoned in the larger drive to differentiate one's individualistic scholarly find from an undifferentiated mass. This drive makes roadkill of the musicians that give and gave us so much. The avant-garde or the experimental has never been good at making room for the popular or the song. "Song" is, of course, an incomplete category. I don't mean an enclosed sense of work but something that takes in all of its social worlds, dance work, and the rest. I mean it along the lines of Kofi Agawu's sense of music as "an escape from ordinary, lived time . . . to stage a departure from an ordinary marked realm into a marked one" (2016, 29). The popular—which is not necessarily the same as the contemporary—leaves so much room for engagement with sound artists (musicians without the gallery). None of them need theorists to argue for them, to argue for their mattering because to so many, they already do. How do they instead invite theorists to take part in something alongside them?

II. How has listening to/feeling with/and working with sound influenced your respective radical practices as scholars? What formations of thought or feeling were lacking in other tools/methods that were only possible through sound?

Response by Christine Bacareza Balance

Music and sound structure memories.
A man's slow exhale as a guitar strums the opening notes of "Superstar" by The Carpenters.
"This is my life as a freshman in college
from Sunday night until Friday evening
I play with freedom and adulthood
Weekends my first quarter of college
are spent back in my childhood room
The drive down the 405 on Sunday evenings with my parents may take an hour
but it feels longer
The minutes on the drive feel like a countdown to my mini-version of independence . . ."

Thurston Moore breathily sings: "long ago, and oh so far away . . ."

The snippet you just heard was written and performed by Elaine Dolalas and was part of "The Songs We Carry," a 2014 project I worked on in collaboration with the L.A. Music Center and Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), a community-based organization in L.A.'s Historic Filipinotown.[1] Sound designer/DJ Gary Gabisan and I identified four Filipinx American storytellers and community leaders. We asked them to choose a song and write a short piece in the style of "Critical Karaoke," introduced by poet and critic Joshua Clover. "The conceit," said Clover, "was this: you get to talk about a single song, for the length of the song, while the song is playing behind you." Their pieces were recorded either in their own homes or at SIPA, a community space that, over the years, has hosted Sessions LA—DJ Phatrick's (Patrick Huang) make-shift DJ academy—as well as the Balagtasan Collective (BC) and Foundation Funkollective—groups that gave rise to hip hop artists such as Native Guns' Bambu de Pistola (Jonah Deocampo) and Kiwi Illafonte (Jack DeJesus) and the Black Eyed Peas. Through the alchemy of music and words, the project's storytellers—Dolalas, Michael Nailat, Faith Santilla, and Joel Quizon—captured memories and feelings otherwise submerged, slightly reverberating under the surface.[2] Their stories mapped Filipinx America across Southern California—from Valley to Valley, San Gabriel to San Fernando; from county to county, Orange to Los Angeles to Ventura; on freeways, in cars, and at LAX (Los Angeles International) airport, the original arrival al space for every Filipino immigrant. Their stories had everything to do with mobility across cities and suburbs, oceans, and time zones. Their stories were made available via a phone service where listeners could dial in and hear each person's song and story.

In my public humanities/community work and my teaching, I centre sound and music as a way of bringing people together, a technique that many of us learned on the grade school playground, at family parties, and around high school lunch tables. "Who's your favourite band?"—a shorthand and short-cut to intimacy and communion with others. At the beginning of each semester, I tap into these types of questions by starting every first day of class by asking my students to fill out a questionnaire that includes "What music are you listening to these days?" and "What songs have carried you through?" Popular culture is not only a battlefield. It is also a confessional booth. My students' answers help me to gather a "feel" for where they are at and what sparks their joy. Their answers are a common language through which our relationships, our collaborations as teachers and students, can grow over sixteen weeks (and beyond).

I aim to instil in all my students the ethos of my own teachers. As my *kumare* Alex Vazquez so lovingly documents in her introduction to *Listening in Detail* (2013), I continually remind students that our writing about and of music is a response to the question "What does the music sound like?" How might we approach our musical objects of study—both live performances and recordings—in an "interanimated" manner so that we remain attuned to how sound is amplified and inspired by the literary, visual, and other sensorial modes (Moten 2003)? What do we gain—what is at stake—in bringing these modes together, especially when talking and writing about race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability? How might this synesthetic approach offer us alternative languages for writing about music, a way out of the restrictive and prescriptive modes of cultural norms? How might we not only recognize the limits of a singular mode of analysis but also apprehend and lovingly transmit the complexity of life and sound itself?

We might look to artists who have considered such questions in their work. Filmmakers who add emotional layers to a story through sound and image. The saturation of colour and sound in Barry

Jenkins' *Moonlight*. The eerie-ness indexed by the Luniz' "Five On It" in Jordan Peele's *Us*. The ways Wong Kar-Wai sets and edits a scene so that we never hear "California Dreaming" the same way again. Poets whose words begin and end and begin again as orality. Their poems are documents of sounds from the past and scripts for future soundings. And I reflect upon my own experience as a singer and performer. How much I want to bring you, the reader and listener, onstage and backstage with me. How much I want to let you in on the feeling of sitting with the band before and after a set. I can never abandon my embodied knowledge nor my radical empathy for performers. They are forms of imagining and theorizing those moments and feelings, both on- and off-stage, and, in doing so, wagering what it all means. I want you to learn, as much as I do, from my conversations and dialogues with bandmates, audience members, and friends, as well as from the songs I listen to, the books and articles I read in solace.

I often meditate upon the type of listening that reading enables. Like prayer, reading forces you to stay present with words, especially those that come from a time and place outside of yourself. The rhythm of people's words on the page can startle you, make you catch your breath, and sometimes even soothe you, especially when they are no longer physically present. These past two years, I have been thinking so much about friends who have passed on, about how clearly their voice comes through in their writing. Traces of their conference presentation tone, their cadence when teaching, our after-hours cackles and whispered side conversations. Reading has now become a different type of "being-with" (Sedgwick 2003). My own practice of writing, a continual attempt to ensure my friends and family, in the future, will always feel me nearby.

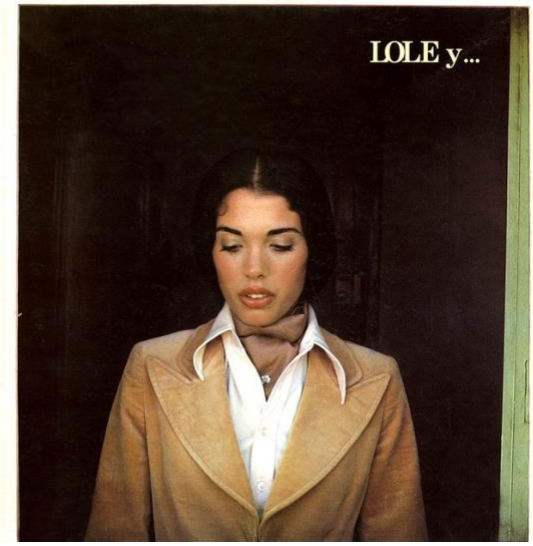
I teach my students to approach texts and music like this: to listen close so we hear and imagine pasts re-sounding. To listen long so we hear where another is coming from. To listen deeply, never forgetting the effort that goes into the writing and music-making. Listen not just one time but instead through perpetual re-visions and re-turns. What does it mean to stay long and close enough with a piece of reading, with a piece of music? In this era of memes and GIFs, around-the-clock news cycles and swift "cancels," an unending barrage of emails and texts and notifications, it is revolutionary to just linger in the words, the sounds, the music. Like sleep and rest, reading and writing are *not* luxuries but instead our means of survival (Lorde [1977] 2020).

III. How might work on sound might change the field of performance studies? What new world views might this research help up imagine?

Response by Alexandra T. Vazquez

Here is one rudimentary answer by way of two things, side by side. On the left is a Nasrid tile from fifteenth-century Al-Andalus, fired by an unknown artist when the Iberian Peninsula was in the midst of a dual-expulsion: the removal of its Jewish and Muslim populations, which is the same time, almost exactly, that Isabella sent exploratory boats, captained by thugs, to the new world. A counterpoint is the cover of the album *Nuevo día* by the great duo Lole y Manuel, which I mean to specifically evoke the song "Todo es de color." The song was recorded in 1975 around the official if not the actual end of the Franco dictatorship and the strange dizzying activity that dovetailed with his death.

Nasrid tile, fifteenth century, glazed and painted blue and manganese earthenware with lustre, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, 1948–31 (Bordoy 1992, 102).



Lole y Manuel, *Nuevo dia*, c. 1975, collection of Alexandra T. Vazquez.

In the tile, there is so much sensible movement turned into aesthetic shapes, lines, repetitions. We feel the strange strata of influence and how it works, where it enters ear and eye, how it trains the hands, alters the brushstroke. We learn of the many inheritance factors here: how to mix color, with what earth elements (given or imported), and how color requires foresight. For the artist has to understand the play and travails of tone before it is fired. The tile teaches us that color is in some ways reliant on past knowledge, but to work with it takes some confidence, or surrender, in taking a chance. The worlds that happen between color as it is set down and color as it is glazed all ask: how will it turn out? The tile, this singular tile of many, is noisy for all its palpable migrancies, evictions, goodbyes, last gasp collaborations, and brings to life an artist that hoped to bring all that and all them in a small space in a short time. In other words: Todo es de color.

And in the song, "Todo es de color," we're given the profound honour of beginning with an in-process announcement, a relentless refrain that we just know has been going on for many years before our hearing of it. It is sung by one voice and one guitar to accompany it but sounds overfull in peopling and placing. Todo es de color, everything is of color, everything is color, everything is made of color, everything in color. Lole y Manuel are heralded as pioneers of new deep song, Flamenco's radical turn. Stylistically, they made words clearer; there is an openness to their dialecto andaluz. The sparseness of their work invited in so much countercultural adornment. But there is something here other than relief. Rather, there is a reminder that shifts are not always experienced outwards but are opportunities to keep sharing secrets, to maintain the vitality of whispering, over the long term, with a chosen another. Here we hear something of what is made possible by the duet, whether named outright or suggested for their audiences. In Lole's voice, we hear her mother, Antonia La Negra, her Algerian birthplace, and all she brought with her from there to here. We hear the dynastic mode of Flamenco that happens in plain sound of everyone. We hear in Lole y Manuel's song an aftermath where air might not be needed or sought out, but oxygen quietly and continually shared, given, and taken in turns.

To turn to, or better put, trust the tile as a guide to listen closer to Lole y Manuel, half a millennium after it was fired, is the activity performance studies. And perhaps the most fun thing we get to do in the field is to take up aesthetics as a way to think about other aesthetics. A blood and guts aesthetics that honours the histories that made them possible. The best kind of performance studies is one that takes aesthetics and all those things that happen and are important to them (the people, plants, animals, water), that takes all of that and makes a kind of third eye between objects even when they are five hundred years apart. An object such as this tile helps us to listen to what's happening in this song, which is not a cathartic recording after a dictatorial fall, but a kind of bleary eye-opening after a too-long bad dream that finds echoes in other bleary eye openings from the shared sand of southern Spain. The song is of its place and time, but it is also of the time of Al-Andalus. There is no comparative or equivalency being made here. What performance studies (that place I live and breathe and not necessarily my job) encourages me to do is to not only take in this tile and this song as things of their place and their time but as this place and this time of sound writing. The tile, you will note, is a musical composition, a form of sound notation; and the song is a surrender to color, the in-between of its setting down and firing. It takes up the chances given and taken away from the unknown artist of the tile. Doing away with what officially counts as composition, as musical score, as song might be an impulse given permission by sound or performance studies, but really, I love to think of it as antiquity and its formats demanding more of our present listenings.

IV. Academic genealogies and official disciplinary histories can be restrictive to creative intellectual thought. At the same time, scholars of color—particularly queer, disabled, and/or women of color scholars—have historically been written out of such disciplinary genealogies. We therefore find it important to acknowledge those scholarly forebears whose thoughts on performance, critical race, and sound preceded and made possible our own work. To that end, what work(s), traditions of thought, and/or mentors made possible the creative imaginings and leaps of faith that led to your own scholarly work? What was already built when you began to dream, and what did you need to build for yourselves?

Response by Christine Bacareza Balance

What does it mean to have learned how to think and write about Filipino/Filipino American performance, about Asian American critique, from scholars of black studies, Cuban/Latinx studies, queer studies? I think about this question often and am indebted to José Esteban Muñoz and Fred Moten, two teachers who helped me find a way into (and then out of) conversations on race, form, the archipelagic, blackness, queerness, and performance. Through José, I also felt the queer genealogy of Eve Sedgwick coursing through our writing and thinking. Her model of the reparative (as opposed to paranoid) stays with me as a means of approaching music, culture, and life itself. A reparative practice revels in reaching for the unknown rather than assuming a politics of "uncovering." It returns to me to the work of Joshua Chambers-Letson and Robert Diaz, Alexandra Vazquez on "surprise," and Martin Manalansan on queer living and "queer mess" (Chambers-Letson and Diaz 2006; Vazquez 2009; Manalansan 2014). Of Daphne Brooks, Gayle Wald, Josh Kun, who all pay close attention to the ways in which popular music *matters* (Brooks 2021; Wald 2008; Kun 2005). Of Fred Moten (2003) and Saidiya Hartman (1997), who show us how to read against the grain and remind us that, even within institutions and their constraints, there can be resistance and, yes, even joy. These scholars, and so many more, model for us different ways of writing—where the poetic and philosophical live side by side, where the teacher patiently explains critical theory and the

ways it travels from high to low culture, where we enter the archive together and come out the other side to tell a different story of life and music.

Performance studies offers us a language for describing the edges of our knowing—those feelings, emotions, and moments when the body, memory, and music come together. Not just a visual approach, not just a literary approach, not just a kinesthetic approach, but all those (and more) in concert. Performance studies moves us beyond what ethnomusicology, musicology, and even pop music studies offer. Performance studies allows us a different way of talking about race and gender and bodies through/in performance. It allows us a different way of envisioning time and sound—the event of a performance impressed on a recording; the recording as both object and the re-sounding of a performance; the event of playback; the recording as a condition of possibility for another performance, another sounding. Voices of the past and the great beyond, sound and music as those things we keep trying to reach for the words to describe. Sound and music and performance as the edge of our knowing, as the vehicles of the reparative itself.

But there are other traditions of thought: the ones not sanctioned by academic life and therefore the ones we work to bring into the room. Lea Salonga's audition for Miss Saigon (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sy-A-wyzj7c) and how it taught me, in the words of Danielle Goldman, that "I want to be ready"(2010). How L-7 and Courtney Love taught me that making noise is a feminist act. How *In Livin' Color*'s Fly Girls taught me sisterhood solidarity and crazy sexy confidence in movement. The way that my parents' records of Bisayan love song/medley and post–World War II crooners taught me about music and memories.

Strings swell and layer upon each other
They crescendo, rolling out a field of feelings
That land on that tonic of C
A note of home where Frank Sinatra's voice enters

"When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you
All the way
Happy to be near you
When you need someone to cheer you
All the way
Taller than the tallest tree is
That's how it's got to be
Deeper than the blue sea is
That's how deep it goes, if it's real . . ."

Face pressed up against our record player's speakers, elementary school year-old me would listen while staring at the sunset settling behind our gauzy living room curtains. Heavenly shades of night are falling, it's twilight time. In the crook of Frank Sinatra's voice, another voice would settle. It was the voice of my dad singing along to this song, his otherwise mild-mannered demeanour now taking on a crooner's comportment. This song, its singing, filled my father with the confidence he lacked after immigrating to the US, a Philippine engineering degree in hand, one that did not pass muster in his new "home" country. In these moments of living room performance, my father let go of those injustices and instead transported himself to another place, another time filled with romance and possibility. To this day, I do not know where Sinatra or Nat King Cole or the Platters' voices end

and my dad's voice begins. I cannot hear those songs without also hearing him—strong and strident and unafraid—singing right along. My father passed away on May 15, 2013. But his voice still lingers.

Response by Alexandra T. Vazquez

It happens on a daily basis, how far, how permeable our thinking and listening genealogies can get. There's nothing quite like the thrill of getting to know a forebear, when you find her, all under-published and in plain sight of everything and everyone. In February of 2020, I was lucky enough to go to the New York Philharmonic to hear a new work by the brilliant composer Tania León. León had been commissioned to write a new work for the Philharmonic for "Project 19," a special series to commission nineteen new works by nineteen women composers to celebrate the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. León is no marginal figure. She is a prolific composer, conductor, programmer, and professor. Imagine a career that began in Havana's most prestigious music conservatory to then come to New York to do it all over at NYU. From 1969 to the early 80s, she was a founding member and musical director of Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theater of Harlem. Other luminous glimmers of her career include her opera *Scourge of the Hyacinths* set to Wole Soyinka's radio play. León is, for many, the gravity for New York's misfit composer community.

For more on this, buy, as soon as possible, Alejandro L. Madrid's *Tania León's Stride: A Polyrhythmic Life* (2021), which will no doubt sit by many of our bedsides. León is a giant among us who is never given enough space and time, and this was her first work to be played by the philharmonic, the very organization for which she was the New Music advisor and conductor in the 90s. My expected night with Tania León, the one I bought the ticket for, was in actuality a program formally billed as Brahms, Strauss, and Tania León. Her piece was programmed between Brahms's "Violin Concerto in D Major" and Richard Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier Suite." I went to the concert with another musical wonder, the composer and saxophone and master chekeré player Yosvany Terry. Before the show began, and because of my New Jersey residence, I told Terry that I would probably slip out after León's piece. And he replied with playful Cuban severity: "you cannot leave before Strauss." It was a way of saying both that the classical music authorities do not give you permission to leave during someone like Strauss, and the ridiculousness of Strauss is something that can't be missed. It is a laugh, in the presence of bombastic seriousness, that we needed to share. So began the Brahms featuring a Dutch violinist Janine Jansen who played the concerto as a demon possessed, fully body listening and talking back to the orchestral onslaught. It was the kind of playing that makes you feel like you can't breathe. And just when we needed it: an intermission.

During the break, the musicians were doubled for León's piece titled "Stride." León took the stage before the orchestra began to say a few words about the work. She told us all how she was inspired by the lives of Susan B. Anthony and her grandmother, women who, as she put it, "walked with firm steps."[3] Though called "Stride," the fifteen-minute piece had nothing of the ways our ears have been trained to comprehend linear progress. León's gentle pull on the metals, putting their off-centre sound subtly and powerfully in such a way that the philharmonic as an institution and public couldn't forget. It was another kind of relentless refrain that had been in progress many years before that and them. The flash of her composition was such that I can't recall its whole; in fact, it resists narrative recall. And this compositional agility of León's means that she tucked right into the live, into us. It was a different kind of recording mechanism and a set of after-effects that compel one to ask who was there and where were they going. The clave, she warned us, was to be present

throughout, but you (the untrained) would only hear it palpably at the end. And they did. Her work changed the light on the stage, and the air was different, only to be quickly cleared by the performance of Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier Suite," which might have been the most hilarious nineteenth-century bomb I ever laid ears on. After the concert, there was a way that León's fans were struck by the planned aggression of the Strauss after her piece and the compensatory of Brahms just before it. And yes, it was a violent and terrible act of programming. But here's the thing: her work stood up to them and us. León showed us Brahms's and Strauss's undoing. She showed us the seams of what made their works feel crazy, by the haunt of some other presence, by modernity's shakeup. Whereas León's grandmother, the real Susan B. Anthony, walked with firm steps.

I relay this story because it was yet another lesson in what official disciplinary histories can't allow (even some of those counternarratives of disciplinary histories). There was the profound sense of company, that walking together when you discover (and you will discover) that someone has been through, thought through everything before. The beloved of our genealogies always welcomes more company. León and her grandmother are the teachers I find in music but in scholarship too, whether the foundational thinking houses of *This Bridge Called My Back*, Chicana and Black feminisms, queer Cuban intellectuals, or all the women who made doing theory while making a living, and more so, making it possible for others to make a living too. I relay this story too because, goddamn it, I loved going to the Philharmonic that night, with all its craziness, its violent strangeness not mine. What a gift to be schooled by León in the midst of it all in ways that were much more difficult and interesting than "finding myself" in or "feeling left out of" the classical lexicon. This is all another way of saying: we have to read and listen and go to everything to keep extending the prop roots of our mangrovian genealogies. And be sure to bring the friend that will tell you to hang on until the end.

IV. In accordance with the question of radical practices, can you talk about how pursuing/writing/thinking about sound has been rooted in relationality and friendship?

Response by Christine Bacareza Balance

My friendship in letters and music with Alex has everything to do with how we see, feel, and inhabit the world. Perhaps not so much the sonic but the musical allows for our shared language—lyrical, affective, and intertextual. There is relationality at the level of the physical body—sound waves resounding within me and then resonating with/from others. But there is also relationality at the level of shared soundtracks, life pathways carved out by sounds. We may have grown up on different coasts, in two distinct cities (both overburdened with cultural meaning)—Los Angeles & Miami—but freestyle, hip hop, Miami bass, and Latinx rap (among others) reverberated in each of these locales, at our high school dances and family parties, while getting ready in salons, garages, and your cousin's bathroom. These commonalities don't begin in the diaspora, of course, but instead signal the shared homeland politics of Cuba and the Philippines, two island nations built under Spain's imperial flag and then under the banner of what Allan Isaac has dubbed the "American tropics" (2006). These musical attachments and kinships are not simply ours to claim, of course, but instead are colonial counterpoints shared by many. Over the years, as we have each travelled around the globe, we see glimpses and hear echoes of these 1898-inspired motifs in the banter of Filipina domestic workers in a Roman piazza on a Sunday morning, in the Cuban Spanish-only conversations of a Hialeah, Florida grocery store, in the murmurs and clanking chopsticks of a

Vietnamese restaurant in Paris or New Orleans, and the roosters (oh, those roosters) that crow as the sun rises over Kaneohe, Hawaii; Talisay, Cebu; Puerto Rico, Long Island, and Santa Ana, Califas. "What's important," Olivia Gagnon and James McMaster remind us, is that we "think together about togetherness . . . Perhaps, to start, it is best just to say that [this] emerges from the collaboration *between* Stewart and Berlant, and it's the between that we are after, after all" (2019, 212) The between as: that which is "at, in, or across the space separating two objects or regions," "in the period separating (two points in time)," "in the interval separating (two points on a scale)," and most important for us here today, "indicating a relationship or connection involving two or more parties" (*Oxford Dictionary of English*). In that period known as graduate school, the "between" of a couple expanded into a cohort, a formation that takes on the makings of a crew, a band, an island of misfit kids. As a professor and mentor, having survived academia as part of constellations of friends and interlocutors, I cultivate among my own students ways of relating and being that work against the institutional mandates of individualism and protocols of exceptionalism.

So, what do music and sound have to tell us, to show us, about such a collectivity? That authorship as a singular act (or voice) is a falsehood. That music and its meanings are always made at these moments, these places of "the between"—between musicians, between musicians and instruments, between musicians, instruments, and a world of sound, between musicians, instruments, and audiences, between fans and the music, and so on.

However, the band, the crew, the cohort are not just a means of survival but also a means for evolution (and even revolution). As a musician, organizer, scholar, and listener, I have witnessed these facts and forms of intimacy since the late 1990s. As our dear José Muñoz writes in *Cruising Utopia*, "I am not just an archivist or a scholar. I am also part of a queer relational orbit, a force field of belonging" (2009, 119). What might it mean for us to think of our work—as scholars, teachers, and community—as the everyday practice of being-with and being alongside (of just being) others through "associations both common and unique"? What types of utopian possibilities can be captured through songs, music, and singing?

I think about that every time I look back at these two short videos I captured at a street party in Escolta, a historic neighbourhood in Manila, during a Philippine Independence Day block party (last June 2019). In the first video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPCYk7zALs4), young Filipinos revel in the familiar rhythms of Manila Sound, a musical genre popular during the 1970s and 1980s, at the height of Ferdinand Marcos' martial rule.[4] These youth, as DJ Arbie Won reminded me, grew up with the musical sounds on the radio and through their parents' record collections. Familiar with the 4-4 beat of VST & Company, they pose and bounce with joy, take selfies and scream with pleasure—a radical publicity—as the song reminds them, "Awitin Mo, At Isasayaw Mo." Sing it and dance it out.

The second video (https://www.youtube.com/shorts/V9X7h1rly_Q) was captured as we were about to leave the street party.[5] Like the young people in the earlier video, I was beckoned by my own 1980s-inflected nostalgia upon hearing the opening notes of Belinda Carlisle's "Heaven Is a Place on Earth." We could chalk up local Filipinos' familiarity with this pop song to America's imperial afterlife or the never-ending time machine that is the Internet. No matter the "why," what the young folks of Escolta did that sweltering evening was remind us of the world-making magic of community and music. As always, we just need to get in there and listen.

Notes

1. I invite readers to listen to the "The Songs We Carry" pieces, in full and performed by the writers, at https://garygabisan.com/audio/.

2. Elaine Dolalas is a Historic Filipinotown-based writer, podcaster, and independent curator. Michael Nailat (aka Waxstyles) was born and raised in Oxnard, educated at UC Irvine and USC, and helps guide Sessions LA, a DJ and music production program for youth. They are one-half of the hosts/crew that bring you "This Filipino American Life" podcast (https://thisfilipinoamericanlife.com/about-us/). Faith Santilla has been a labour and community organizer for the past twenty years and co-founded Pilipino Workers Center in Los Angeles. An award-winning poet, her work has been published widely and is featured in various Beatrock Music artists' songs, including Ruby Ibarra's "Us" (https://rubyibarra.bandcamp.com/track/us-ft-rocky-rivera-klassy-and-faith-santilla). Joel Quizon is a Los Angeles-based/Manila roots arts and culture curator and programmer, filmmaker, and DJ. He is the co-host with DJ Les Talusan of the weekly "OPM Sundays" show on Twitch, featuring original Pilipino music (OPM) from the Philippines and diaspora. For more, visit https://www.joelquizon.com/.

3. Program notes, *Project 19*, New York Philharmonic (February 15, 2020). The program made no mention of León's grandmother.

4. Visit https://www.instagram.com/p/ByLDGwXAqRe/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.

5. Visit https://www.instagram.com/p/ByLEBePgd-7/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.

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Giving / Taking Notice

Dylan Robinson

We might say that naming aspects of positionality is about noticing our noticing and noticing how we notice. The work of positionality—as the work we do to reflect on our habits and biases of noticing—is undertaken with the hope of moving us toward different, non-normative forms of noticing. In *noticing otherwise*, we learn to see, hear, and sense the police orders (Rancière 2004) that structure how we perceive, orders that are often not felt through an authoritative sense of restriction but instead as sense's smoothing out of sensate abrasion. Noticing otherwise involves more than attending to the punctum's singular prick or glancing awry. Giving and taking notice, together, are practices that hold potential to shift the normative time and terms of attention.

The term *notice* can have a quotidian or low-stakes quality to it ("I noticed something on my walk to the park"). Micro- and small-scale noticings are of great importance in coming to understand how structures of settler colonialism subtend everyday actions, from small talk and greetings to the ordinary infrastructure of sidewalks and city parks, and to the predictable routines of lunch and the daily news (Love 2016). But there is also a high-stakes version of noticing. In its use as a noun, the word serves in formal and legal contexts as a statement conveying information or warning. I open my mailbox and am met with a letter from Revenue Canada, a *notice of assessment* that details the amount of income tax I owe. Additionally, we "give our notice" as a formal statement, for example as a letter or email about terminating a contract or our current employment. We "put someone on notice" or "serve notice" as a way to give warning about something (often with more severe consequences). To receive these kinds of notice are often a sign that you have not been living up to expectations or fulfilling basic responsibilities.

This essay—drawing from and extending my previous work on settler colonialism and perception—takes up both the lower- and higher-stakes conceptions of notice and noticing. In the lower-stakes version of this term, I argue that decolonization involves calling attention to the ways in which we notice not just settler colonialism's events as instances of historical and contemporary injustices against Indigenous people, but how settler colonialism's structures pervade everyday life. Our ways of noticing settler colonial structures are guided by and foreclosed on by the normative expression of positionality at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In this context, what I call *critical listening positionality* emerges when we increase our awareness of what and how we hear, in relation with structures of white supremacy, heteronormativity, classism, ableism and settler colonialism (in non-discrete, intersectional ways), and then letting such awareness lead toward practices of sensing otherwise. This essay and my previous writing draw on one sense of the term "noticing" by experimenting with forms of writing and address that seek to intervene within normative Western epistemologies, serving notice to academic and discipline-specific structures that enact epistemic violence toward Indigenous sense. I give my notice to those who enforce and perpetuate the normative categories of what deserves noticing by way of the ear, by way of what

Dylan Robinson is a xwélméxw (Stó:lō) writer, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, and associate professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He is author of *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Studies* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), coeditor of *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), and cocurator of *Soundings*, an internationally touring exhibition of Indigenous art scores.

music schools and curricula call "ear training." Through its structural refusal, my writing finds forms of serving notice to the hegemony of ear training's intervallic knowing, chordal fact, cadential certainty, and the teleological familiar in functional harmony. As just one among many normative forms of understanding music, ear training has remained largely unnoticed by music scholars and teachers as effecting a normative orientation toward how we might come to know music. Even the fact that the ear itself has remained the primary site for training listening remains largely unnoticed. Consider this essay, then, another addition to a growing stack of notices of assessment on music training's audism.

In 1977 Deaf scholar Tom Humphries coined the term "audism" to refer to "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear" (1977, 12). More recently, Jonathan Sterne and Zoe De Luca have emphasized how the concept can also refer to "the ethnocentrism of those who hear, often characterized by an assumption that everyone hears in the same way" (2019, 303). My essay here seeks to extend some of my previous work on listening positionality (*Hungry Listening*, 2020) toward understanding in greater detail its potential not as a category of identity, but as a constellation of improvised practices. If, as I have previously argued, positionality is best understood as a state, how might this state be recognized in its momentary flux? Further, how might we let such recognition open up new practices of listening improvisation that do not fixate on positionality and instead move us beyond the legacy of listening's "settlement" to allow more agile and connective practices of Indigenous listening resurgence? The improvisatory existence and future of listening positionally here call us not to merely acknowledge our values as a trigger-warning for others, or for zero-sum consistency between word and action, but as an ongoing return to self-accountability: what are the frames through which I see, hear, feel the world now, and now, and now. Indeed, to follow such shifting moments of positionality requires writing that is equally agile and relational. In order to test out such a practice, I will offer an example of my own listening positionality in relation to the recording "Round Dance," by Cree-Mennonite cellist Cris Derksen on their album *Orchestral Powwow*.

On Positionality

To begin this work on improvising through listening positionality, it is important to define not just its scope and history, but to retrace some critique about its limitations in practice. As first defined by philosopher Linda Alcoff in 1988, the term positionality refers to "the location from which one speaks." By "location," Alcoff doesn't mean the physical location that one occupies, but the individual articulation of intersections between race, gender, class, ability, sexuality, and cultural background. Importantly, positionality calls us to name the inherited aspects of our identities and acknowledge how our habits, abilities and biases are guided by social positions that are always in relationship with the context of naming. This is to say, positionality is always context-specific in recognition of the fact that one's position quite literally changes alongside its context of expression. As someone who is xwélmexw (that is, as a Stó:lō person whose mother's family is from Skwah) and as xwelítem (mixed white settler), my habits and my capacities for perception are guided by recombinant intersections between these and other axes of my positionality. But how they guide my perception is dependent on my relations with others in the space. Whether this is with my immediate family, or with my daughter, or gathered with folks in an online meeting space, my positionality is felt and articulated differently in relationship to those I am gathered with, the reason for gathering, and the very rooms we are gathered in. As Alcoff notes, positionality is "relative to a constantly shifting context, to a situation that includes a network of elements involving others, the objective economic conditions, [and] cultural and political institutions and ideologies" (Alcoff 1988, 433).

This shifting context also applies to the perception and articulation of artwork. A reflexive examination of positionality not only helps us gain greater precision around the ways in which we see art, read literature, or hear music, but how we might contend with perceptual habit and bias toward specific works. Following Alcoff's caution that "location and positionality should not be conceived as one-dimensional or static, but as multiple and with varying degrees of mobility" (Alcoff 1991, 16), approaches to intersectional positionality provide stratified nuance to unmarked practices of close reading. And yet, despite positionality's potential to open toward decolonial, feminist, queer and "otherwise" practices of reading, listening, and seeing, its typical appearance today is limited to the caveat that graces the opening pages of an essay or takes up space in the opening words of various gatherings. In Canada, the mass uptake of "positionality caveats" can be understood as a settler colonial standardization of protocol used by northwest coast Indigenous communities that serve non-Indigenous institutions as a form of risk management. The institutionalization of positionality—including land acknowledgments—bureaucratizes Indigenous protocol and in doing so evacuates the very reason such protocol exists: to situate ourselves in relation to the people (kin or adversary), nonhuman others (including the lands, waters, and animals), and reason(s) for gathering. Land acknowledgments (as settler positionality caveats) have become static forms of awareness-raising, ones that would seem to confirm Brian Massumi's critique of positionality's investment in cultural stasis:

> Is the body as linked to a particular subject position anything more than a local embodiment of ideology? Where has the potential for change gone? How does a body perform its way out of a definitional framework that is not only responsible for its very "construction," but seems to prescript every possible signifying and counter-signifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of pre-determined terms? How can the grid itself change? . . . The aim of the positionality model was to open a window on local resistance in the name of change. But the problem of change returned, with a vengeance. Because every body subject was so determinately local, it was boxed into its site on the culture map. Grid-lock. . . . The idea of positionality begins by subtracting movement from the picture. This catches the body in cultural freeze-frame. The point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zeropoint of stasis. When positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second. After all is signified and sited, there is the nagging problem of how to add movement back into the picture. But adding movement to stasis is about as easy as multiplying a number by zero and getting a positive product. Of course, a body occupying one position on the grid might succeed in making a move to occupy another position. (Massumi 2002, 3)

Massumi identifies positionality here as a "grid-lock," "cultural freeze-frame," "zero-point of stasis," and "boxed into its site on the culture map." His critique characterizes positionality as a moment of enunciation that leaves the subject without movement. Indeed, from Massumi's metaphors, it would seem as if he were directly evoking Linda Alcoff, who notes that a reductionist critique of positionality's supposed essentialism "might, for example, reduce evaluation to a political assessment of the speaker's location where that location is seen as an insurmountable essence that fixes one, as if one's feet are superglued to a spot on the sidewalk" (Alcoff 1991, 16). And yet Massumi's critique is substantiated by the form that positionality has most often come to embody, as the brief acknowledgment one gives before a presentation or event. Written prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Massumi's words have become prescient in relation to the standardization of Indigenous protocols across Canada as land acknowledgment checklists. In such

instances, identity has indeed become locked into a grid of institutional propriety, functioning as a mere caveat that allows one to proceed and, above all, does not engage with why such declarations of positionality hold importance. And yet, given how Alcoff originally envisioned positionality as having "varying degrees of mobility," I argue that we might realign positionality with practices and perceptual states in relational movement rather than writing it off entirely as an irredeemably compromised practice that "fixes" identity (and thought) in its moment of enunciation.

While positionality's ubiquity within many academic fields renders it unremarkable or even passé, this has not been the case for music scholarship.[1] Even when music scholars focus explicitly on musical representations of race, gender, sexuality and ability—or examine scores, performances, and recordings whose whiteness, heteronormativity, and classist and ableist values go unmarked—they tend to avoid explicitly articulating how their individual positionality guides their listening, analyses, and writing about their subjects. Such "explicit articulation" here acknowledges that our positionality unavoidably guides not just what detail we perceive, but how we render that detail of knowing into words, sentences. My understanding is that a significant amount of music scholarship avoids this focus because of the central value of "generalizability" that music scholars—and scholars more generally—feel our work should strive for. The fear is that to speak from the position of an individual, with a specific listening positionality that is ungeneralizable, would compromise this principle, despite the ways in which the singularity of the individual holds import for thinking together apart. Yet because music scholarship (particularly musicology and music theory) continues to be haunted by its history of legitimization as a rigorous scientific field of study, it invested much more heavily in a positivism that, even when not explicit, continues to marginalize certain kinds of scholarship including that which takes individualized experiences of affect and the sensory impact of sound as a focus. Generalizability also works against reflection on the movement between techniques of mobility and agility of listening attention while proscribing a listening ideal that is often more related to audiation than singular listening experience. We need to look no further than the repetition of "the listener" in music scholarship to see this principle in action. Moreover, current forms of "ear training" would understand practices of listening in movement across a singular listening experience a lack in need of remedy. Forms of peripatetic listening, listening oscillation, and movement through intersectional listening positionality are more likely to be dismissed as part of a distracted listening experience than understood as choices in the distribution of attention.[2] This view of distracted and uncivilized attention characterizes the history of corral and focus Indigenous listening by missionaries and other settlers as a technique to assimilate Indigenous listening practices to settler colonial forms of focused attention.

Listening Fixity, Settlement and Extraction

In 1837 Anna Jameson, in her travel narrative *Sketches in Canada, and Rambles among the Red Men,* recounts the words of Ojibway missionary Charlotte Johnston: "She says all the Indians are passionately fond of music and that it is a very effective means of interesting and fixing their attention" (Jameson 1852, 255). "Fixing Indians' attention" is in fact an accurate way to characterize the sensory paradigm shift that early missionaries across Canada sought to effect.[3] "Fixing," in the sense Jameson uses it, refers to keeping Indigenous peoples' focus on the word of God rather than on their own cultural practices. As Jameson notes of Charlotte Johnston, wife of William McMurray, an Anglican missionary and Indian Agent based in Sault Ste. Marie from 1830 to 1838, Johnston was able to convert the Indians by leading them in hymns with "her good voice and correct ear" (255).

In comparison with Charlotte Johnson's missionized ears, it is the Indians' "*in*correct ears" and lack of focused attention that keeps them from their civilization:

> The difficulty is to keep them together for any time sufficient to make a permanent impression: their wild, restless habits prevail; and even their necessities interfere against the efforts of their teachers; they go off to their winter hunting-rounds for weeks together, and when they return, the task of instruction has to begin again. (Jameson 1852, 256)

This settler colonial reading of an Indigenous lack of attention in missionary accounts understands Indigenous forms of attention to the world as "wild, restless habits" rather than purposeful attentional agility through Indigenous mobility and proprioception. To missionaries, these wild, restless habits were a detriment to the new temporality of learning and living civilized lives. Missionaries thus recognized that new ways of focusing attention were needed. Hymn singing became one of these, with hymns translated into Indigenous languages, where the homophonic ideal of voices moving together was a corrective to the unruly voices of Indigenous people.

It is impossible to say what exactly Jameson's reference to the Indians' "necessities" means and how such necessities interfere with focused instruction. What is clear is that these necessities, along with other "wild, restless habits," were inimical to the new attentional order settlers sought to impose. Additional limitations on Indigenous mobility were imposed by the Canadian government's Indian Act and Residential Schools, both of which curtailed Indigenous mobility and relationality with the lands of which we are stewards. Like the movement of Indigenous people in relation to the changing seasons and locations for sustenance, Indigenous attentional mobility has always been understood as the inability to remain focused on labour, like the undisciplined impulse toward "our necessities" that Jameson euphemistically describes. Settlers also perceived this lack as the inability to civilize our lands through Western agriculture and to attend to aesthetics through mobile forms of attention. Yet Indigenous folks have understood the agility of attention as a technique that brings things into relationship, for example through a reflective oscillation between land and our nonhuman relations, between the skies and waters. Within the Western attentional economy of focus, such mobility historically presented as savage.

For many Coast Salish Indigenous communities, xwélalà:m (spelled variously in different downriver and Island dialects) is one form of relational listening mobility. xwélalà:m—a word English is best able to name imprecisely as naming "listening *or* witnessing"—has always been a practice of noticing, of precisely documenting our history in collective memory in the longhouse. Through xwélalà:m, attention is given not only to the content of the oratory that is shared, but its temporal relationship with previous words offered (ey kws hakwelestset te siwes te siyolexwalh). xwélalà:m—listening-witnessing—means noticing the affect and atmosphere of what is shared in relation to the words, movement, sounds that fill the space. It entails giving our attention to the ways that dances, songs, and stories bring life to the work at hand. xwélalà:m, listening-witnessing means understanding our songs as law, medicine, and historical documentation and yet still songs. To understand Indigenous songs as music alone is to participate in epistemic violence against how our songs exist *simultaneously* yú:wqwlha (as beautiful things) *and* as law, medicine, and historical documentation. To understand songs as music alone is also to make our songs and the life carried by them into a categorizable knowledge resource. Indeed, we might ask a more foundational question here regarding the extent to which forms of analysis and scholarship more generally are predicated on an extraction and accumulation of knowledge as resource.

This accumulation of knowledge as resource is what I term *hungry listening*, as one practice of settler colonial perception among many, a practice of perception guided by extracting resources. I derive the phrase hungry listening from two contrasting forms of perception contained in the Halq'eméylem words for "settler" and "listening." The first of these words is xwelítem, which commonly means "settler." The second word, xwélalà:m, which I've already described, is the word we use for listening and also the specific form of sensory perception practised in the longhouse and oriented toward the precision of documenting the feel of history and that which is shared. The term xwelítem comes from the history of settlement in S'olh temexw. In the mid-1800s, thousands of prospectors arrived in our lands, driven by gold fever, but also literally starving. The word xwelítem thus not only means "settler" but also "starving person." It is used not only as a historical descriptor but as a way to describe non-Indigenous folks today. I use this term as well, and not merely to name a category of people but as a way to name the continuance of starvation as a state that guides settler colonial perception. Importantly, forms of hungry listening are not limited to the experience of white settlers alone; they have been equally internalized by Indigenous people, myself included.

This extractive desire of hungry listening manifests in multiple ways, some of which are:

- a hunger for what Eve Tuck calls "damage centered" narratives of Indigenous trauma and loss;
- a hunger for affective forms of familiarity and resolution sometimes associated with what I call reconciliation's feelings;
- a desire to pinpoint a range of sonic certainties, a desire that can foreclose on listening as a speculative practice of wonder and imagination, which can manifest through formal music training (ear training, analysis) and interpretive concert material (preconcert talks, programs); and
- listening that seeks to gain information as a resource—the collection of Indigenous fact that elides Indigenous epistemologies of listening as practices of law, medicine, and historical documentation.

In sum, hungry listening satiates through categorical familiarity (that operates through feeling the satisfaction of identification and recognition), but also through certainty (to feel pleasure from finding the "fit" of content within a predetermined framework). Hungry listening is hungry for the felt confirmations of square pegs in square holes, for the satisfactory fit as sound knowledge slides into its appropriate place. Forms of hungry listening often satiate through the consumption of affective certainty or what I call "sensory veracity" (Robinson 2012), where the intensity of affective experience leads listeners to identify their response as a transformative marker of the work's social or political truth. The intensity of affect when experiencing socially and politically oriented performance can here allow for a conflation of affect with efficacy. Audiences are persuaded, or more accurately feel, that something has happened; a moment (or more) of something ineffable felt as "reconciliation" has been witnessed *because* our affective response is irreducible and as such does not lie.

Gaining an increasing awareness of the listening norms, habits, and biases we employ thus does not mean fixing our attention on any one aspect of positionality; it does not mean becoming hypervigilant or fixated on our listening norms. Instead, it demands that we seek other practices of listening relation, of becoming intermittently "attendant to" our positionality, for example as a low background hum. At moments, perhaps we tune into this hum and then let it recede again into the

background. In order to begin to understand what constitutes this "hum," we need to spend time with the timbral qualities that constitute it; we need to gain awareness of the strata positionality is constituted by. We must spend time in the process of listening to the layers of our positionality, naming their combinations and recombinations, renaming them, reflecting on them, but not to contain them, to put them in a box on the shelf or under the bed. As Pauline Oliveros has undertaken through deep listening exercises, perhaps we might find different ways to notice the hum, sustain it, and return to through audiation. Ultimately it means affirming and perhaps (re-) learning to listen through wonder and exploring different forms and shapes for listening otherwise.

Forms and Shapes for Listening Otherwise

If we are to approach something that might be called decolonizing listening, one way we might begin is by readmitting the movement of wonder, of noticing what else (other than music and sound) we are listening to. What kind of subjectivity, what kind of life, what kind of alterity is this? This kind of listening is perhaps challenging to practise, as it is a listening that does not seek to know but instead pinpoints knowability's coordinates. It deters analogy as the colonization of alterity. Decolonizing listening requires expanding listening practices of wonder over prejudgment, cataloguing, and identification. In remaining attentive to listening as a practice of wonder, I'm reminded of Emanual Levinas' writing on the face-to-face encounter with the other, an encounter with irreducible alterity that is grappled with through its inability to be fully named, categorized, or known. Rethinking settler ontologies of listening and proposing decolonial approaches to listening means finding ways to listen that leave ourselves uncertain as to what kind of life we are in relationship with. Given the ways that Indigenous songs in particular carry life, bring life, and are alive in as many forms as there are Indigenous communities, decolonial listening practices might bring us into closer relation with such song-life. This life of song is always in relationship with the life of our lands and waters, but also not reducible or analogous to it. The life of our songs is not of the same order as human life—while the beat of the drum may be conflated with the heartbeat of a human, this anthropocentrism conscripts the drum to being alive only to the extent that humans are alive. To listen through a decolonial ethics of wonder avoids the question "what is this like?" for the question "what *is* this?" as a productive event of nonrecognition. As an example of writing about such an event of nonrecognition—to test out a different shape of listening—I turn to Cree-Mennonite Cellist Cris Derksen's work "Round Dance" from the album *Orchestral Powwow*. I'd like you to turn to listen to this recording as well. Please find it and play it. Read the response below as you are listening to the music.

Sqwalewel

I know this round dance
I've listened to this round dance many times
I know I wouldn't know a round dance to hear one
I wouldn't know this one
except that it's called *Round Dance*
on the track list

I know this round dance
as much as I've been in a round dance
as much as my first time

in a round dance, dancing
in Idle No More, in a mall
where I looked like a mooniyaw,
stumbling along

I know this round dance
little enough that I wrote,
that I cited—
        relied on the words of a scholar, a friend—
who wrote:
"round dance songs are courting songs, with all of the vulnerabilities those entail."

Stop reading, listen

Start reading

It's good to remember
te síwes
my aunty said—
        after telling her about my new job as a professor—
"What will you teach?"
"Indigenous music," I said
"How can you teach other peoples' music?"
she said
"How can you know it?"

As a xwélmexw who writes about music
I can't hear the courting or the vulnerability in this dance
I can't hear what English knows
as courting and vulnerability
I don't know how to hear them,
or whether I could ever hear them,
without lived relationship to *Nitaskinan*,
without feeling the life of Atikamekw-Cree land

I can't hear the courting
neither can I hear Cree kinds of courting—
        nôcihitowin—
I can't hear the vulnerabilities through the strings
through this epic screen
through which I cannot hear *Nitaskinan*
the land

I can't hear what the song sings to,
what it sings toward.
I can't hear what the singers sing to,
what they sing toward.

what I can hear of the sound
the sound of the cello, brass and percussion
leaves me anxious.
This striving sound, taking space
leaves me less room to listen.

I know my listening—
shwexwélmexw xwélalà:m—
struggles against the swelling affect
of strings and wood
of brass and wind

my listening
síweltsel, ears-pricked
by the sound of the Drum,
cushioned and held by cello and brass,
rising, then pulling away

I know my listening—
shxweitemelh xwélalà:m—
its listening privilege
carries a discipline of repetition
of Stravinsky, Lachemann,
Clementi, Sciarrino on repeat

I know this listening privilege
makes it hard for me to hear

I know my listening
wants to hear more,
to hear different complexities,
sharp interventions.

My listening privilege wants more
More than the powwow drum moving just slightly out of sync
My desire to hear rough aggregate,
as if rough aggregate carried a radical politics
that orchestral cascades and swells cannot

What do you hear of your listening?

Wandering away from this desire
I hear Derksen's cello,
alongside a second voice, keening,
a singer from the Northern Style Powwow Drum group *Northern Voice*
I hear a singer

I write "I hear a singer from Wemotaci lands, Northern Quebec

singing in Atikamekw,
in Cree."
In fact, I don't hear this, I read it.

These voices (whatever I hear)
displace me
draw me in,
I'm placed alongside powwow temporality
alongside this sense
sometimes used as a mark and measure,
that measures "Indigenous knowing"

then
I'm reminded of a gathering
I'm reminded of a room
and a Nish poet speaking about powwow
I'm reminded of Anishinaabe kwe and Haudenosaunee laughter
overflowing the room,
spilling

In that room, with that laughter
My listening had no way finding
through the crass poetics
of powwow grounds

How are you finding your way?

I need also to say
that the *first* thing I really heard—
        felt-knew sqwalewel—
was a moment
of pulling away, then pushing up
against "Indian time"—
        "Indian time" written twice just like this
        with scare quotes,
        then removed, then replaced—
I felt something like a resistance that didn't re-centre resistance
I heard not resistance but an awkwardness of relation
I felt the sense of

"I'd rather not"

Improvising Positionality through Imposition and Impasse

How then might we begin to listen otherwise? How do we not just acknowledge the various forms of audism—be it hungry listening, heteronormative listening, or other normative forms of listening—we have unconsciously come to employ? Developing practices of critical listening

positionality, I argue, requires that we as listeners increase our awareness of how race, class, gender, ability, cultural background, and sexuality guide our listening capacities, habits, and biases. It is here that I have been confronted most by individuals asking (at times demanding) a clear program, a checklist, to implement better listening positionality. "How do I decolonize my listening to a Beethoven piano sonata?" I've been asked. "How do I avoid hungry listening to a song by Jeremy Dutcher?" I've been asked. My response, as frustrating as it might be, is that I cannot tell you. For me to give you or anyone a five-step program for decolonial listening would elide the essential process of gaining clarity around your individual listening habits and biases. Indeed, it is this very process, as I will examine next, that establishes the subfrequency of positionality that might haunt active listening, urging it toward the otherwise of normative sense. It would be impossible for me to provide anyone with a program for critical listening positionality, given that listening positionality is unique to the individual: your listening habits, norms, and biases are not the same as mine.

What I offer are instead some starting points for process. For example, understanding the ways in which settler colonialism affects your listening might entail detailing moments of hungry listening in your life; it may require that you spend time noticing how and when your listening is a practice of extracting and accumulating resources. You might choose to do some work around ontological reorientation: what do you believe you are listening to when you listen to it? Given that Indigenous songs exist as legal orders, as medicine, and as historical documents that serve as the equivalent to books, how then might you listen to them nonaesthetically? How might you wonder about their existence as an expression of law, health, and epistemology? You may also decide that it is time to actively dislocate the fixity and goal-oriented teleology of listening with more flexible listening practices. How do you re-situate listening as a relational action that occurs not merely between listener and listened-to, but between the strata of positionality, the material conditions of listening (the place where we listen, the medium we listen to), and the materialities of the sound event itself?

Given that these layers of positionality are numerous and always shifting and aligning in different ways, this process for gaining a listening awareness without allowing such an awareness to compete with or overwhelm our capacity to listen to the music or sound event itself is challenging. How do we balance between noticing sound and noticing our listening? To what extent might we orchestrate such stratified positional listening toward intersectional antiracist, decolonial, queer, and feminist listening practices in ways that do not lead counterproductively to potential incapacitation through perceptual overload? Focusing primarily on such layers of positionality may result in an over-vigilance that threatens to elide our relationship with the very music and sound we seek to understand. It may inadvertently recast listening as hypervigilant attention, or what Eve Sedgewick has called "paranoid" forms of reading, where critical attention seeks to foreclose all possibility of "bad surprises."

Noticing Taking Notice

So perhaps instead we experiment with ways of noticing how our positionality guides our attention. For example, once we have a sense of the ways in which we take notice (our habits and capacities of noticing), we might then develop exercises in oscillation, where we move between the layers of sound and positionality, as ways to improvise noticing. Having the presence of mind to reflect on such movement between layers of positionality in the moment of listening might be a tall order, but no more so than growing awareness of structural recognition through Western ear training. Finding processes for oscillating between layers of listening positionality is not limited to the listener.

Strategies for listening otherwise might also be activated by interventions in the unmarked rituals of music performance and forms of composition themselves. The program note, the darkened auditorium with singular focus on the stage, the preconcert talk—all of these concert rituals can effectively be challenged in ways that open up new layers of listening. Intervening in the space of the concert hall also means intervening in the particular kind of normative focus that such spaces assert. Whether the white cube of the gallery, the proscenium stage–concert hall, the outdoor festival stage, or the black box, each site urges us to think and listen to music in particular ways that may not be conducive to the kinds of listening otherwise we might hope to advance. What happens when we change these sites of listening to include intimate spaces of one-on-one listening, spaces in relation with the land, spaces where audience members are not bound by the kinds of attention these spaces assert? Strategies for de- and re-formatting concert norms afford the potential to question how venues for performance structure hungry listening.

Can we make choices to shift our listening positionality as one would improvise through extended technique of an instrument, by varying a rhythm, or through shifting the balance or volume of our voice alongside others? How feasible is it to learn the craft of listening as a flexible, improvisatory practice in which one shifts between listening registers of gender, culture, sexuality, especially given that it is impossible to simply apply listening filters that are not our "own" (for example, like applying iPhone camera filters)?

While improvisers work/play with sound material, with rhythm, with timbre, it's less typical to improvise with one's forms of perception. If we link of listening as an improvisation, what are the materials we are working with? Can we, for instance, think of an alertness to positionality as the "material" that we improvise with? It is possible to consider, for example, a feminist listening background punctuated by bursts of decolonial listening. It is easier to say than do. To have a "burst" of decolonial listening sounds lovely, but how do I do that? What is possible in thinking of listening through improvisational parameters of time and tempo? Surely such improvisatory listening choices must also be made in the moment of relationship to the listened-to partner, music and sound. Yet perhaps this orientation toward learning techniques for orchestrating and controlling positionality merely turns the same system of listening mastery (listening domination) that is at the heart of Western music training toward mastering listening freedom.

Perhaps instead what we need are merely techniques for noticing how we are listening already to allow the improvisation of listening positionality not to be hindered by self-monitoring (and the attendant shame and guilt that results in settler self-monitoring paralysis). In classes I have taught on listening positionality, I have often asked students to create a list of how they understand and feel the various aspects of their positionality. This is frequently challenging work for students to undertake. It often makes them feel vulnerable. Through their coursework, they come to learn that art is not as transparent as they might first assume, but rarely do they have the opportunity to engage in the same level of detailed analysis of their own positionality, ability, privilege, and habit. In many cases, these positionality lists turn toward stereotypes, over-identifying, and essentialisms. Yet rather than trying to weed out these kinds of fraught naming, I encourage it, along with other, less legible forms of identification ("If music isn't sexuality, for most of us it is psychically right next door." Cusick 1994, 71). Our lists are not made in order to comprehensively define a matrix of all the possible intersections of positionality, nor are they used as maps upon which students cross-reference a one-to-one relationship between a moment of listening and an axis point of positionality, as per Massumi's critique. Instead, this list gets added to, refined, returned to, glanced at, and neglected. We seek to find ways of noticing listening positionality without giving it the ultimate

authority to determine or name our experiences. We seek to name structures for that which goes unmarked, but only inasmuch as this naming might serve as a background hum. Perhaps sometimes we learn to feel our listening positionality reaching toward something, perhaps we learn to feel it recoiling, perhaps we learn to feel its curiosities and wonder. More simply, perhaps we learn to notice our noticings.

Notes

1. By "music scholarship," I am referring primarily to the fields of musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory rather than work loosely grouped within the area of sound studies, although I am not saying that sound studies scholarship should be excluded from this critique.

2. This is not to say that forms of peripatetic listening, listening oscillation, and movement through intersectional listening positionality are innate. We need to actively develop various kinds of listening retraining and practise them to the same extent as Western ear training is practised in music education. Further, such skills should not seek to replace Western ear training but to bring it into relationship with other listening practices.

3. The following section is drawn from my book *Hungry Listening* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

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Staging Aural Fugitivity through Nineteenth-Century Freak Show Archives

Danielle Bainbridge

"I 'member w'en I's jes' a li'l gal a-hearin' bells in d' night. D' ol' folks say dat some 'r' d' run-a-way niggers from uder plantation. Dey put bells on d' slaves, wel' [weld] dem on so dey kaint gittum off 'n' dey kin hear dem iffen dey git 'way in d' woods."

["I remember when I was just a lil gal hearing bells in the night. The old folks say that some are the run-a-way niggers from other plantations. They put bells on the slaves, weld them on so they can't get them off and they can hear them if they get away in the woods."]

—Amy Domino, former Alabama slave, quoted in *The Sounds of Slavery*

Introduction

In the epigraph of this essay, former Alabama slave Amy Domino recounts the soundscape of repeated enslaved fugitivity, the sounds of bells piercing the air as enslaved Black people who had previously attempted to self-emancipate ran to freedom once again. For Domino, the bells signalled both the attempt and the failure of freedom, possibilities welded shut like the devices clanging around the ankles of the enslaved. This sound of coupled truncated fugitivity and captivity became one of the major catalysts for my 2018 performance piece *Curio*, performed at the University of Pennsylvania Theatre Department and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe that same year. In it, I ask: what are the sounds of slavery onstage, and how does the excessive pathologizing and medicalization of the Black fugitive and/or free body contribute to these soundscapes? Although the bells Domino remembered were heard on the terrifying landscape of the cruel plantation, my interest in the bell stemmed from my own inquiries into the lives and nineteenth-century performances of enfreaked performers, most especially Millie Christine McKoy (Samuels 2011). Conjoined twins born into slavery in North Carolina in 1851, the McKoys spent their lives until their deaths in 1912 as sideshow and freak show performers, a musical singing duet, and virtuosic entertainers.

Before Emancipation, the McKoys' lives consisted of semi-public medical examinations and publicity materials that centred on the nature of their attachment, which ran from their hips through their shared genitals. However, their performance strategies both under slavery and after legal freedom consisted of ways to centre their vocality, speech acts, and musical abilities in order to decentre the previous exploitative focus on the medicalization of their physical bodies. Yet there is evidence in the archive that even under the binds of legal slavery, the McKoys and their family spent a good portion of their childhood embroiled in both public custody and kidnapping claims, as well as private extrajudicial attempts to secure their earnings from their performance labour after Emancipation. Because this evidence of complex fugitivity also relates to the performance strategies the McKoys adopted after slavery that centred mental prowess, polyglot skills and song over their former physical exhibitions, I am terming this performance technique *aural fugitivity*.

Danielle Bainbridge is an assistant professor of theatre and performance studies at Northwestern University. Her book in progress, *Refinements of Cruelty: Enslavement, Enfreakment, and the Performance Archive*, examines the lives of African American sideshow and freak show performers who were also enslaved.

Building on Daphne Brooks' "spectacular opacity" (2006) and Uri McMillan's "sonic of dissent" (2015), aural fugitivity looks to how sound acts that refuse all-encompassing archival capture and recording are antithetical to the panoptic gaze of slavery's meticulous record-keeping and exist in the archive as an act of refusal by enslaved or otherwise oppressed performers. Therefore, the fragmentary nature of the McKoys' performance archive should be honoured and spotlighted in any attempts to recreate or restage it for contemporary audiences. To this end, *Curio* never allows the audience to become completely lost in the pure pleasure of visual observation and performance of the enfreaked body that defined the McKoys' act prior to Emancipation. Rather, every aspect of the staging and script is designed to highlight the qualities of aural fugitivity that the McKoys took part in onstage.

This essay will couple an analysis of the McKoys' aural fugitivity with an excavation of *Curio* in order to answer the opening question about slavery's sounds when they are thrust under the scrutiny of the stage. Through aural fugitivity, the Black enslaved performer is able to gain conditional freedom from an all-encompassing archival capture by using sound acts that defy accurate recording. The McKoys' aural fugitivity took the form of lyrics that exist in the archive without music (which served as the basis for *Curio*), as well as their improvisational speech acts that so delighted and astonished audiences that they failed to be dictated or recorded. Through improvisational and ephemeral speech and sound acts, the McKoys were able to maintain a fugitivity rooted in their uniquely untraceable and hard-to-define sound. Their articulations and music serve as the catalyst for my own artistic and scholarly exploration of the sounds of slavery onstage, leading me to contemplate the best ways to stage nineteenth-century aural fugitivity for a twenty-first-century audience.

Since the McKoys were enslaved until Emancipation but constantly either passively (as children) or actively (as newly freed young women) engaged in an ongoing struggle for freedom, I looked for ways to stage the aural fugitivity they perfected under slavery and continued to refine even after legal freedom. However, I soon realized early in the writing process that merely faithfully restaging the McKoys' shows would not illuminate the strategies of aural fugitivity that dictated the terms of their pre- and post-Emancipation performances. All the archival evidence that remains of their performance strategies exists in incomplete fragments: reviewers' praise of their singing voices, reports of them speaking to two people at once to prove they weren't one person, claims that Millie was an alto and Christine a soprano, evidence they always used the singular first person pronoun when referring to themselves, and lyric sheets that survive in their coauthored (auto)biographies sans music with the indication that some of the songs were written expressly for them and instructions that audiences should sing along.[1] It was out of these fragments of information that I began to interrogate how I could create a soundscape that encompassed both the complexity of the McKoys' performed world and also the social and legal conditions of aural fugitivity that were evident in their biographical information.

Therefore, I eschewed more faithful recreations of the McKoys' performances and evidence in the archive that indicated more conventional approaches in favour of a "critical fabulation" in service of the methods they employed during their lives (Hartman 1997). Namely, I chose to stage a historical and theoretical intervention by replacing the instruments they played in life (e.g., the piano and the guitar, which are mentioned in written and visual archival materials) with a set of handbells when I set their lyric sheets to music. I was drawn to the bells for a variety of reasons. First, their use in torture devices like the ones described in the epigraph and staged in the bell rack (below) meant that they were already a part of the accounting and property loss prevention methods well documented in slavery. These torture devices, as essential to the mechanisms of slavery as the plantation owner's

ledger and the whip, had an accompanying auditory function different from other methods of control: to make fugitivity heard when it could not be seen. Second, combining a fictional element like the bells with a historical fact like the lyric sheets allowed for a bridge between a faithful restaging and a complete reimagining of the archives. It allowed me to take what I could glean about the McKoys' aural performances and to fill the voids where I could not know (namely, the sound of the music that would have accompanied them in real life.) And lastly, by having the bells played onstage in *Curio* later transformed into a bell rack worn by the actresses playing the McKoys, the bells never allowed our audiences to become completely comfortable in the visual realities of the enfreaked and enslaved Black body onstage. The bells decentred physical awareness of the enfreaked body in favour of repurposed sound. I worked in close collaboration with undergraduate performers at the University of Pennsylvania (Duval Courteau, Aria Proctor, Breyasia Scott and Hannah Spear along with student composer Elias Kotsis), scenic designer Sara Outing, and our director Dr. Rosemary Malague. The result was a process born of mutual interrogation and creative discovery that helped to reimagine the worlds of enslaved and enfreaked performance around aural fugitivity. This essay interweaves analysis of *Curio* alongside biographical and (auto)biographical archival remains of the McKoys in order to excavate the ways they created their uniquely fugitive sound.

The bell rack. Courtesy of the WPA Slave Narratives online archive.

Part One: The (Auto)Biographies of Millie Christine McKoy

Poster for Curio. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Theatre Arts Department.

My theorization of the McKoys' aural fugitivity rests on two critical stories in their archival biography. Although there are multiple stories of resistance in the McKoys' archive, I've marked these two as significant because they predate the twins' decision to eliminate semipublic physical and medical exams from their performances at fourteen. That shift from medical anomalies to purely musical and vocal duets and other sound acts (e.g., speaking to two people in two languages at once) marks an important transition from slavery to legal freedom and physical objectification to greater control of their act and earnings. I mark these predating events as significant in their formulations of performances under newly granted freedom because each story points to a complex interplay between legal freedom and extrajudicial methods used to keep Black people perpetually enslaved. Out of this mire of competing forces emerged a performance strategy that redefined the McKoys' relationship to both white audiences and their extraordinary physical bodies. The first comes from an 1883 reprinting of their 1871 (auto)biography.[2] This evolving document was likely coauthored by the McKoys and the white sideshow proprietors who helped to orchestrate their act (Frost 2009). The (auto)biography exists in many permutations in the archive with addendums, additional details, and advertisements changed to suit the specificity of the individual sideshows it was used to advertise.[3] Because the McKoys often collaborated with different showmen and travelling performances, the shifting details of the (auto)biography serve as a curious destabilizer of their personal narrative.

Additionally, these printed (auto)biographies were used to advertise the McKoys' act and also served as souvenirs for the eager audiences who came to see their shows. The (auto)biography also serves as the most complete archival record of the McKoys' lives and performance legacies. It combines biographical information about the twins' early lives and origin story with a fantastical account of their multiple kidnappings in their youth, medical reports about their conjoined bodies, and the lyric sheets that serve as the basis of *Curio*. Although the veracity of the document remains in question, it nevertheless remains the best jumping-off point for the analysis of the twins' performance strategies.

The second biographical source that serves as the basis of the twins' aural fugitivity is an 1866 letter written to the Freedman's Bureau on behalf of the twins' parents, Menemia and Jacob McKoy. The letter implicates the McKoys' final owner, Mrs. Smith, and famed showman PT Barnum in an alleged plot to keep the young McKoys enslaved after legal emancipation by having them perform without wages in Barnum's Museum in New York.

This narrative of forced performance labour combined with the (auto)biography's assertion that the twins were kidnapped multiple times in their youth because of their earning potential as racialized freaks create the conditions of fugitivity that defined the McKoys' act post-Emancipation. By purposefully shifting the focus of their act from the invasive semipublic doctors' exams and reports that defined their youth to aural improvisational performances that defied simple and all-encompassing archival capture, the McKoys were able to assert an aural fugitivity in the face of a system that sought to perpetually enslave them onstage. This enslavement was inherently linked to their race, disability, and exceptional talents.

Two versions of the biography printed in 1883 and not attributed to any particular author, held in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at Yale University, serve as the basis of my analysis of the twins' ongoing attempts at some form of self-styling and limited liberation.[4] A later version of the twins' original 1871 (auto)biography is reprinted in Linda Frost's *Conjoined Twins in Black and White* (2009, 40–49). The major difference between the published biographies at the Beinecke and the circulated (auto)biography is a switch from the first-person singular to a narration written in the third-person singular (although both fluctuate between singular and plural pronouns, as most materials on the twins do). Interestingly, the versions of the biography and (auto)biography are almost identical in content, showing that the same story was circulated as a generic template and that there was also a conscious cultivation of the twins' public image and personal narratives. Only the autobiographical account, published in 1871, is credited to a direct authorial source: the twins themselves. However, considering that the content remains virtually untouched, it seems highly unlikely that they were the sole original authors of the text. Speaking about the role their autobiography has played in contemporary interpretations of the twins' lives, Ellen Samuels notes in "Examining Millie and Christine McKoy: Where Enslavement and Enfreakment Meet":

> I argue that contemporary attempts to recognize the McKoys' agency by treating this first-person narrative as an autobiography that speaks in their actual voice(s), and thus as a reliable historical source, have actually functioned to present the twins as collaborators in their own oppression. (Samuels 2011, 55)

Samuels goes on to note that the content of the autobiography falls into the category of "apologist slave narratives," seeking to promote its own form of supposedly "benevolent" slavery that is unsupported by contemporary historical evidence (2011, 55). I agree with Samuels' assertions that uncritically utilizing this first-person narration as a site of agency unwittingly casts the twins as coconspirators and willing participants in their own enslavement. Yet coupling these biographical and supposedly "autobiographical" accounts with additional resources regarding the twins' enslavement, freedom, and varying legal status does elucidate that they were highly conscious of their status as physical commodities. As a result, these texts, which focus heavily on the twins' movements and legal statuses, show the permeability of the various sites of emancipation they traversed as well as their ability to manipulate and navigate these legal statuses to their advantage.

The 1883 promotional biography begins by listing the eight known wonders of the world, with "Miss Millie Christine, the Carolina Twin" ranking in eighth place. The text itself is proclaimed to be a "Biography, Medical Description, and Songs" of the twins, effectively listing the three major selling points of their show. The biographical description goes on to note the twins' birth in 1851 on the plantation of a minor slave owner named Alexander McCoy (from whom the twins took their surname). Born to Menemia and Jacob McKoy, the twins would later go on to purchase tracts of land near the plantation on which they were born for their elderly parents.[5] In turn, their father bequeathed this plantation to his children and grandchildren, with the stipulation in his will that the land could not pass to any other but his direct descendants (Martell 2000, 254). The biography notes that McCoy was a poor farmer, and when the twins were approximately fifteen months old, he sold them to a man referred to only as Brower for $10,000. Because Brower was not in full possession of the cash amount, a Mr. Joseph Smith was then asked to secure the promissory note, after which Brower relocated the twins to New Orleans for a medical exhibit and freak show. Brower, however, proved to be a poor businessman. He met an unidentified self-proclaimed Texas millionaire. The man claimed to own "large tracts" of land in that recently formed US state. However, the would-be millionaire turned out to be a scam artist and quickly absconded with the twins to Northern states, where they were secretively put on public display (Biography 5).

As the story goes in the biography, when Joseph Smith is informed of the twins' kidnap, he promptly pays the outstanding debt of $10,000 to McCoy, gaining full legal custody of the disappeared girls. The author then notes this proviso in Smith's agreement with McCoy:

> He at once paid the purchase money in full to Mr. McCoy and took from him a deed which made him the exclusive owner, under then existing laws, of the person of Millie Christine. The proviso, "wherever he could find her," was of course understood, and in order to quiet the mind of her mother and convince her that, whenever found, the child would be restored to her care, Mr. Smith at the same time purchased the father, mother and seven children, a transaction of course involving a large sum of money, all of which was dependent for its recovery on the recovery of Millie Christine herself. (Biography 6)

If ownership over the child is not the inherent right of the enslaved mother, Smith's decision to claim legal responsibility over the twins' entire family is more closely related to his proviso that he should be able to recover the twins "wherever he could find her." It is at this precise moment the narrative diverges from the American context to take on a transnational scope. The twins' bodies were being passed from hand to hand in American slaveholding states, and even throughout Northern states who were obligated under law to return escaped enslaved persons to their owners under the edicts of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (passed scantly one year before the twins were born). However, the spectrum of international slave law further muddied the waters of their legal status.

The twins were then secretly transported to Britain and were later discovered on exhibition in Glasgow, Birmingham, and finally London. According to the biography, Mr. Smith then transported the entire McKoy family, including Menemia, to London to reclaim ownership of the young girls. The twins were returned to the care of their mother. In the biography, the author ventriloquizes the ruling of the British judge presiding over the case, writing:

> The child should be given into the custody of its lawful mother. If it was not the child of the defendants, then mother never bore a child. Every lineament, every feature, every look betokened it; every spectator in his inmost heart felt, yes, knew it to be her child, almost as certainly as though they had seen it every hour since its birth." (Biography 9)

Because slavery had been abolished in Britain and its territories from 1833 onwards, Smith's claims of ownership ended at US borders. Therefore, in Britain, the children's legal status (and that of their parents, for that matter) was converted from enslaved to free. Yet the mandates of Smith's ominous proviso reign dominant here. By purchasing their parents and moving them to London temporarily, Smith was able to circumvent British law and retain unlawful ownership of the entire McKoy clan. He then transported them back to North Carolina, supposedly at the bequest of Menemia.

After they returned to the US, the entire McKoy family remained under the legal ownership of the Smith family until the official abolition of American slavery. However, even following the abolition of slavery and the departure of their parents and siblings from the Smith household, Millie and Christine remained with the Smiths for many years in a dubious legal status somewhere between enslaved labourers and employed performers. This muddied legal status, in which they lingered somewhere between employee and enslaved, is further demonstrated by the 1866 letter to the National Freedman's Bureau. The letter not only shows that there was ongoing conflict over the McKoys' earning potential and custody post-Emancipation but also demonstrates the often-fraught relationship between legal ownership and parental custody. By this juncture, they had already begun to shift their performances away from semipublic and highly reported medical examinations to performances of aural virtuosity and dexterity. After age fourteen, the twins were never examined naked by a medical professional, with the exception of their 1871 visit to a Dr. Pancoast when they were treated for an abscess-like formation on their shared genitals (Samuels 2011, 66–69). And yet, despite their often-celebratory biographical writing about their lives under slavery (which included high praise for the Smiths in their (auto)biographical and biographical texts), the McKoys' archive points to contradictory conditions of freedom, even after Emancipation, as evidenced by this letter. The letter, which predates both the (auto)biography and biography, notes a claim that the twins' parents (Jacob and Menemia) brought against the widow of their former owner, a woman named Mrs. Mary A. Smith, on August 17, 1866, less than a year after the end of the Civil War.[6]

In the letter, a Lieutenant Echelberry writes to General Allan Rutherford that he has met with "Jacob and Menemia McCoy (freed) and would respectfully ask if there can be any thing done by the military authorities to help them get possession of their children." He goes on to note that Mrs. Smith, who was the owner of Menemia and Millie-Christine at the time of emancipation, "refused them their freedom, and by misrepresentations kept them in her service some time thereafter." Through threats, coercion, and concealment, Mrs. Smith kept possession of the underaged twins, requesting that Jacob and Menemia sign over the custodial rights to their children in exchange for "one fourth of all she made by exhibiting the children." The letter closes by saying:

> Under these promises and threats, they signed the contract and Mrs. Smith kept possession of the children and has them now on exhibition in Barnum's Museum, New York City. Mrs. Smith has not paid any money for the services of the children and the parents are very anxious to get possession of them again, and they are not able to follow Mrs. Smith and appeal to the civil authorities on account of not having money. From the character that Jacob and Menemia have among those that know

them, I think their statement true. (quoted in Samuels 2011, 63–65)

There appears to be the potential here to think of this move as an act of demanding labour reparations for the McKoys' time spent in Barnum's Museum in New York City. Here the distinction of custody and ownership over the twins' (both their enfreaked bodies and the earning potential of that unified body) remains in flux.

Both the McKoys' biological parents and their former owner maintain that they have a right to ownership of the girls and their earnings and look to exert those rights through this custody dispute. The fact that the girls at this point are teenagers (merely fifteen years old) only serves to heighten this legal battle. This comes at a point when just a year prior, the twins had begun to change the shape of their act by refusing to be exhibited or examined nude in public, and also following several internationally published kidnapping attempts in their early childhood, which are detailed in newspaper articles and their biographies.[7] So the conditions of their performances, even after we might assume legal emancipation, continued to bear the weight of unfreedom even into the latter half of the nineteenth century, similar to the narratives taken from the archives of the Freedman's Bureau detailed by Tera Hunter in her monograph *To Joy My Freedom* (1997).

Part Two: Aural Fugitivity Emerges

After the twins began to deny or severely limit doctors' public and private access to their conjoined bodies (most notably their conjoined genitalia, which served as a point of continued examination and fascination), they began to engage in performance strategies that centred speech and sound acts over physicality. By withholding access to their bodies post-Emancipation, the twins set in motion a new way that they would be represented. The Smiths (their final owners) went on to teach the women multiple languages (in some cases, it is reported as four, in others five or seven), singing, dancing, reading, and playing musical instruments. Their act became a combination of these activities, with the medical reports and "verifications" limited to the texts of their promotional programs. Instead, they focused on performing the skills they learned in their traditional ladies' education. Reports of Millie and Christine speaking to two different people on two different subjects, often in two different languages, proliferate the archive as their new main attraction post-Emancipation, replacing medical exams altogether. And suddenly in the archive, there is song where there once were only silent observations, a marked shift upwards from the lower half of the twins' bodies to their faces that also moves us from visual material to aural material.

By identifying and amplifying the properties of music and sound in their archives, *Curio* first and foremost recreated a sense of their performance artistry and labour as it would have existed in real life. It also spoke beyond the contradictory and challenging speech present in their (auto)biographies to get to the heart of the conditions under which they performed as formerly enslaved and later free women. Because the McKoys' lyric sheets were meant to be sung and not read, there was something deeply dissatisfying to me in simply reading the work as written text without hearing them. Thus, I embarked on a journey to find the properties of the work and animate them in ways that foregrounded theatrical research and praxis in equal measure. Nineteenth-century enslaved performers like the McKoys in life and onstage were at once highly valued as spectacles (someone to be gaped and gazed at) and seen as abjectly valueless through the systems of traditional enslaved labour that deemed them unfit for "real work" because they couldn't bear children or enrich the estate through traditional manual or domestic labour. This is mirrored in the archive after death,

where we still focus on the spectacle of these performers because we assume they are abject or "unfit for bondage" (borrowing here from Dea Hadley Boster). But it is precisely the impulses of curiosity and pleasure that continue to drive artists, scholars, and audiences to these works. The conditions of bondage under which they were created (regardless of whether the bodies were deemed fit or unfit) continue to ensnare and condemn us as a result. By sitting with and through the discomfort of my own complicity in creating this piece, I aimed to recreate conditions that mirrored the painful legacies of enslaved or unfree performance with methodologies that amplified the virtuosity of the McKoys' skills. This existed both onstage for the actresses portraying the McKoys and throughout the audience who came to witness the staging.

With details of their (auto)biographies informing the action of the play, I turned my attention to the McKoys' lyric sheets sans music. I combined the conditions of unfreedom that permeated their archives prior to and immediately after Emancipation with my own theorizations and research into how their world onstage should sound for twenty-first-century audiences. In order to do this, I made a few tentative assumptions as a writer but not a composer and combined my assumptions and research with the efforts of student composer Elias Kotsis and the direction of Dr. Malague. The first assumption was that the McKoys' musical legacies largely centred on their speaking abilities, vocal styling, and oral and linguistic dexterity. This assumption was confirmed by extensive archival research at Yale's Beinecke as well as in the North Carolina collection of UNC Chapel Hill and the North Carolina State Archives. My second assumption about the lyric sheets sans music was that music usually delivered in this style has a few common characteristics that (as a nonmusician) I've anecdotally observed. They tend to be easy to sing and repetitive and are intended for singers and nonsingers alike to be able to join along extemporaneously. As a model for this, I thought of nineteenth-century parlour songs with rolling Southern pastoral themes and Black Christian gospel hymns. The imagery of the lyrics, with their idealized genteel antebellum South and traditional Christian themes, reinforced this feeling in me. In doing so, I wanted to recreate the space of the freak show stage, where the McKoys' eager audiences (for an additional fee) could purchase souvenir programs like the one I previously discussed. But I still wanted to emphasize the conditions of unfree or fugitive performance in the archives of the McKoys. As a result, I was drawn to the handbell because bells were frequently used as torture devices to sound the alarm if fugitive slaves repeatedly attempted to escape.

Bell racks and devices like them were meant to not only protect slave owners from the loss of property but also dehumanize and pathologize fugitivity. Writings on methods of torture and control often stressed not only hindering escape through physical impairment but also through psychological torture meant to destroy the emotional resilience of the enslaved, attaching pseudoscientific terms to them such as "rascality," "drapetomania," and "sullenness." Similarly, freak shows often centred on displaying the medical disabilities of enslaved performers. *Curio* explores the connection between the bell as both a signal of capture and a method of music-making. The piece is invested in unpacking the use (or refusal) of medicalization onstage in the nineteenth century by investing in theory and sound over the purely visual spectacles favoured in freak shows. In creating a performance piece out of the archival remains of the McKoy twins, I wanted to perform the methodological gesture of impartial observation that was so closely tied at its roots to the practice of displaying disabled and enslaved enfreaked bodies onstage. What occurred for these performers at the intersections of legality, disability, medicalization, and public performance? And what is our aim as scholars and artists when we reanimate these contentious performance practices for contemporary audiences?

Still from *Curio*. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Theatre Arts Department.

I became obsessed with the haunting resonance of the bell, both as it's sounded to make music and as it's used to capture and further enslave fugitive bodies. The devices like the ones described by Domino in the epigraph show a particular cruelty in their design. Not only were they meant to constrict the movement of the enslaved through the use of heavy and cumbersome metal structures, but they also made invisibility (one of the few protective postures of the slave) impossible through auditory means. Escape is most often thought of as an act that is dependent on invisibility or the act of not being seen. What this fixation of the visual ignores is that the sounds of escape needed to be equally undetectable in order to assure a fugitive body's safe passage. That these barbaric devices made you both more visible and more audible is their ultimate torture. The bells become transformed in her mind as connected to the process of thwarted escape. In this vivid recollection, the bell becomes both a method of capture, a way of ensuring the human property of plantations could not and would not make their repeated attempts at escape. The bell also unconsciously shows evidence of Black resilience and fugitivity, for why else would it be necessary to take these excessive measures if slaves were contented, as slave owners so often claimed?

This final question became particularly important in staging the lives of the McKoys post-Emancipation. The letter written on behalf of their parents to the Freedman's Bureau shows definitive evidence of attempted freedom and assertions of their rights to fair pay from their performance labour. This stands in direct opposition to the contented, almost familial relationship between the McKoys and the Smiths portrayed in the (auto)biography and biography. Similarly, their refusal to be examined again after being granted legal freedom demonstrates not only an awareness of their legal rights as newly minted free women but also an acknowledgment of the boundaries they could now create onstage between themselves and white audiences. In choosing to enliven the McKoys' performances for contemporary audiences, I drew attention to this knowledge of unfreedom coupled with the growing pains of Emancipation. Alongside this knowledge, I also had to reckon with the fact that in some ways, the freak show stage offered limited possibilities to exercise new freedoms for formerly enslaved Black subjects precisely because it was dependent on

an undergirding of medicalization and the objectification of disability. So even while I celebrated the McKoys' shift from physical display to more fully embracing the use of sound, I also recognized that this was a gesture with limited possibility for full freedom. Hence the bell became a symbol of their enslaved past, their newly won independence under legal freedom, and the limitations of those same freedoms under the weight of ableism and white supremacy.

Part Three: Staging the McKoys for Contemporary Audiences

Costume design for *Curio*. Courtesy of Sara Outing.

When I began writing creative work out of the McKoy twins' archive, I drew inspiration from several artistic sources. The first (very surprisingly) was Audra McDonald's Broadway turn as Billie Holiday. During her critically acclaimed and transformative performance in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, Audra McDonald as Billie Holiday begins to recall her musical predecessors Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong. Taking these iconic performers as her musical antecedent, Holiday recalls how she always admired Bessie Smith's "big sound," which she was never truly able to emulate because "my voice isn't that way." However, when speaking of Armstrong's ability to convey emotion throughout his vocality, she laughs when she recounts that she never understood why he didn't "sing no words." In this moment, both McDonald the performer and Holiday (the performer, the character, the persona, the myth, the memory) are at their signature funniest. The audience is in stitches recalling Armstrong's scat, a loose connection of sounds and notes and utterances that are as signature to his style as his most famous standards (e.g., "Hello Dolly" and "What a Wonderful World"). Here the performer takes an unexpected turn, lowering her voice to barely above a whisper, before uttering dreamily, "but I just wanted that *feeling*. You know?" McDonald's whispering raised for me a fundamental question of Black orality and musicality: what is mimicry

and what is signification? What are the attendant values of ownership and possession inherent in delineating these two categories of artistic agency? Additionally, how do we measure style, that which is ephemeral and transient, intangible, and essential? More specifically, how do these pieces encourage us to view modes of style as not only essential to performance, but also to a Black performance tradition? What exactly is "that feeling," and is it familiar enough to all of us that Holiday's soft questioning "you know" resonates with each of us the same? What does she ask us to know?

My own project in the McKoy twins' archive focuses primarily on practices of consumption and performance labour as exercised by the McKoy family, both before and after legal emancipation in the form of aural fugitivity. In looking at the process through which a body can be categorized as "free" or "enslaved" and thinking about the ways the McKoys enacted subtle but strategic freedom through control of their performance labour practices, my project meets at the intersections of the "slave narrative" and emancipated labour, thinking of Fred Moten's evocation of the "anti- and ante- slave" and Omise'ke Natasha Tinsley's "anti- and ante- modern."[8] But looking again to Lady Day, a moment in the production that struck me as particularly poignant was Holiday's entreaty to the audience that parole officers always showed up to stop her club performances because she had no work card, which she was no longer eligible for because she was a convicted felon. Although early in the show she jokingly noted that a parole officer's role was to stop her from "having too much fun," here we hear a different refrain: *"they won't let me work!"* How is this knife's edge balance between pleasure and labour a constant mire for the Black female performer? What does an archive like that of the McKoy twins and Holiday say about the potential perils of these labour practices? What are the terms under which a Black performer's body enters the national and international consciousness (as Farah Griffin so aptly notes in her 2004 essay "When Malindy Sings")? And lastly, what insights do we gain from a moment like seeing Audra McDonald, an actress whose meteoric and sustained success on the Broadway stage has become the central plot point of her public persona, making her employability significantly less tenuous than her antecedent Holiday, uttering the frustrated words of Lady Day, "they won't let me work!"? And how does Holiday's insistence on performing until the end in spite of legality show a careful balance between an oppressive hypervisibility and a determined personal aural fugitivity so often expressed in Black performance?

The other side of my inspiration for the McKoy twins' performance didn't stem from music at all, but rather from the use of the bell in both torture devices and visual culture, as I mentioned earlier. At a point in my piece *Curio*, the two actresses (moving through the motions of an academic lecture) stop to tell the audience about the origins of the word "drapetomania." Researchers 1 and 2 are embodiments of my role in the archive, while Woman 1 and Woman 2 are cast as storytellers and jokester characters that work to upend and unsettle the progress of the academic lecture. They say:

> RESEARCHER 1: A footnote: *Drapetomania.* A fictitious mental illness coined by Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright. Theorized as the reason that enslaved blacks fled captivity. Scientific racism, roundly disproven. Was popularized in 1851 the year the McKoy Twins were born.
> RESEARCHER 2: You said that already.
> RESEARCHER 1: I did?
> RESEARCHER 2: Yes.

Then about thirty minutes later, they return as different characters to note:

WOMAN 2: If Drapetomania is a mental disease, the insanity of the slave, then the Bell Rack is a medical device.

And finally, another few minutes pass, and they add:

WOMAN 2: A footnote: *Drapetomania.* A fictitious mental illness coined by Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright. Theorized as the reason that enslaved blacks fled captivity. Scientific racism, roundly disproven. Was popularized in 1851 the year the McKoy Twins were born.
WOMAN 1: Is it diagnosable drapetomania if you just *dream* of running away?
WOMAN 2: What?
WOMAN 1: If it's only dreaming?

Joscelyn Gardner, *Creole Portraits.*

So, when it came time to stage my versions of these songs, it was this impulse at the back of my mind, along with my research and images of Caribbean visual artist Joscelyn Gardner's 2012 work "Creole Portraits," which was commissioned by and appeared in *Small Axe* 37. Gardner couples detailed and colourful etchings of the abortifacient flowers reportedly used by enslaved women to end unwanted pregnancies alongside torture devices and almost ventriloquized pseudomedical/scientific language used throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to classify and define the Black female body. It was Gardner's coupling of Western medical pathology with the shared knowledge of Black enslaved women (through the abortifacients and the tenderness evidenced by the intricate braiding designs) that drew me to take some dramaturgical licence when

setting the McKoy twins' lyrics to music. Since I already knew that I wanted to keep the parts of the songs that were irrevocably existent in the archives (the lyric sheets) in their original form, the music was a place for me to explore instruments that were more in service of the show than historically accurate.

After puzzling over the question of aural fugitivity and bells for about two to three years, I became interested in videos of all-girl handbell choirs online. At the time, I was looking for an instrument for my two actresses to play that would require all four of their hands to move in coordination, but without obstructing our view of their bodies or faces. I needed the songs to be simple, repeatable, and easily taught/learned. I wanted every prop that was written explicitly into the script to serve at least two functions onstage and signal the conditions of mixed freedom and unfreedom that the McKoys performed under. I already had the bells written in for the scenes of torture devices and the sounds of ringing bells and how that noise is (for me) haunted by their historical weight. But I found as I watched more and more videos of handbell choirs (most of whom were from the US South) that the bells also created a haunting and resonant ringing tone that aligned with the themes of *Curio* more closely than the piano or guitar. So, when the pieces sung in *Curio* were composed, our creative team looked to the handbells to provide insight into the complex conditions of freedom and aural fugitivity that the McKoys performed under while also capturing the otherworldly virtuosity of their live performances that reviewers and witnesses recount in reviews of their shows. The resulting performances of *Curio* demonstrated that the handbells were the most effective theatrical device in the show. While other segments felt strained or difficult for the actresses to embody (namely segments that mirrored academic lectures or focused exclusively on autobiographical material), audiences tended to be drawn in by and transfixed by the bells. The transition from musical instrument to torture device also proved to be one of the more instructive moments in the 2018 performance. It heightened audiences' awareness of the politics behind the McKoys' work while also providing another opportunity to hear the bell music in a different way when one actress (who was not wearing the device) reached over and rung the bell hanging high over her fellow cast member's head. The development of this moment came in collaboration with scenic designer Sara Outing and Dr. Malague as we discussed ways to make props more utilitarian onstage while also maintaining their dramaturgical functions.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the 2018 production and projecting ahead to future rewrites and restaging, I plan to amplify the use of the bell and decentre the use of more academic frameworks in the script of *Curio*. Although the work was and is intended as an excavation of an archival collection, I found the framing of a lecture somewhat restrictive in our attempts to illuminate the deeper theatrical properties of the McKoys' extraordinary lives. In future productions, I'll reinvest in the impulses that originally drove *Curio*: namely telling the lives and performance strategies of these remarkable women while also working to limit or restrict the amount of historical harm in the process of retelling. By examining the sites that we as historians and scholars are indebted to in order to retrieve the narratives of performers like the McKoys, this project offers a lens into the economies of pleasure and pain that still haunt both the margins and the centre of the McKoys' virtuosic legacies and aural fugitivity.

By concerning my research and theatrical staging with illuminating the properties of the archival materials rather than a strict historical reenactment, *Curio* offers a new critique of the McKoy twins'

archival remains and performance legacies. The piece itself owes a great deal to the collaborative efforts of the entire company, without whom I would not have been able to stage the archival properties of the McKoys' songs for a general audience. There remains work to be done to bridge the gaps between the traditional scholarship of performance theory and theatre history and praxis. I am deeply indebted to works of theatrical ethnography that paved the way for scholar-artists to find ways to enact and act upon our archives in innovative ways. The work I've done and continue to do with *Curio* lives in a world that intersects these ethnographic methods with artistic and scholarly praxis to create an ethnography of the archive through performance.

Notes

1. "Clara Yeoman, their only surviving sister, has spent her life in Columbus County [North Carolina]. Her famous *sister were* older than her by about six years. Millie-Christine would have been almost eighty-three years of age, had they lived. When interviewed by newsmen on last Friday afternoon, one particular thing was noticed about Clara's conversation. *She always referred to Millie-Christine as one, and never in a plural sense*" (article on Millie-Christine McKoy, *News Reporter*, March 29, 1934, emphasis mine). See also *Wilmington Daily Herald*, letter to the editor, June 9, 1859; Touchaatout and La Fosse, *Trombinoscope* Paris, France, 1873; and reviews from the *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 10, 1912, and September 27, 1925, *Raleigh Register*, October 22, 1853, *New Berne Journal*, *Whiteville News Reporter*, December 10, 1925, and March 29, 1934, *Wilmington Daily Herald*, and *Wilmington Morning Star*. All sources cite the twins' multilingual performance skills as a central drawing force of their act and a primary mode of distinguishing one sister from the other.

2. Here, I mirror Daphne Brooks' (2006) gesture of "(auto)biography" in reference to the twins' autobiographical text.

3. In *Conjoined Twins in Black and White,* Linda Frost (2009, 16) asserts that at least five versions of the autobiography were printed and reprinted around the world during the McKoys' careers. The first came in 1871 in London and was updated by their then show manager Judge H. P. Ingalls. In 1882, another version, published in New York by Torrey & Clark, appeared during the twins' time touring with the Batcheller and Doris Great Inter-Ocean Show. Another three versions were published between the 1880s and the early twentieth century. Frost recreates a version of the text that appeared sometime between 1902 and 1912 and was published in Cincinnati by Hennegan & Co.

4. Millie Christine Bio Sketch, dated 1883, Archives of Millie Christine McKoy, James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. This biographical sketch of Christine and Millie features a fictionalized account of the twins' birth, early life, rise to fame, and travels. It follows a form commonly used in performance programs and publicity materials popular in American freak shows of the late nineteenth century. The program also includes several doctors' reports verifying the twins' conjoined status, lyrics from the songs they would perform (with instructions for the audience to sing along) and advertisements on each page for Merchant's Gargling Oil Liniment used for humans and animals alike.

5. The 1870 census notes that "Jacob McKay" owned $250 worth of personal real estate and a personal estate valued at $150 (Martell 2000, 136).

6. Original letter from L. Echelberry to General Allan Rutherford, August 17, 1866. Courtesy of the Freedmen's Bureau Collection, National Archives.

7. Millie Christine Bio Sketch, dated 1883, Archives of Millie Christine McKoy. Most versions of the (auto)biography list "receptions" that Millie-Christine held for public audiences and various European dignitaries as part of their touring routine.

8. "As we navigate the postmodern we must look for the fissures that show how the anti- and ante-modern continue to configure black queer broken-and-wholeness. At the same time, the meaningfully multi-blued

Atlantic tells us that we must continue to navigate our field *metaphorically*" (Tinsley 2008, 212); "(anti-, ante-[slave]) narrative fashion" (Moten 2003, 24).

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Surface Listening: Free Association and Recitation in the Wooster Group's *The B-Side: "Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons" A Record Album Interpretation*

Julie Beth Napolin

Untitled, 1965. From left to right: Unknown, W. D. Alexander, Mack Maze, Joseph "Chinaman" Johnson (squatting), Lawrence Smith. Ellis Prison, Huntsville, Texas. Photo by and courtesy of Bruce Jackson.

In 1964, incarcerated men in a segregated Texas state prison gathered before an ethnographer's field recorder and sang work songs, toasted, and told tales known intimately to them. They had likely never recorded their voices before. In one of many photographs taken by the ethnographer, Bruce Jackson, some of the men gather in the plantation fields of Ellis Prison, their work shirts open, looking down in the attitude of listening at something difficult to see. Nearly concealed in the frame, a tape recorder sits in the overgrown grass and plays back their voices. I sense a sound from the photograph, having listened many times over to *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons* (Elektra, 1965), a mass distributed recording of their voices captured by Jackson just before these prisons were to become desegregated. Perhaps they already imagined the propagation of their voices beyond that moment of recording, beyond the photographic frame, beyond the record itself. Half a century later,

Julie Beth Napolin is an associate professor of Digital Humanities at The New School and author of *The Fact of Resonance: Modernist Acoustics and Narrative Form* (Fordham University Press, 2020).

the Wooster Group's *The B-Side: "Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons," A Record Album Interpretation* (2017), directed by Kate Valk, presents a verbatim recitation of Jackson's 1965 ethnographic recording. Three African American performers—Eric Berryman, Jaspar McGruder, and Philip Moore—listen to the recording live on stage through in-ear receivers and re-perform the record in real time as the LP plays on a turntable visible (but mostly inaudible) to the audience. The performers hear the recording and then "transmit" it to us. They are its medium.

The B-Side is, to some extent, about Berryman's desire, he says in the show's preamble, "to learn the songs, *really* learn them." Berryman, the MC and cocreator of the show, had already been learning to recite the songs and toasts on *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons* when he attended a performance of *Early Shaker Spirituals*, a 2014 Wooster Group performance, also directed by Valk. It "channels" a 1976 LP of the same title. Its performers listen to the recording of religious songs through in-ear receivers and present a verbatim recitation. Berryman, who is Muslim, heard in that technology an artistic possibility for the record he had been studying.[1] Sitting in the audience of *Early Shaker Spirituals*, a multiracial cast of both men and women, Berryman thought to himself, "I have to figure out how to do this with work songs." Prison songs, he also thought, could be enjoyed in the way that one readily enjoys and sings along to Bessie Smith (Berryman, interview by author, June 6, 2020). After the show, he drafted an email to Valk. He did not yet know her or that they would work together to create a show.

It is undecidable whether the company joined with Berryman or Berryman with the company, a story I will not so much relay as transmit here. *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons* became the source of a companion piece to *"Early Shaker Spirituals"* (hence "the B-side"). The record testifies to experiences in prison and what predates them, the men being inheritors of songs whose origins lie in slavery: recitation is essential to the record's formal existence. Recitation, Korean American novelist and artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha ([1982] 2001) has shown, is a linguistic tool of colonial education as well as a politically necessary tool of testifying to histories of collective violence. The two exist side by side, painfully but not irreconcilably. *The B-Side* has everything to do with the politics of playback and the ethical implications of reciting, where voices also appear beside rather than against one another.

The Wooster Group works as an ensemble, with its longstanding and salaried members but also a number of artistic "associates" whose main work traditionally lies elsewhere (Berryman, McGruder, Moore, and Jackson are all associates, and some, like Jackson, are not actors). These associates continue to be listed in the company's biography to the extent that they continue to be "current" and work with the ensemble. There are, finally, "founding and original members." As an artist leaves the company or ceases to associate, they are no longer listed. The biography of the company is somewhere between a foundational past and the most-current present. The in-between is not so much elided or even "lost"—a term favoured by archivists and so-called "blues hunters" (Brooks 2021) alike—as it is no longer a node or continued site of association. Something of this temporality resembles the psyche. To free associate as Freud understood it is to follow the "train" of whatever might come to one's mind, so as "to make it possible for the analysand to form relationships between what was and what is" (Silverman 2005, 40).[2] Thought assumes an audience—the Freudian Pair—which refers "the monologic nature of solitary inner speech to the dialogical structure of a two-person relation" (Bollas 2002, 7).

The B-Side would at first appear to be monologic. Yet, it takes inner acts of listening and bears them before an audience so as to engage in a number of pairings—between performer and director,

performer and ethnographer, performer and audience, and the Wooster Group and itself. This latter pairing involves a self-conscious commentary on the work and traditions of the Wooster Group, returning the makers to the company's previous work. Free association can include the "return of the unwanted," such that its freedom is also framed by resistances (Bollas 2002, 9). "Thus free association is always a 'compromise formation' between psychic truths and the self's effort to avoid the point of such truths" (9–10). The show's provocation, for me as only one listener, is the question of what it means to associate across race, gender, and age, for Berryman to associate with Valk and Jackson, to have entered the Wooster Group's Performing Garage, and to change the group's longstanding way of making a performance.[3] A largely white theatre audience in New York City—and in the kind of black box theatre whose spatial politics are tied to a long history of white performance—is asked to listen to a work that is listening to itself and to Blackness.

"The song tradition documented in this book no longer exists," Jackson writes in the preface to *Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues* ([1972] 1999). "It ended the day segregation in prisons ended" (vii). It depends on who is writing the history, on "who speaks," as Roland Barthes ([1967] 1977) might say, but also on "who listens" (Napolin 2017, 2020). *The B-Side* reopens Jackson's declarative statement to inquiry. The tradition, which began on "brutal plantations of the Deep South" then to survive the Civil War on the southern agricultural prison farm (Jackson 1972, vii), no longer exists, but the songs surely do. In the Atlantic world, Blackness is tied up with strategies of orality as memory and performance as historiography. The songs and tales, oral in their beginnings, travelled from mouth to mouth, from body to body, being collective in their authorship and purpose. The recording by Jackson captured these still-transforming songs in one shape that continues to be transmitted. But it is only one record of what was and is multiple.

Jackson made this recording on the cusp of de jure desegregation, which remains an ongoing, incomplete event, as much as the "imagined community" that is America might claim or wish otherwise (Anderson 1983). Race in the United States continues to be lived and framed through narratives and experiences of an intransigent Black and white antagonism. It feels like an intractable framework of American life. *The B-Side* does not so much escape these antagonisms as unfold a series of ethical implications about what it means to listen, and under these conditions. The freedom of its association—how Berryman, Valk, and Jackson came together to make the show—bears profoundly on the songs whose beginnings were unfree. They are recited in a world where the past is not yet past.

Ron Vawter, one founder of the Wooster Group with Elizabeth LeCompte, remarked that their work involves "going back over the tapes of the twentieth century to see what had happened, to see what had gone wrong" (Etchells 1999, 102).[4] It is a concrete summary of the politics of recitation as pedagogy: to understand what has gone and is still going wrong, you have to go "back over" it. This movement is a foundational modernist concept of ego psychology. I have described elsewhere how, with the composition of "Mourning and Melancholia" in 1920, Freud understood the ego to be a kind of phonographic record that stored and replayed voices from the past; they are the voices most hurtful to and indicting of the self.[5] In the talking cure, one goes over and recites these voices with another—listening and self-listening open the possibility of transformation.

In the case of the Wooster Group, these records, though linked to the company through personal attachment and desire, are cultural, historical, and iconic. In pursuing "what had happened, . . . what had gone wrong," Freud sought the hidden depth of voices recorded by the ego. The Wooster

Group preserves their surface. New York choreographer Annie-B Parson (2016) describes surface as the "exterior of the work," that is, "how it appears" (n.p.). It can be lifted and placed onto another surface, as would a layer that shapes the presiding surface differently. French historian Michel Foucault (1982), whose aversion to psychoanalysis is well documented, would perhaps call this going back over the surface of things a *remanence*. It is an enunciative analysis that deals with appearances, which contrasts with a historical analysis that seeks a statement's originating subjectivity or a postulated interior to which its imputed meaning can be traced.[6] Literary theorists Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus would here invoke the notion of "surface reading" that deals in "presences," rather than hunting for imputed absences. Such remanence is to "let ghosts be ghosts, instead of saying what they are ghosts *of*" (Best and Marcus, quoted in Klein 2013, 666). Verbatim recitation is to go back over the tapes, not their animating event, but in the enunciative surfaces events leave behind.

To repeat and retransmit also forms the ligaments of circum-Atlantic historiography, where to engage in song, dance, gesture, and ritual is already to have remembered (Roach 1996). In *The B-Side*, then, the Wooster Group's traditions of enunciative analysis, or sourcing, replay, and reenactment collaborate with Black sonic historiography and its traditions of memory. Those traditions, though they predate modernity, were also sundered by it. They cannot be separated from the fact that, from the moment enslaved people made contact with the New World, traditional memory was violently suppressed. The wrongdoing *The B-Side* rehearses is foundational to modernity in its memoriality, that is, its constant sense that to do is to do again without being fully able to undo. The work necessarily trades in the suppression of memory and its remanence even as it goes over the tapes and what escaped them.

To interpret this going over, an association between Black performers and a historically white company, demands that one move between two literatures of listening. *The B-Side* joins the archive of Black sonic performance as surrogation (Roach 1996). What Foucault calls the statement's "survival in time" (1982, 124) is paired with fugitivity and escape. "The fugitive enacts by enunciative force," writes critical theorist Ashon Crawley, "by desire, by air, by breath" (2016, 6). Oral enunciation depends upon an atmospheric passage and, as such, cuts through the concept of the individual, which is premised upon the property relation.[7] "From the Latin *ex-* meaning out and *nunitus* meaning messenger," Crawley continues, "enunciation . . . carries a word, a phrase, a plea, a praise, a prayer, a psalm" (36). African American singing—whose condition Crawley rescues as the simplest attempt to "keep on breathing," which lies behind all "narratives of escape"—has always been dangerous in the New World (35). The Wooster Group's techniques of reenactment and their formal arrangement of the ethnographic artifact become what they could not have been otherwise: a future historiography. It is "gifted," as Du Bois ([1902] 1999) says of the African American spiritual, "with second-sight in this American world" (10). In singing, toasting, and preaching, the three performers enunciate the recording anew; two and perhaps more spaces associate.

I sat in the audience many times over. What follows is an ensemble and a critical narrative that free associates, bringing the literature of listening, quotations, songs, and interviews into contact. I present on the page listening to and remembering *The B-Side*, all acts of listening being what critical theorist Peter Szendy (2008) calls an "arrangement" (99). I have arranged these associations, some of them scenes of listening within listening (mise-en-scène becomes mise-en-abyme), some of them things overheard and left unsaid. Listening, as a concept, is at the heart of what it means for *The B-Side* to associate. In making his field recording, the ethnographer listens to incarcerated men; these men listen to themselves and each other; the actors listen to the LP as it is played; and they listen to themselves listening, as they also sing what they hear; and the audience listens. The source material

(the phonograph record) and its "place" (recorded in Texas but replayed in New York) moves from location to location, encounter to encounter, enunciation to enunciation: a record album makes contact with the performers' own associative memories and desires, but also those of the audience. The force of enunciation in *The B-Side*, its "voice," will prove to be fundamentally expropriated. For one link in the chain of associations willingly admits what is outside of it. This voice is associative not only in its logic but in its being: it is not quite itself, never quite in its place, not belonging to anyone except when to be found in the redoubling strategies of association, as a way of being together and making theatre.

Free Association, or "Low Waves of Meaning"

Berryman, a young man of thirty, comes to the foot of the stage and introduces himself. He is dressed in a t-shirt, khaki pants, and sneakers, standing before the audience both as an actor and as himself. Berryman is positioned behind a small table where a record player sits. He holds up the old record cover for the audience to see. I linger on a photo of Berryman and Moore taken by Jackson (who on many nights sat in the audience). It captures a mise-en-scène that stayed in my memory long after seeing the show for the first time.

Eric Berryman and Philip Moore in *The B-Side:* "*Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons*," *A Record Album Interpretation*. Photo by Bruce Jackson, 2017; courtesy of the Wooster Group.

The photo, like the phonograph record, captures a fleeting moment. Berryman looks into the distance, palms opened and gaze raised, as if in worship. Lying on the table next to the record player is Jackson's book of oral history, *Wake Up Dead Man*. It begins with a series of voices of incarcerated men, also taped by Jackson between 1964 and 1966 and transcribed by him. Jackson excerpts and

collages these voices, testimonies to life on a penal farm, by placing them in rapid succession and without attribution, as if to capture in print orality and what Jackson experienced as a chorus of sentiment ("a new heading indicates another speaker, another time, another place," he notes of its associative presentation [1]). Berryman reads one of the voices transcribed there, and throughout the show, he reflects on the tracks to come by returning to the book while also, without the audience's awareness, adding from Jackson's other publications (it is more important that he appears to be reciting the book verbatim, highlighting the show's pedagogy even as it conceals some of its making). A talking book, he gives voice to the once spoken but now written testimonies as well as to their framing by Jackson.

Jackson took the photo above and many others, photography having accompanied his writing and recording practices from the beginning. His most well-known photos are printed in the book that accompanies Alan Lomax's recordings of Parchman Farm, a state penitentiary in Mississippi. Now in his late eighties, he sat in the audience of the Performing Garage half a century after having travelled to Texas to record and photograph the men at Ellis. The photo of Berryman and Moore is not unlike the first photo of the men listening in the field in being a recording of a recording. Behind Berryman is a screen, and projected onto it, a video image—somewhere between still and moving—of the intimate, private space of his apartment in Harlem. The shifting image of the apartment is situated at the threshold of the public and private. In one image, I see his bed and a pile of phonograph records, and in another, a chair and a window bearing a dreamcatcher. Superimposed on this private space is the live-video image of Moore, who faces Berryman out of frame (in this moment, his back is to the audience, and he and McGruder sit in chairs on stage facing Berryman, an audience inside of an audience). Here, Moore's visage is only visible to the audience because the live camera feed, a longstanding technique of the Wooster Group, projects it onto the screen. Moore doubles himself, both present and telecommunicated. They are photographed by Jackson, not as an ethnographer but as an audience member, who is, too, encountering multiple selves.[8]

Berryman does not stay stationed behind the table in the traditional position of the DJ. He moves around, both DJ and MC. The show is a constant rearrangement of the physical space of listening in the black box theatre, which lacks a proscenium stage and its implied fourth wall. Here, however, he has moved beside or alongside the record player. His position is exemplary of what I have called, after the philosophies of Du Bois ([1902] 1999) and Martin Heidegger, an "alongside voice," as a way of being with, listening to, and aesthetically deploying quotations in the world (Napolin 2020, 134, 281n65). The aesthetics of being alongside involves transferring across—the domain of both translation and transduction, from the Latin *trans-* or "carry over across"—but without overcoming or subsuming physical, spiritual, and political difference in a field of associations. In this way, each object in the photograph of Berryman's apartment marks a distance in space and time from the fields and penal spaces of Ellis as they were fifty years ago. The audience is meant to see him as a "modern man," Valk says (Kate Valk, interview by the author, February 7, 2019).

The superimposed image of the apartment is, in this way, a hinge between realities, but also between ontologies of repetition and supplementation, which is to say whiteness and Blackness. The Wooster Group's techniques of superimposition engage a "black technopoetics" that defines the doubling strategies of technology in the Atlantic world (Chude-Sokei 2015, 11).[9] The LP that Berryman, McGruder, and Moore listen to is inaudible to the audience, but in some moments, the off-stage sound engineer brings it up into the house mix. An echo of it persists just below my awareness, and that trace of audibility contributes to a dynamic event of synchronization and desynchronization. The technologies of the record player, in-ear receiver, and stereo amplification summon the ghosts:

it is a dub, from the patios *duppy* or "ghost" or "spirit," a word that took on global significance as it moved from out of the dancehalls of Kingston, Jamaica. The Wooster Group's techniques of doubling are given new meaning in *The B-Side* as a Black diasporic art, one audible in dub and the Yoruba trickster figure. The power of the mix, double exposure, and echo is to inflect one reality dialogically with another other.

I consider the two photographs alongside each other, 1965 and 2017. Berryman once told me that the photograph of the men gathered listening to the tape in the fields of Ellis hangs in his apartment, so I imagined it before I saw it; I wrote to Jackson to ask if he could send it to me. "Often a purely formal bridge—a position, an accent, a detail—effects the passage from one place or an image to another," writes French playwright Jean-Christophe Bailly of associative logic (2020, ix). For Bailly, two seemingly unrelated photographic images "slipped below consciousness," as if in a dream: one a ladder in pastoral France, the other a nuclear shadow of a ladder burned into a wall in Hiroshima or Nagasaki (it is not known which). "The two images thereby revived," he continues, "but they began to function in tandem, and to emit a unique, low wave of meaning" (ix, xii). A dream, but also a historical truth. One photograph haunts and makes way for the other, a channel, such that it is no longer possible or, indeed, necessary to say which comes first in a series. To listen in the mode of free association is to find a "word, image, body movement or turn of phrase striking," Bollas notes. The listener "will not know why this is so" (Bollas 2002, 30).

Only a few years after seeing the show for the first time did I see Jackson's photograph of the men of Ellis. Both images, of Berryman's apartment in Harlem and of the men listening to the recording in the field, are conditioned by a tremendously brutal yet invisible force in the making of the New World. To be sure, such force stands behind and is archived within the enunciation of the state apparatus that incarcerates. It is literalized in the police hail— "Hey, you!"—to which Marxist theorist Louis Althusser (1970) credits subjectivation, or the becoming-subject of the individual before the law. But the singers' enunciative force—fugitive and vibrating between spaces and times—is unrelated to the subject and the individual.

It becomes necessary, then, to distinguish the kinesis that moves between the images—also between the men of Ellis, Berryman, his coperformers, and their audience—from the force that characterizes the making of the subject in the Western philosophic tradition. The kinesis of the form is "elemental," musicologist Shana Redmond (2019) describes in the context of the African American spiritual. These elements, including vibration, are the "fundamental, indivisible . . . pieces that, when combined, produced the new world," Redmond writes. "These elements compose the past that we compel ourselves to recall and the futures that we do not yet know" (Redmond 2019, xi–xii).[10] The enunciative force of *The B-Side* is an announcement, irreducible to an Althusserian scene whose principal purpose is to subjugate and individuate.

As its enunciative future, the photograph of Berryman's apartment ghosted by Moore is already implied by the photograph of the men listening to themselves in the field at Ellis. This earlier photo is implied as a concrete nonabsence, not a presence, for the men of Ellis did not know how far and in what way their voices would carry nor for whom and for what kind of profit.[11] Being a low wave of meaning, the truth of their association is vibratory. This vibration does not so much precede the images (a chronology) as it is ongoing. It is embodied in one moment by their proximity and wordless intimacy, their association. The low wave, though no doubt overdetermined and contingent, cannot be separated from the way it appears in a particular association. One photograph

could not simply be replaced by a similar one: their existence in time and space, as well as their relation, are singular.
The dream catcher in the simple apartment and the men of Ellis gathered for a moment of rest and enjoyment: together, these images become not iconic but vernacular. Photographs of Black vernacular life, photography historian Tina Campt suggests (2017), emit a vibration unrelated to the sensibility awakened by the confrontation with the spectacular, neither the silence of the grave nor the snuffing out of voice by violence, but a quietness. They may capture a person's movement through institutional worlds, like the immigration photo. They move a viewer in their primacy, "constituted primarily by vibration and contact and . . . defined as a wave resulting from the back-and-forth vibration particles in the medium through which it travels" (Campt 2017, 7).

Though opposed, these dual forces—kinesis and subjugation—together organize the recitative sensorium of *The B-Side*. Behind it is the quotidian fact of a pair, the fact that one association can move and link to another. Moore appears superimposed in the live video as a ghostly image in Berryman's photograph of his apartment (ostensibly where he first listened to Jackson's recording). In perceiving that image, also an arrangement, the audience is asked to mark a space or opening for the predecessors, those who are no longer with us but who made the event possible. In its pairing of two rooms, the image is tilted, as if seated on a precipice of the invisible. The dreamcatcher is both a corridor through which images pass and a gatherer, which catches and absorbs. It is a mark of a pan-Indigenous space in the violent making of the Americas but also a marker of the ongoing chain of associations. To be sure, this sign has often been commodified, appropriated, and misused. I dwell on it meditatively, seeing there an escape route, a hatch into the unseen.

This photograph physicalizes the ethical question of how one can become open and receptive to otherness at all. The question is not one of retrieving the ghosts or past selves, as if something about the past might be objectively known (which, as I will return to, includes the fraught past reception of the Wooster Group itself). The show begins with a comportment—the opening—by which one can become aware of the uncaught, nonaccumulated sonic trace. This alertness, sensing behind and beyond oneself, unseats the imperial feeling of knowing, of having been first on any scene. To write alongside *The B-Side* is necessarily to participate in its ongoing, low wave of meaning. The phonographic device ceases to be premised on the nineteenth-century imperial desire for capture and preservation, which entangled the invention of the phonograph with the technologies of canning and embalming (Sterne 2003). Such a desire echoes the erection of cemeteries in the New World. These "cities of the dead," according to Roach, were a sanitizing barrier between the living and the dead meant to suppress Black assembly. Yet, "amid the formal requirements of Eurocentric memory," Roach continues, "there erupts a countermemory" (1996, 61)—a Black historiography.

The B-Side is an encounter with storage and reproduction technology attenuated by these spiritual and racial meanings: the ventriloqual is no mere reproduction but sounds "prognosticating echoes" (Chude-Sokei 2015, 73). This sense of association—forecasting through repeating, or a prognostication through harkening back—begins even before the record plays and the performers sing on stage. Berryman does not move the tone arm to begin the act of playback until reading the names of the departed men on the album sleeve. It is a memorial:

> Johnnie Adams, W. D. "Alec" Alexander, Virgil Asbury, John Bell, Douglas Cannon, James A. Champion, William Evans, John Gibson, James Hampton, James W. Hobbs, Louis "Bacon & Porkchop" Houston, Johnny Jackson, Floyd James, Lemon Jefferson, Jesse "G. I. Jazz" Hendricks, James Johnson, Joseph "Chinaman"

> Johnson, C.B. "Snuffy" Kimble, Henry Landers, L. Z. Lee, Clem A. Martin, Leroy Martindell, Mack Maze, D. J. Miller, Houston Page, Marshall Phillips, Johnnie H. Robinson, Arthur "Lightning" Sherrod, Albert Spencer, Lee Curtis Tyler, David Walker, Jesse Lee Warren, Venesty Weles, George White, Morgan White, Matt Williams, and Eddie Ray Zachary.

Names have an uncanny dual power to summon: they both call what is by its name and call it into being (the language of Adam and Genesis). The hail is purely reiterative, an empty placeholder inhabitable by anyone (European philosophy's phantasm of the subject). Berryman's enunciation is thus suspended between incantation and recitation. It is both a genesis and harkening back. This duality of Black enunciation is literalized in the figure of the phonograph record itself, which becomes on the scene a "tabula rasa" upon which something new can be written only because something else has been erased (Marriot 2018).[12]

Reading aloud, Berryman both rewrites and overwrites. Its many logics function side by side, *The B-Side* being a lesson in reconciliation. Standing before the phonograph and the public, he does not say anything about how audience members are to listen; there are no instructions or mandates about how to respond, whether to give or withhold applause, whether to be silent or laugh. The recitation of names is a pedagogical clue in *The B-Side* that teaches me how to listen, marking the space and cutting it into two: the "here" and "there" of the receptive opening. The space is caught between the rewritten and the as-yet-unwritten, history and the dream, the overdetermined and underdetermined. If antagonism is determined in advance, where everything has already happened, then association depends upon the gift of contingency, a chance encounter.

Working and Working Through

The lights fade just after Berryman holds up his copy of the record and tells the audience it is from his personal collection. Positioned between selves, between the personal and the theatrical, the present and the historical, the spontaneous and the recitative, he tells a story. "So, I was workin' in a Chinese teashop," Berryman begins. His first enunciation at the threshold of the stage has the curious power both to insert his personality and to withhold it (I can't be sure if the show has begun or not). The audience is loosely constituted and assembled by this direct address. He tells us how he had first met Valk by overhearing her and a companion talking at a tea shop. He struck up a conversation and asked if they worked in theatre. Yes, she said, I am an actress in the Wooster Group (some in the audience laugh). In overhearing, the listener becomes a catcher in relation to a sound, the ear overleaping the dyadic unit of linguistics and subject formation, the addressee and addresser, to create an oblique space operating alongside the sanctioned one. Berryman's own obliqueness—his proclivity to overhear—is itself a lesson in receptiveness. For me, some of the pleasure of the story derives from his dissimulation, particularly because to "know" the Wooster Group is also to know that Valk is a critically acclaimed actress.

Berryman continues to tell the story. He says to Valk that he realized he had just seen her directorial debut in *Early Shaker Spirituals*. On stage, Berryman recalls the show's cast as a "bunch of white ladies." In reality, it was multiracial, but the joke works to underscore the "place," as it were, of his Blackness, localized in the visual fact of his skin as it appears in this historically white space, but also the place, more unlocalizable, of his voice in relation to his acts and modes of listening. To whom

shall the show be credited? If it is to be credited not to a voice but to listening, then such a question becomes misguided. The preamble is less concerned with fact than it is with framing.

It was not long after their first encounter that they came together to develop the show. After its initial development, Valk and Berryman had been unsure how to begin. Valk recorded and transcribed Berryman telling the story of their chance meeting to an audience in Korea, Berryman later learning that transcription and reciting it verbatim. He becomes a speaker, listener, and reader at once. It is unclear and perhaps unknowable if, when speaking to the audience in Korea, Berryman intentionally elided the "g" of "working." Berryman reproduces a version of himself as he was before that particular audience abroad (it is possible that the performers were the only Black people in the room that night). Recorded and transcribed by Valk, perhaps the pronunciation is an artifact of white listening, just like Jackson himself drops the "g" from "working" in his opening transcription of anonymous African American men at Ellis in an effort to write their accents. The effect of Berryman's recitation is uncanny and polyphonic, somewhere between spontaneous, colloquial speech and the reproduced, or rehearsed and strategized. Musicologist Derek Baron (2020) describes the effect as a "flickering" between vernaculars (135). The elided "g" signifies, but what? His Blackness or his Americanness, or both and for whom? Perhaps it is a sonic trace of migration. "I have no deep ties to the American South, all of my family has primarily for more than a century been based in Maryland and frequented Philly and New York," he replied when I asked. "I am born and raised in Baltimore. Which is not the Deep South but is technically the south and was a slave state. I never thought of myself as southern until I got out of Baltimore and somebody heard me say 'Y'all'" (Berryman, email to author, November 2, 2020).

Berryman told me that the songs, for him, represent "the root" and "the beginning" (Berryman, interview by the author, June 6, 2020). What is the origin of a voice? To speak is already to sound like others. One must seek not origins but what Edward Said (1985) calls "beginnings." The ear of the other may, nonetheless, restlessly attempt to "root" a person's voice, to suss out the traces of origin. But the "voice" is made of the most pliable material, not only rooted but "routed" (Lipsitz 1997). From the moment *The B-Side* begins, it poses the question, what does it mean to sound Black? The old literary question, "who speaks," can only be answered through a pairing: who listens?[13]

Berryman is well aware that he stands before the mostly white audience in the Performing Garage, which has never before seen an all-Black cast in this space. When he sees Black people in the audience, Berryman tries to find them after the show, curious to know how they heard of it at all. He told me about this curiosity after performing one night, just before scooting away to find some young people he had seen, a scene of listening within a scene of listening, a paratextual encounter. Berryman also told me that McGruder and Moore are neighbours in the same apartment building. Moore, a long-time associate of the Wooster Group, joined *The B-Side* when Berryman and Valk came together to develop it. He told McGruder about it in their shared hallway. McGruder said he knew that record and its songs well. A performer himself, he joined the cast. These are the informal spaces where theatre begins, not unlike the empty chair below the dream catcher in Harlem in which I imagine Berryman listening to music.

The story of the Chinese tea shop both marks and transgresses the boundaries of inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. The story, as recited, is ambiguous and leaves open the possibility that Berryman served Valk in a more traditional sense. It introduces a different register of labour in a show that takes work songs as its material and gestures to, without underscoring, the fact that an audience may harbour questions about a power imbalance. What he does not say in his opening

address is something Berryman corrected in my earliest draft of this essay. "I was not working" at the shop, he wrote to me. He was apprenticing to become a tea master. But that is not the line in the show, repeated night after night. It is significant that Berryman rejects the very phrase that appears in his studied, onstage self-description (I will not say "originates in" because who knows what conversation took place between actor and director to direct the story). To be sure, speakers continually adequate themselves, their words, and sonorities to a hypothesized or sensed reception of others. Black speakers must continually modulate the voice in a world defined by anti-Blackness (Stoever 2016). Perhaps "working" (or "workin'") was the best way to explain it that night in Korea; perhaps it remains the best way to explain to an audience at the Performing Garage.

The preamble indirectly addresses a skepticism that some audience members might bring to the Garage in advance. To go back over the tapes in *The B-Side* involves a self-conscious commentary on the Wooster Group's use of blackface in the past, in *Emperor Jones* and other shows directed by LeCompte. *The B-Side* was not directed by LeCompte, who, to some extent, steps aside in her own company so that others can inhabit new roles. It was directed by Valk, an actress who appeared in blackface in other shows. Though an oblique commentary on the Wooster Group's traditions, the self-consciousness of *The B-Side* is not an attempt to undo them. For that would be to claim that the current work is merely a reaction. Berryman's opening story begins in medias res ("So, I was workin' . . ."). *He* tells us how far back to go (recall that the company bio includes only the foundations and the present). If you want to know where to begin, in other words, listen not to the depth but the surface. Berryman tells Valk what show he had seen (*Early Shaker Spirituals*). It is a story of chance encounter. The show is "about" what it means, or what it *can* mean, for Berryman to have encountered the company and, in turn, for the audience to have encountered Berryman and the record through the company.

In this midst of this association, the video image of the apartment in Harlem inserts a cut or *nota bene* in the theatre: a reminder that the threshold of the room, the one in which I, or "we," sit listening, surpasses its tentative boundaries and four walls. It is a meditation on the theatrical space's social constitution and limits. This "we" is not formed in advance, and it will also vary from night to night. Writing of the Rodney King trial in the United States, Black feminist theorist Christina Sharpe (2012) notes King's often-quoted question in the aftermath: "Can we—can we get along?" In its stutter or redoubling, it is an "almost unaskable yet repeatedly asked question surely connected to a history of terror; surely connected to the pronoun 'we,'" Sharpe writes. To seek a language for white consumption of Black suffering and for "historical and present violence," Sharpe continues, is labour that splits Black people into both "witness and participant." King's repetitive question indexes that split, as if two selves speak, or one speaks and another listens, the one a witness and the other a participant. This self-reflexive split is endemic to recitation itself. Sharpe suggests, after the work of Elizabeth Alexander, that for King to have repeated the almost unaskable question (the almost unsayable first-person plural) is to look "for the join" (2012, 828).

The B-Side asks its audience to listen to the join. In joining Berryman, the Wooster Group takes up something far less contained than in previous works. *The B-Side* resounds four hundred years of the Black Atlantic, making the theatre its transducer. Black being is in the room. In this preamble, also a metaphysical opening, the audience is asked to take a risk, and not only because familiarity with the Wooster Group will not go very far. It amplifies the space of encounter qua encounter, which frames the replaying of the record. Berryman recounts on stage how he told Valk that, not knowing her, he had already hoped to be in touch. After he sat in the audience of *Early Shaker Spirituals*, he immediately started drafting on his iPhone the email "to someone named Kate Valk." Not yet

having an address, he saved a draft without an addressee. The chance encounter is an oblique space where associations drift outside of the dyadic units of subject and object, which are unoccupiable and empty linguistic placeholders.
Indexed on the stage in a corner, where a teapot and two cups sit, tea is a marker of that space as well as of Berryman's praxis as an artist: to become suffused. Berryman comes from a family of prominent jazz musicians, and he often heard music played at home, also learning saxophone from his uncle. Because his battered copy of *Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons* was without the original liner notes, Berryman laboured over the tracks, replaying them again and again as mp3s, struggling to hear the words through the men's bygone southern accents. He was engaging in the work of transcribing the songs while also learning to sing them: he was working over their surface. The songs, but also toasts and tall tales, were so stunningly present to him that he thought they must not simply be listened to but recited.

When he and Valk began working on the show, Berryman was twenty-seven years old, the same age as Jackson, a Jewish man from Brooklyn, when he took his recording trip to Texas funded by Harvard. Berryman found Jackson's email address and, after writing to him twice, had not heard back. The emails were lost in a digital non-space until they arrived, much delayed. Again, something of free association is outside of the sender/receiver dyad. The show is an accumulation of these associative, contingent movements. It is not a given that the show would take place. Its having happened is premised upon almost having not. Berryman learned that Jackson had already written down the lyrics of the tracks in the original liner notes, which he sent to Berryman. The two began to correspond, forming a friendship premised upon reciprocity, a love of music, orality, tales, talking, and listening. Two techniques and motivations; one shared object (the record).

The technique of verbatim recitation involves becoming host to what Valk calls the "source." "You are thinking, I know this . . . but you have to go back always to listen. . . . We go back together, collectively. You perform and then you come back, come back to the source" (Valk, interview by the author, February 7, 2019). From this perspective, the source cannot be fully mastered. It is absolute in its capacity to produce differences. These differences are constituted as much by the strength of individual collective memory as by its weaknesses and failures. The past reproduces itself in the present, but, like the source, it is infinite in its detail.

To go back over the tapes and see what went wrong is not to master the past but to return to it so that a different relationship to the present can become possible. Certainly, a cultural institution can engage in antiracist training or receive a mandate to change from without, but that cannot take the place of going back over the tapes, a version of what Freud called "working through." Though Freud meant the depth of the self, he also meant its surface. Linguistically, mental processing or "working through" (*Durcharbeitung*) is a close companion to revision (*Verarbeitung*, or "workmanship" in the sense of processing and finishing). The two terms, one theoretical and the other practical, are closely related in Freud's corpus. He was an author who announced his ongoing proclivity to revise his texts. To repeat, Freud also contended, is a failed form of memory; where we cannot remember, we repeat. In the Pair, we recite the past so as to open up the chance—not without its risks—that the story can end differently this time; it is a repetition with a difference.

Berryman explained to me how, in one early rehearsal, Valk directed Berryman to deliver a particular line differently. It was not a line from one of the songs, but from the pauses in between, where Berryman addresses the audience (reading from Jackson's writings and transcriptions). He remembers that she said, "You sound angry." Berryman explained to Valk that her remark was

injurious: it was freighted, though not intentionally, with a history of a white failure to listen but also with the fact that white women can call upon the force of the law to snuff out Black men. To associate is not to be free from the social; it is to be committed to it, committed even to "the return of the unwanted." To take a pause such as this is to ask others to hear themselves and become witnesses to their own speech, or to do the work. It is to ask someone to become responsible (from the Latin, *respondere*, or "to respond") for its effects, which can never fully align with intention. In *The B-Side*, performing and directing maintain themselves in acts of listening and returning; incomplete, sometimes, they must vulnerably and, still wounded, begin the work again.

The B-Side participates in this work of the chain of associations as both receptivity and risk. Its beginning is not with the Wooster Group nor with Jackson; it is with Berryman's encounter with the record, which happens again, night after night. It is vocation, whose etymology shares that of vocalist, from the Latin *vocare*, or "to call" or "to invoke" (Cavarero 2005, 81). Berryman displays his iPhone on the stage, a sign of vocation in a transmedial, transitional space. There will be a calling. His phone sits on the stage next to the tea set and across from the analog record player that becomes strangely contemporary. It is oriented toward desire. Berryman's opening address is a lyric one moving between two realities and temporalities, a given and a not yet.

The Source

Nearing the second side of the record, the performers sing "See How They Done My Lord," a spiritual that meditates on death and resurrection. Berryman's vocal apparatus channels that of Houston Page, the tenor and lead on the original recording, someone who cannot sing as well as he, also an older man who hears a bit flat but also in quarter tones. Berryman reproduces Page's swallowing, a man who seems to sing to himself, just before Berryman again becomes our narrator and MC, sliding into a youthful and well-projected vocality. The ghost flits away just after having overtaken him so completely. Berryman told me he had been drawn to the Wooster Group's techniques precisely because they were an alternative to putting the record in a museum. The Wooster Group's work, Valk said, "is an act of transduction. . . . The past comes through us, comes through our being. . . . We put ourselves with the artifact" (Valk, interview by the author, February 7, 2019). In *The B-Side*, the exactitude of recitation yields an ongoing, collective transduction. In Berryman's phrase, he is not singing along to a voice; he is "in the voice"—a document of what Alexandra Vazquez (2013) might call "listening in detail." The singer does not possess or master the voice, nor is the distance across which it sounds intractable. The recorded artifact is, in some precise sense, a resonator.

Berryman's statement is, then, a subtle reversal of yet a companion to Valk's comment on technique, that the "past comes through us."[14] It relates to the cultural, aesthetic, and ontological specificity of what it means for African American performers to be channelling the voices of those whose ancestors were also property. Recitation is expropriating, not because it appropriates, but because it rejects the property relation of "having" a voice. Through the in-ear receiver, the vocalist hears not himself singing in the inner vibrating sanctum of self-hearing, but the voice of the other he is to surrogate. To listen to the record is to listen to the self. Traversing the in-ear receiver, listening folds the sounds outward from the interiority of reception. The sound is their reception; the reception is the sound, the ongoing work of listening twinned by sounding.

Before playing the record, Berryman turns his attention to the surface of the record, to the practice of cleaning it and the needle. It is a ritual of care for an artifact. The performer stands before the artifact as what Valk calls "the relic." The relic appears: as a surface, it is visible, tangible, and open to the senses. Berryman's desire "to learn the songs, *really* learn them," an act of personal discovery, partners with but is irreducible to Valk's desire and perspective as a director. No relic is indifferent to its modes of handling and listening, or what bell hooks (1992) calls, in the context of ethnography, "the perspective and standpoint" of the one who discovers (152). Finding and abandoning so-called "raw material" are not neutral matters of "personal choice" (152). The relic risks being appropriated by the white artist, but also the collector.[15] With *The B-Side*, the record is not something to have. Nor is it what Szendy (2008) calls "something to be heard" (99). In this case, to listen to the record—among its listeners are the singers on stage—is to "assume *responsibility for its making*" (Szendy 2008, 99). The three performers sing as they are listening; they are re-sounding the recording, such that singing and listening are simultaneous acts.[16] Berryman returns to the record with each new track, moving the tone arm. The record never leaves the stage and maintains its split status, both declarative ("this is a record") and enlivened. *The B-Side* does not allow you to forget the artifactual existence of the recording, its distance and singularity, nor the voices of the enslaved people that, unrecorded, resonate through it.

The prison, as it echoes the slave plantation in the fields of Ellis, is connected to others like it along the Brazos and Trinity rivers, and cannot be heard directly in *The B-Side*, except in fleeting moments. "Rattler," a song that moved along the rivers through Texas prisons, transmits knowledge of how to evade Walker hounds (Jackson 1965). In the recording, I can hear traces of the outdoors, the faint sound of birds just beyond the inner corner of the DOC where Jackson recorded it. In 1964, he did not yet own a portable recorder. The men were not singing in the field but rather anywhere Jackson could set up his device, like the prison dentist's office. In a duet, these and other felicities of the source material, like Joseph "Chinaman" Johnson's inimitable whistling, rise briefly into the house mix (the room where I am listening). *The B-Side*, as chronotope, does not so much include details as it refuses to diminish the situation of the recording's event, its ambient setting. The performance is not only voicing and re-voicing; it is situating and resituating. It means something to be resituated here in the Performing Garage, and by Berryman, who has no direct experience of incarceration. The fundamental situation of sounds—incarceration and penal labour—is invisible except through these resonant and acousmatic contingencies. Through the continued presence of the video screen on stage, which displays not a prison, but Berryman's apartment, the entirety of the performance remains an acousmatic event, a sound whose source is unseen.

It is imperative that there be no fictional elements in *The B-Side*. The theatre is continually heard declaratively as a theatre, never becoming something other than what it is. The performers do not attempt to look like the men in the recording, nor are there metonyms that would remind the audience of agricultural prison space.

Untitled, 1965. Ellis Prison, Huntsville, TX (photographer unknown; courtesy of Bruce Jackson). "I recorded a lot of tree-cutting songs that day," Jackson wrote to me. Looking at the entire roll of film, Jackson did not see a field guard in any of the frames but supposes he had given his camera to the guard "and asked him to take the photos." There is a missing third gaze framing and aestheticizing, but also containing and controlling the scene of encounter.

The B-Side does not attempt to overcome an emotional aporia, the gap between this free space and the unfree one, the painful fact that the performers, and "we" through them, are listening to men who were in prison. The performers ask for a certain kind of justice in not positioning themselves as speakers. They position themselves chiefly as listeners and receivers; they listen to what the record says, and in singing, they both testify and listen. The performers never claim to occupy the place of the missing men. It is in that distance that all the performance's ethical charge is produced.

If in recording one can give "second life to things" (Coles 1997, 249), then in *The B-Side*, life and death, finitude and infinitude touch. The live video image visualizes the *memento mori* and multiplying effect. The three—Berryman, McGruder, and Moore—become the many, the community. Each of the performers is doubled, such that the three men are both themselves and, through projection, a visible sign of missing others, including Asian Americans and Black women.[17] Three men gather around the phonograph, hands placed on the table, below which sits a vestige of a stage, a small fragment or sign. It is just enough to create a minor distance through which theatre occurs. It is the natal space that opens each time storytellers and actors face each other and start something new.

When the record draws to a close, the last track, "Forty-Four Hammers," continues to play from a small on-stage speaker. It was performed by the younger men of the DOC, and it bears traces of their modernity, their experience with AM radio and its modes of presentation, including the desire to be recorded and broadcast. Moore and McGruder leave the stage, and the stage lights dim. Berryman sits, his back to the audience holding his iPhone, to watch a final and fleeting moment of

cinema projected before us. It is a shard of archival footage, shot by Jackson and Pete Seeger, of the men at Ellis labouring in the field. It is the only image of penal space in the show. The audience sees their bodies swinging axes ("hammers") in unison. Berryman's face is projected onto the same screen through the live video camera pointed at him. I watched Berryman watching, thinking, and listening as the echo of the men's axes filled the room.

Berryman brings the audience to the record album that compelled and haunted him. But what circulates in *The B-Side* is the part of the self that is not itself at all. The song issues not from the inner but the outer, which owes itself to others, whether ancestors or strangers. The Shakers called their practice "labor" and their songs "gifts." Through transduction, the artifact maintains its being as a gift. The spiral groove disappears into the centre and returns to its source.

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Notes

1. Though I did not ask him, I wondered how the recitative valences of the Quran could be heard in *The B-Side*.

2. Silverman here describes the dynamics of transference, which carries the developmental past into the present as the analyst and analysand sit together in a room.

3. McGruder was already an associate. Moore had long been working in downtown theatre and with other company associates and members.

4. The Wooster Group has continually returned to forms of exact recitation of archival footage.

5. For a discussion of race, melancholy, and sound technology in Freud, see Napolin (2020).

6. In the enunciative field, statements "are residual," that is, "they are preserved by virtue of a number of supports and material techniques" (Foucault 1982, 123–24).

7. Stephen Best writes, "Property is individual, i.e. indivisible (Latin, sixth century, *individuus*, from Greek *atmos*, not cuttable, not divisible)—'not divisible,' incapable of possession by any other than that 'one' who bears 'title'" (2004, 326n91). Atmosphere is derived from *atmos*, and thus part of this semantic field. One thinks, too, of the *dérive*, which according to French Marxist theorist Guy Debord is "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" ([1958] 2021, n.p.).

8. It would be another project to consider what it meant for Jackson to return to his ethnographic recording made so long ago and to listen to it made art by the Wooster Group (at present, he is writing such a project). Berryman continually asks Jackson, now in his late eighties, questions about his moods and writerly intentions when he produced these works in his twenties, stirring up memories of an old self that Jackson had forgotten.

9. Chude-Sokei adopts the broadest possible definition of the term "technopoetics" as the manifestation of the technological in the cultural, literary, and philosophical. "Black," as a modifier of technopoetics, involves

the simple "historical fact that technology itself has carried racial meanings" prior to its engagement (2015, 11).

10. The "we" of Redmond's statement is all human beings, but she never loses the sense that the kinetics of the African American spiritual, its "movement formula," includes a "proximity to enslavement and other unfree labor."

11. The carrying poses a fundamentally different relation to death and mortality than that ordained by racial capital. Slavery historian Daina Ramey Berry (2016) has shown how enslavement persists beyond death, enslavers accumulating value from slave mortality through a variety of legal and financial instruments, including speculation and insurance. In this way, futurity is harnessed not only through birth but in death. This harnessing goes for the recorded voice in its ongoing production of value through sales and distribution.

12. Drawing from Walter Benjamin's Judaic thought, critical theorist David Marriott describes inscription and erasure as they characterize the messianism of Blackness and the anticolonial itself, which he names after Frantz Fanon, a "tabula rasa." The anticolonial is, Marriott writes, "radically *unwritten*" (2018, 3).

13. For a discussion of the cultural politics of listening in relation to Black and white antagonism in the US, see Stoever (2016). For a discussion of timbre in relation to African American music, see Napolin (2017) and Eidsheim (2019).

14. Thank you to Masi Asare, whose comments on the draft of this essay were invaluable to revising this section.

15. Daphne Brooks (2021) describes the expropriating practices of the blues hunter, the subculture of white men who travelled to the South in search of "lost" 78rpm records: "they pursue and stow away this precious 'thing' that they identify in the record" (281). It would take more space than I am allotted here to discuss Jackson's complex relationship to the men he recorded, but it is important to recall his galvanizing sense that a tradition of song was about to disappear, or a salvage ethnography.

16. Working with Valk, Berryman learned this longstanding Wooster Group technique, and he says it took him more time than he anticipated to get used it. Becoming a student in this way, his voice was defamiliarized to some extent, since Berryman is not only trained in but teaches Lessec, a vocal method.

17. Asian Americanness and its uneasy relation to Black/white antagonism are marked by Chinaman's unexplained nickname, Berryman's apprenticing at "a Chinese teashop," and the importance of the show's early performance in Korea. Black women are among the storytellers the performers watch on a monitor that plays Bill Farris's 1975 documentary *I Ain't Lying* just out of the sightlines of the audience (they see it; we do not). Berryman borrows movements from the footage, stitched into his performing body. On the record, the men also sing to each other about women, longing for sex and romantic intimacy, as well as for the mother. Historian Shobana Shankar (2013) notes that work songs are historically associated with African American men, despite having been sung by incarcerated women (and also recorded by Lomax and others). "The fact that these women have remained largely invisible," Shankar writes, "despite their public performances for men who became eminent figures in musicology, suggests a great deal about layers of inequality and silence—racial and gendered—in the very projects that aimed to reveal and record the Delta Blues" (2013, 184). See Brooks (2021), the first of a three-volume series dedicated to studying these and other African American women invisible to official history.

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Listening to Country: Immersive Audio Production and Deep Listening with First Nations Women in Prison

Sarah Woodland, Leah Barclay, Vicki Saunders, and Bianca Beetson

Introduction

We are an interdisciplinary team of four non-Indigenous and Aboriginal Australian artist-researchers. In January 2019, we worked with incarcerated First Nations women to produce a one-hour immersive audio work based on field recordings of natural environments. The project team facilitated a three-week creative program with a group of women in Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre (BWCC), using an interdisciplinary approach combining visual art, performance, Indigenous storywork, and dadirri (deep, active listening). The goal of this pilot project, *Listening to Country*, was to investigate the value of acoustic ecology in promoting cultural connection, maintenance and wellbeing among Indigenous communities and groups who experience separation from family, culture, and Country (ancestral homelands) in Australia (Woodland et al. 2019). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often use the term "Country" to describe family origins and associations with particular parts of Australia. It refers to ancestral connections to homelands and is an essential ontological concept and relationship that grounds understandings of kinship, place and belonging (Carlson 2016). The term is often capitalized to describe and pay respect to Indigenous peoples' Country or Countries affiliation and belongingness, and to reflect that it is an entity that is family with the same ontological status as a person.

In Australia, as in other settler-colonial nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada, Indigenous peoples are imprisoned at an alarming rate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the fastest-growing prison population in Australia. Representing nearly 30 percent of the prison population, they are currently 21.2 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous women (Australian Law Reform Commission 2017). The majority are mothers, experiencing the trauma associated with separation from family, community, and Country, and their incarceration creates a ripple that affects entire communities (Walters and Longhurst 2017). This is part of the "torment of powerlessness" (Referendum Council 2017) that Indigenous peoples experience in Australia: the continued legacy of forced removal, marginalization and incarceration that began with Australia's establishment as a penal colony; and the systemic racism that pervades our contemporary institutions (Fforde et al. 2013; Henry, Houston, and Mooney 2004; Paradies 2006). Current prison programs are failing to address the specific needs of First Nations women, and research has shown a demand for holistic, culturally focused and flexible approaches to engage and support women and their children before, during and after entering prison (Kendall et al. 2019). Connection to Country is central to most dominant narratives of Indigenous wellbeing, with the majority of ongoing efforts in native title, health, education, environment and cultural heritage being focused on strengthening connections to place, belonging and Country. The *Listening to Country* pilot, funded by the Lowitja Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research,[1] therefore represented an original

Sarah Woodland is Dean's Research Fellow in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne. **Leah Barclay** is a sound artist, designer, and researcher who is Discipline Lead and Lecturer in Design at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. **Vicki Saunders** (Gunggari) is a Research Fellow with the Centre for Indigenous Health Equity at Central Queensland University. **Bianca Beetson** (Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi) is a visual artist, curator, and Director of the Indigenous Research Unit at Griffith University.

experimental creative approach to promoting cultural maintenance and wellbeing among mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties, and grandmothers who are experiencing disconnection from family, culture, and Country in prison.

Our decision to create immersive audio resulted from a direct request from a group of Aboriginal women at BWCC to create, in their words, a "culturally relevant relaxation CD"—a sound recording for the purpose of reducing stress and connecting to natural environments and to Country. From 2011, Sarah Woodland, a non-Indigenous arts practitioner-researcher, had been delivering participatory drama projects in BWCC, and while these projects had been open to both First Nations and non-Indigenous women, more recent works directly addressed the colonial legacies and impacts of female and Indigenous over-incarceration in Australia (Woodland 2019). One of these projects, *Daughters of the Floating Brothel* (2015), was an audio drama that engaged the women in creative processes such as making scripts and monologues, vocal soundscapes, Foley effects and audio production (Woodland 2021). It is likely (although unverified) that the women's participation in these programs led to their request in 2017 for a sound-based project that emphasized Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as their next creative endeavour.

Following this request, Woodland enlisted support from Aboriginal artist-researchers Dr. Vicki Saunders (Gunggari) and Dr. Bianca Beetson (Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi) to colead the project, along with Dr. Leah Barclay (non-Indigenous), a composer, sound artist and acoustic ecologist. The team engaged in extensive consultations with Dr. Claire Walker (Wiradjuri) from the Murridhagun Cultural Centre at Queensland Corrective Services and the Brisbane Council of Elders to shape the project and finalize the logistics and continued these consultations throughout and post-project. Aunty Melita Orcher and Aunty Estelle Sandow[2] from the Council were engaged as cofacilitators for the *Listening to Country* pilot workshop series, and the team also worked closely with the Aboriginal Cultural Liaison Officers within BWCC. This approach reflected our commitment to codesigning the project with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a focus on Country as being central to place and belonging and thus healing, and the importance of the Elders' involvement in maintaining a culturally safe, culturally focused and culturally responsive project.

This paper outlines the creative process we undertook with women in the *Listening to Country* pilot at BWCC, as informed by key Indigenous and arts-led theories and practices such as acoustic ecology, dadirri, Indigenous storywork, and arts-led and poetic inquiry. The women in BWCC provided the artist-research team with permission to share the work outside the prison. However, as the soundscape was produced for a very specific purpose inside the prison—that is, to facilitate cultural connection and healing for a particular group of women—the version that we shared publicly on the website and in other public forums such as conferences and workshops was adapted with changes that included filters on voices so the participants cannot be identified (available at www.listeningtocountry.com). In this essay, we share details of the creative process that we led inside the prison and a soundscape created by Leah Barclay that features excerpts of the original immersive audio work that the women in BWCC cocreated with the team, some of the original environmental field recordings, and a poem composed and read by Vicki Saunders. We hope that this soundscape evokes in the listener a sensorially enhanced understanding of the project, which encompasses the original pilot work, the original soundscape produced with the women at BWCC and our ongoing engagement with it as artist-researchers. The soundscape was created to engage the listener/reader in understanding the healing potential of environmental sound in a prison context and the ethical tensions, with the poem serving to anchor our positionality as artist-researchers navigating complex ethical and cultural terrain (as we will discuss further below). This approach reflects our ongoing methodology for generating

and translating knowledge from the research in ways that draw on the acoustic and poetic resonances of our experience.

As we undertook this process, the principles and practices of acoustic ecology and dadirri (deep, active listening) underpinned and framed our understanding of the connection between listening to environmental soundscapes and the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Acoustic ecology is a dynamic interdisciplinary field concerned with the ecological, social, and cultural impact of our sonic environments. While the field evolved from research investigating the value of listening to natural environments and the negative implications of exposure to noise on our health and wellbeing (Schafer 1977), acoustic ecology incorporates other understandings around the value of listening. Acoustic ecology draws on Steven Feld's "acoustomology," which approaches sound as a distinctive medium for knowing the world (Feld 1996), and Pauline Oliveros' "deep listening," where sound facilities expanded consciousness and healing with transformational changes in the body and mind (Oliveros 2005).

From an Indigenist research perspective, acoustic ecology echoes the practice and principle that is becoming more widely known as dadirri—an active and deep way of listening to the world around us, the Country. Dadirri comes from the Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri languages of the Aboriginal peoples of the Daly River region (Northern Territory, Australia). Aboriginal healer and educator Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr (2017) introduced this term to frame and explain the philosophy and concepts behind her work and ways of being the world. As a practice, dadirri means listening with more than the ears; it is whole body listening. Arts-led and poetic inquiry were central to our methodology, in which creative acts such as drawing, poetry, storytelling and performance became the processes by which knowledge was generated and translated (McNiff 1998; Prendergast et al. 2009).

The Creative Process

In order to fulfil its purpose of promoting cultural connection, maintenance and wellbeing, *Listening to Country* reflected an equal emphasis on the process of engaging in reflective listening and creative practices and the outcome of producing the audio work. The team worked over a three-week period with a group of women at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre (BWCC), a reception and remand centre located just west of Brisbane where, at the time of the project, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women made up nearly a quarter of the prison population. The participant group fluctuated in size between one and twelve, depending on a range of outside factors that included health or legal visits, transfer to other centres, or release. The creative process initially involved the group listening together to recordings of environmental sounds and soundscapes that we brought in from outside, yarning[3] (talking) together about what feelings and memories these evoked, and then discussing and documenting what other sounds or environmental soundscapes might connect the women to their Country, or their "belonging place." It was important to include the broader idea of belonging for those women who did not know their Country or ancestry, which for some First Nations peoples can bring about feelings of shame or distress due to the ongoing effects and ruptures brought about by colonization.

For these incarcerated women, separated from community and family networks and Country, and denied opportunities to engage with their cultural traditions and practices, yarning about places of belonging was an important aspect of the creative inquiry process and ethics of the project throughout. It invariably drew out positive memories and stories, for example, about swimming in waterholes as a child, sitting by a campfire in the evening, or listening to children's laughter. Indigenous storywork is grounded in the idea that Indigenous meaning-making occurs through the relationship between the storyteller and the story. Indigenous stories within a

predominantly oral knowledge system are living stories held within Indigenous bodies (Hughes 2013; Archibald 2008). Health research in Australia is often framed within "deficit discourses" that position Indigenous peoples as a "problem" to be "solved" by Western knowledge systems (Fogarty et al. 2018). Working with Indigenous stories in health research involves confronting or raising awareness of the culturally toxic stories imposed on Indigenous bodies by colonizing storytellers. The goal for working with story through this approach is to tell Indigenous stories in ways that make us all stronger through a collective process of affirmation and acknowledgment of our strengths and knowledges (Abadian 2006; Wingard and Lester 2001). By grounding our *Listening to Country* methodology in the women's positive stories and memories, specifically by representing these through sound and soundscape, our project speaks back to mainstream health and criminology research in Australia that continues to silence these women and frame their experiences through deficit narratives and discourses.

After the yarning sessions, the research team went off-site, as the women were unable to leave the prison, and made recordings of the sounds and environments that had been identified (where possible). We recorded over eighty hours of material during the field recording for this project. These recordings were edited into short soundscapes from each location (over fifteen sites) and brought back to the prison to begin the process of listening and collaborative composition with the women. The sound recordings reflected the yarning stories and memories shared by the women and included sounds of waterfalls, birdsong, children laughing, ocean waves and dolphins underwater and a traditional song sung by Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi artist Lyndon Davis.[4]

As we played back the environmental field recordings through high-quality speakers in surround sound, we invited the group to listen deeply while engaging in reflective drawing with coloured pastel on large pieces of paper. This further strengthened a sense of embodied listening and expressiveness connected to the women's sites and sounds of belonging. In addition to environmental sounds from outside the prison, the women were keen to incorporate human sounds in the soundscape, such as breathing, heartbeats, traditional clapsticks and so on, which we recorded with them inside. This included recording a poem that reflects the women's feelings about listening to Country, an excerpt of which we share below. The poem was created through a poetic inquiry process, where our team kept a journal of verbatim comments made by the women after each listening session to the field recordings and during our yarning circles. Their comments focused on their reflections and responses to listening to the soundscapes, including the effects of the soundscapes on their sense of wellbeing and their connection to Country and/or culture. After we shared these verbatim comments with the whole group, two of the women worked together to sequence comments into a poem, which they then read aloud and recorded for the final soundscape:

> Like a dreamtime story / it is beautiful to my ears / and the sounds of my kids' voices / the sounds of water flowing / and the flood of fish / makes me feel free, spiritually alive / sounded like she was outside in the world on her journey. / Spiritually alive / I just get goose bumps / my ancestors were there telling me where to walk / When you hear it you can feel it. / The only thing I hear is my heart beating / sitting in the dark / can't hear no birds, no fire / I can't say the meaning / the true meaning is deeper than us, in the dance. / I feel warm / I feel my soul / like voices walking away / centring your spirit. (Excerpt from original poem, also reproduced in Morrison et al. 2020)

The poem reflects the generation of meaning and knowledge that is possible through poetic inquiry—creating qualitative, arguably deeper understandings of wellbeing and healing that move beyond positivist empirical approaches (Prendergast et al. 2009). This also supports the goals of Indigenous storywork discussed earlier, where the embodied knowledges and cultural strengths shared by the women through yarning were highlighted and reflected back through the poem.

The poem also reflects our commitment through the *Listening to Country* process to using sound intentionally to promote "acoustical agency" (Rice 2016), where participants might take control of the sonic environment and resist the oppressive industrial soundscapes of the prison. On a larger scale, this approach involves using sound as a form of "sonic agency" (LaBelle 2018) or resistance to the structurally racist systems of health, welfare and criminal justice that keep First Nations women such as those in our group in a state of "systemic entrapment."[5] The collaborative process our team took with women inside the prison was at times empowering and transporting, enabling the women to make and listen to sounds and soundscapes that, as alluded to in the poem above, were ordinarily drowned out by the oppressive machinery of the prison and the wider systems of entrapment surrounding their lives.

Our entire creative process was not without tensions arising from the project's situation within a secure custodial environment. Despite the potential for "sonic agency" described above, the process of deep listening and recording was nevertheless constantly challenged by the industrial soundscape of the prison environment, with slamming doors, air-conditioning vents, two-way radio chatter, and interruptions all disrupting the potential for quiet focus and reflection.

For security reasons, after initially being given permission by Corrections, we were ultimately unable to bring a laptop into the prison, and so the women were not allowed to edit the soundscape in real time. The women's involvement with the composition process therefore occurred without sound composition and production technology, but instead through paper printouts: drawing, brainstorming, and constructing "maps" of different sounds. These included images and words depicting animals, birds, human sounds, and landscapes recorded outside the prison, arranged in a sequence on the floor of the workshop space through a process of discussion and negotiation. This limitation created key tensions around cultural safety and ownership, which became apparent during one workshop when the women became angry and highlighted their concerns about cultural appropriation and their loss of control over the creative process. Addressing these tensions with the women led to the creation of the poem called "Echoes of Listening to Country" described below.

Despite these tensions, there were also many moments of meaningful engagement and connection, where the women described the soundscapes that they heard and composed as making them feel calm, relaxed, and free. Professor Elena Marchetti from the Griffith University Law School conducted an independent process evaluation of the project, which included interviews with three of the women involved, as well as staff from BWCC (see Marchetti et al. 2022). The evaluation found that the women involved in the project felt a reconnection to or strengthening of their connection to culture and Country, facilitated through discussion and deep listening to sounds from the natural environment and by interacting with Elders. This, combined with our own observations and reflections on the project and the poetic and storied responses from the women through the process, demonstrates that this unique, interdisciplinary approach might have, at least in part, reached its goals.

The Artist-Researchers' Response: "Echoes of Listening to Country"

The *Listening to Country* methodology, which we piloted inside Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre (BWCC), continues outside the prison environment. Since our time with the women on the project, our team has generated and shared knowledge through different modes of research translation, including listening events, workshops, and written works. This includes the soundscape "Listening to Country," which is the living text of our work with the women in the prison. In addition, we have made a new soundscape, "Echoes of Listening to Country," for this special issue, which represents our own ekphrastic response as researchers to the creative process we led inside the prison.

Extending on the more traditional definition of ekphrastic poetry (as a poem written in response to a painting), researchers might create a work of poetry, music, sound, or performance in response to a creative artifact or experience. This process of ekphrasis arises from the resonance or embodied listening and knowing that occurs through the experience (see Maddison-MacFayden 2012). While it features excerpts of the original work the women in BWCC cocreated with the team (used with permission), the ekphrastic sound work published here reflects our experience as researchers as we navigated this emergent mode of inquiry through methods such as yarning, echo poetry,[6] and audio composition. The idea of resonance continues as we researchers acknowledge the need to use our privileged voices to interrogate our own practices and help amplify the voices of those who are seldom heard.

The "Echoes" soundscape includes elements of the project we used with the women at BWCC. It features environmental field recordings that we recorded off-site, some of which were used in the original "Listening to Country" soundscape and some that were not. These include a dusk chorus of insects deep in the rainforest, distant waterfalls, ocean waves, humpback dolphins and a thunderstorm recorded from the banks of the Nerang River. The soundscape also incorporates recordings of the women's voices that have been processed and filtered through the soundscapes.

"Echoes" opens with a poem written by Gunggari team member Vicki Saunders and recorded inside the trunk of a tree at Curtis Falls on Yugambeh Country in Queensland. Saunders wrote the poem during the *Listening to Country* pilot as a direct response to the challenge of working sensitively, safely, and intuitively toward meaningful cultural connection while inside such a tense, culturally unsafe institutional environment. She shared the poem with the group inside BWCC as a way of opening up a conversation within the yarning circle. The poem reflected her feelings of questioning and being unsettled, knowing that she held a sense of cultural responsibility and a duty of care as one of the artist-research team members to hold the workshop space. The poem asks why we (the women and the project team) were here—not in the prison, but coming together to do this work. Saunders approached this poem as a gentle way to work with the tensions and conflicts mentioned earlier, using poetry as an alternative way to create space for discussion. The idea to record the poem inside the tree occurred later during one of the off-site field recording sessions in the bush when testing the sounds within a large "grandmother" tree with a wide hollowed-out trunk. Reading the poem standing inside the tree created strong reverberations for the human voice, so the poem was performed and recorded there. This second performance extended the poem's meaning far beyond its initial impetus, moving the question "Why are you here?" out of its initial context and into a more existential realm via the presence and reverberation of a wholly natural space.

Conclusion: Healing through Soundscapes

Recent research has suggested that listening to natural environments through remote experiences (such as sonic performances and installations) has the potential to evoke a profound connection to place (see Barclay 2018; Bates et al. 2020). The project evaluation supports the idea that women's listening from within the walls of a prison could have similar health benefits to physically listening on Country (Marchetti et al. 2022). Actively listening to environmental soundscapes in an embodied way facilitates a sense of ecological interconnection and resonates with what Timothy Morton (2012) describes as the vast intertangling "mesh" flowing through all dimensions of life. It highlights the temporal and performative nature of sound and how its attendant process of listening can facilitate a presence and connection to place.

As we continue to share the *Listening to Country* approach through different knowledge translation platforms and encounters in scholarly and community settings, we see the potential for sound-based collaborative creative processes such as this to be adapted and applied to different institutional settings where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples might experience dislocation or distance from places of belonging and Country. Following the pilot program delivered in BWCC, the researchers delivered a two-hour workshop to sixteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at Southern QLD Correctional Centre as part of the knowledge translation activities for the project. As we describe in Morrison et al. (2020),

> these women listened to the work that had been created in BWCC, and engaged in yarning and reflective drawing. When asked to reflect on the usual soundscape of the prison, the women said that the sounds of doors slamming, keys, two-way radios and other industrial noises contributed to feelings of anxiety and stress. They understood clearly how listening to environmental soundscapes from outside on Country might help to mitigate these feelings. Afterwards, they reflected that the session had made them feel relaxed and calm, and they were very keen for the program to be delivered in that centre in the future. The healing benefits of the project were seen by stakeholders to be particularly relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were displaced and vulnerable in other settings, such as those in hospital or medical settings.

The process and work we undertook with the women in the pilot is an ongoing, generative movement of knowledge and resonance, potentially creating a "social echo" (Lederach and Lederach 2010) that reverberates well beyond the walls of Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre. Our hope is that these reverberations continue the deep listening necessary for transforming oppressive and punitive systems of entrapment and healing the harms associated with colonization.

Notes

1. This Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Research Institute was established in 2010 to generate high-quality, high-impact research and knowledge translation in health and wellbeing for Australia's First Peoples (https://www.lowitja.org.au/page/about-us).

2. The title "Aunty" is commonly conferred in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to a female Elder who has seniority and cultural authority in her community and, by extension, in other communities and contexts.

3. Yarning is a First Nations cultural form of communication and conversation that privileges building respectful and reciprocal relationships. The use of a yarning circle (or dialogue circle) is an important

process within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and has become an important method of inquiry, promoting relational accountability in participatory research that involves Indigenous communities in Australia (Barlo et al. 2021).

4. Examples of original recordings used in this stage of the process include Kookaburras at https://soundcloud.com/leah_barclay/listening-to-country-kookaburras/s-qme6Sr0vMPh and Dusk Wetland Frogs at https://soundcloud.com/leah_barclay/listening-to-country-dusk-wetland-frogs/s-7pWESo7OC4y.

5. See the research project "Systemic Entrapment," interrogating the intersecting government systems that maintain First Nations peoples' oppression: The University of Wollongong, https://www.uow.edu.au/global-challenges/building-resilient-communities/systemic-entrapment/.

6. In this context, we are using the term to refer to the process of echoing back that which resonates in the listener/the poet listening—to echo what others have expressed/articulated, amplifying their meaning/expression in a creative form. Echo poetry aims for resonance—that which is heard by the listener/observer and expressed back verbatim using the words that are "heard."

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Excerpts of the original work that was created in collaboration with the women at BWCC are included here with permission from the women participants.

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"I'm A Stripper, Ho": The Sonics of Cardi B's Ratchet, Diasporic Feminism

Karen Jaime

The first time I saw Cardi B on VH1's reality show *Love & Hip-Hop: New York (LHHNY)*,[1] I was struck by her onscreen presence and performance, how she articulated and inhabited a particular racial, ethnic, and class-based feminism. While the aesthetics and politics of a Bronx-raised, working-class, Black Dominican/Trinidadian are familiar to me, they were unique to televisual spectacle and entertainment. In her scenes and overall arc, Cardi B refused to be marginalized in her personal life or as a working, emerging hip-hop artist. She expressed a sex-positive feminism grounded in hip-hop aesthetics and Caribeña ways of being, evidenced by her facial expressions, hand gestures, mode of speaking—Cardi B speaks with an accent that highlights her urbanity and fluency in both English and Caribbean Spanish—and overall affect that rejects the relegation of women to sex objects and instead champions their sexual agency, pleasure, and frivolity. Whether in her chart-topping songs, Instagram videos, or interviews on talk shows and online, Cardi B performs a sonic and visual refusal that expands current definitions and theorizations around feminism, especially as the struggle for women, femme and trans rights, and representation relates to the US racial/ethnic street. As discussed in her weeklong presence on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, she has introduced a local vocabulary to the globe, especially with her use of "okuuuuuuurt!" and "eeeeooowwww!," which both have roots in East Coast, Afro-Latinx queer communities and communication.[2] I attend here to Cardi B's deployment of such utterances along with her unabashed sexual expression to challenge, disrupt, and reject respectability politics. To enlist Cardi B's parlance, I am interested in how her ratchet, trap, and hood songs operate as sonic feminist strategies, enacting a sounding of diasporic feminism. Specifically, I focus on her appearance on the *LHHNY* season 6 reunion special, her chart-topping hit song *Bodak Yellow*, the video for *La Modelo* (her collaboration with Latin trap artist Ozuna), the video for her song *Money*, and her interview on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

Although *LHHNY* served as my introduction to Cardi B, I later learned she initially gained fame and recognition for her Instagram posts. Her social media presence garnered Cardi B a particular following that she sought to capitalize on by participating in *LHHNY* and promoting her music. In these short videos, she rejects aspirational ideologies based on following socially and culturally constructed politics of respectability. A critique first introduced by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in 1993, the politics of respectability emphasized the "reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations" (187). The politics of respectability function as a way for marginalized people to police their own and each other's behaviour, including modes of speech, dress, and comportment, in order to adhere to class-ascendant and majoritarian definitions of propriety. The limitations of respectability politics, as Brittney Cooper articulates, lie in how they are steeped "in elitist, heteronormative, and sexually repressive ideas about proper Black womanhood" (2012). In observing and promoting mainstream social and cultural values and belying racial, ethnic, and

Karen Jaime is an assistant professor of performing and media arts and Latina/o studies at Cornell University and author of *The Queer Nuyorican: Racialized Sexualities and Aesthetics in Loisaida* (New York University Press, 2021).

gendered stereotypes, people are ideally rewarded with acceptance and a vaulted status previously denied them by raced class comportment and stereotyping.

Cardi B's Instagram videos highlight how she uses both sound and image as a tactic for disrupting this configuration. In one of her earlier videos, she speaks directly into the camera, her hair worn in long braids as she wears a low-cut Lycra top and responds to the question of what she does for employment. Her answer, delivered in a sing-song cadence, is that she is a "ho, a stripper ho," who is about that "schmoney," aka money (Washpoppin TV 2015). Such brash avowal of sex work and sex-positive feminism relayed in a lighthearted manner both acknowledges and seeks to diffuse the stigma associated with sex work. Her declaration, in turn, operates as part and parcel of Cardi B's meteoric rise to fame and notoriety, ensconcing her nascent musical career within the frame of ratchetness and a hood worldview that, I argue, is also a sounding of diasporic feminism made anew via the interlocking mediums of the stripper pole, Instagram videos, talk show guest appearances, reality television scandals, and celebrity and hip-hop music and videos.

Sounds of Ratchetness

In her essay "A Ratchet Lens: Black Queer Youth, Agency, Hip Hop, and the Black Ratchet Imagination," Bettina L. Love challenges the usage of "ratchet" to define Black women as "loud, hot-tempered, and promiscuous" (2017, 539). A ratchet sound is disruptive, sonically challenging the limits of proper behaviour for women of colour through the interplay between sound, image, and message. Drawing on the work of Cooper, who pushes us to imagine a feminist practice and female subjectivity beyond the binary of respectable and ratchet, Love's essay proposes a necessary methodological approach, one that radically engages the visual and the aural/sonic in what she terms "a Black ratchet imagination lens" (539). A Black ratchet imagination is grounded in a recognition of the complicated ways that agency is enacted by "Black queer youth who are resisting, succumbing to, and finding pleasure in hip hop by undoing the heteropatriarchal, liberating, queer, homophobic, sexist, feminist, hyper-local, global, ratchet, and conservative space of hip hop" (540). Ratchet signifies modes of behaviour that challenge respectability politics, intentionally or not, and often operate as sites of resistance for people erased and/or objectified in representation, popular culture, and the public sphere. Further, as argued by Nikki Lane, ratchetness does not require permission and centres Black women's pleasure while challenging definitions of "classy-ness" and extending the conditions of possibility for *all* Black women, "calling out and critiquing the delicate sensibilities of middle-class Blackness" (2019, 108). I agree with Lane that the performative potential of ratchet is most clearly evident in hip-hop, a sonic space where Black women are able to "evoke the ratchet," in particular the "sultry basslines" and the explicit sexual lyrics in order to devise and circulate images that call attention to their bodies and sex on their own agentive terms. I draw on Cooper's and Lane's critical interventions on ratchetness to underscore how an embrace of ratchetness operates as a rejection of respectability politics and an acknowledgment of how the politics of respectability have failed Black women, denying them the very access that it promises to provide.

To be clear, as a ratchet feminist Cardi B intentionally uses hip-hop, alongside trap and reggaeton, to sonically articulate a diasporic feminism that encompasses the complexities of her racial and ethnic identity while simultaneously performing her disavowal of proper, "respectable" behaviour for women of colour. Further, her articulation of diasporic Blackness recontextualizes the too-often United States-centric representation of Blackness within hip-hop circles, while her ratchetness upends the proscribed upward mobility that rewards more sanctioned and complicit modes of hip-

hop femininity. Through her social media posts, musical productions, and interviews, Cardi B demonstrates a commitment to "keeping it real"—however, her version of realness deviates from those expressed by other hip-hop feminists such as Joan Morgan. Morgan's hip-hop feminism, defined as "a feminism brave enough to fuck with the grays," refers to artists who demonstrate an investment in keeping it real while simultaneously reifying the binary of good/bad or respectable/vulgar. Hers is a feminism that does not challenge but rather engages the binary (Morgan 2000, 59). "Fucking with the grays" is Morgan's argument that women can be both—they can align themselves with respectability politics *and* express a sexuality that pushes the boundaries of what is considered acceptable, operating within "subtle, intriguing shades of gray" (62). Throughout her career, Cardi B has generally eschewed Morgan's "grays" for staunch alignment—she defines herself as pro-Black, pro-woman, and as a self-described Bernie Sanders supporter. Cardi B does not inhabit or perform within the grays in the way Morgan defines them. Her version of feminism signifies on earlier versions of hip-hop feminism while simultaneously challenging them, pushing hip-hop feminism to broaden its scope and sharpen its political alignments.

Misogyny, Hip-Hop, and Ratchet Feminism

During *Love & Hip-Hop: New York*'s season 6 reunion special, Cardi B entered into an argument with Grammy-nominated hip-hop artist and rapper Peter Gunz. As with most reality television reunion specials, the host sat centre-stage in an armchair with two couches, each containing three cast members, on either side. Due to the size of the *LHHNY* cast, there were also couches facing the host in the front row of the audience. Cardi B sat on the couch to the host's left, next to Peter Gunz and music producer Cisco Rosado. The host asked Cardi B: "What is the craziest thing you've used a man for?" to which Cardi responded: "You pay my rent for six months straight because you like me" (VH1 2016). She delivered her response in a low voice with a flat tone, employing a matter-of-fact delivery that came across as factual and unapologetic. Fellow cast member Yandi Smith chimed in, stating that all relationships are about an exchange, be it monetary or emotional. Cardi B corroborated Smith's assessment, this time deploying a different vocal inflection; no longer devoid of affect, her delivery came at a faster tempo and a higher pitch, evidencing her defiant and confrontational stance. Here Cardi B's verbal posturing reflected her refusal to attend to a partner's sexual, monetary, or emotional needs without receiving anything in return. She continued, offering verbal punches as she laid out the dynamics of these transactional interactions, relaying to the host and the audience that some married men approach women, wishing to enjoy their company for "free," and that her response has frequently been that she has bills that need to be paid. She spat out the word "paid" with a slight lilt on the final syllable, her tone suggestive of a question but all the while explicitly framing how these interactions are inherently contractual and transactive. Through referring to her personal experience[s], Cardi B poses the question: Why should women give—be it of their time, attention, or affection—without expecting anything in return, up to and including monetary compensation?

This moment in the reunion reflects Cardi B's usage of the sonic strategies of ratchetness—she unapologetically affirmed her sex positivity and did not sanitize or frame her interactions with men as anything but contractual, subsequently resisting her erasure and objectification by fully inhabiting her positionality. Her subjectivity pushes back against Morgan's definition of hip-hop feminism's "grays," wherein women can both align themselves with respectability politics and push the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable; for Cardi B, it is about dismantling those structures altogether. At this point, Peter Gunz interjected, criticizing women who request money from a man

in exchange for sexual favours. Cardi B then clarified that it was not only about being paid for sex and questioned why she and other women shouldn't receive financial support from her/their male romantic partners. Gunz then described her behaviour as "ho-ish," attempting to both slut-shame Cardi B and reassert his cis-male dominance by setting the economic and emotional parameters for heterosexual coupling and mating. In turn, Cardi B rejected this framing by confronting Gunz about his problematic relationship with the two women sitting on the couch across from them, Amina Pankey and Tara Wallace. She turned to face him, raised her voice, and spoke rapidly, the accelerated speed and raised volume of her delivery denoting the urgency of what she was saying and simultaneously working to disrupt and challenge Gunz's misogyny. This moment reminded viewers of how, throughout the season, Gunz kept affirming to each woman that he was in a monogamous relationship with only her while fathering children with both women who were born just months apart. Cardi B directly confronted the unequal dynamic of Gunz's romantic and sexual entanglements with these women by expressing that the only things he ever gave Pankey and Wallace were "babies." Gutturally spitting out the word "babies," Cardi B attended to how the labour of bearing his children and caring for them ultimately fell on these women without the fulfilment of commitment that they sought and he promised.

As the argument continued, Cardi B suggested that perhaps they should have used him for his money since now, because of him, two intelligent women were looking "stupid" on stage. Her delivery of the word "stupid," similar to her utterance of "babies," served as a chastisement of Gunz's behaviour and demonstrated her feminist solidarity with Pankey and Wallace. Gunz pushed back, denouncing Cardi B's sexual behaviour and economic use of heterosexual romance, attempting to reduce her to the trope of a gold digger. She refused to back down, matching his verbal delivery and raising her voice in return, questioning the logics that construed her as abject when she is operating within the same moral ideology and transactional economy as "respectable" women whose husbands and partners purchase goods for them in return for love, affection, and time spent together. Cardi B's confrontation with Gunz during the reunion highlights how, as Tricia Rose argues, respect for women is part of an exchange that follows social codes and conventions that include "be respectful" and "be modest" (2008, 119). Rose's assessment that this framework "undermines what real respect for women requires: an active commitment to women's equality and justice" encapsulates Cardi B's response to Gunz, who continually disrespects and objectifies women, yet attempts to hold them to task for what he defines as improper behaviour (119).

Moreover, this interaction with Gunz evinces how Cardi B critically operates within hip-hop culture, drawing from its sexist stereotypes and tropes—the opportunistic woman who uses men for money, often presented as having no abilities beyond sex, and who deserves to be treated as a sidepiece—and how she works to dismantle and repurpose those tropes in her musical message and productions. Especially of note in this moment, Cardi B varied the speed of her verbal delivery, shifted her tonal inflections, and employed an urban argot inflected with regional (Bronx, NYC), ethnic (Dominican Spanish), and class (blue-collar) specificities as a means of conveying her argument and reflecting how her sociocultural positionality undergirds her diasporic feminism. Rather than back down to Gunz in order to appear demure or to express contrition for her "immoral" or "inappropriate" behaviour, she instead aligned herself with the two other Black women that Gunz deceived. Specifically, Cardi B's conflict with Gunz highlights the patriarchy and misogyny in the music industry, where men like Gunz can shame women for sex positivity while they enjoy and boast about random sex as an example of (hetero) masculinity that is celebrated and rewarded. In turn, Cardi B, as an up-and-coming female rapper—she had yet to achieve any substantial commercial musical success at this time—is expected to remain silent. Instead, she

refuses, enacting a ratchet feminism through her direct and unwavering verbal delivery that contests the codes and conventions of "appropriate" behaviour expected of women seeking to collaborate with more established male rappers and producers. To be clear, she was not calling out Gunz but rather the misogyny present in the music business, where only 2 percent of the top 100 songs in 2020 were produced by women, yet women of colour were almost entirely excluded from this category, as evidenced by an examination "of the 1,291 producer credits for the most popular songs in a 600-song subset since 2012, [and] only nine of them were for women of color" (Sisario 2021). The lack of female producers results in a hierarchical relationship that fosters an environment where women must acquiesce and not call attention to the behaviours of men in power, such as Gunz, even if it means they become complicit in maintaining the current power imbalance and that they might still be denied access to the resources necessary for their musical success.

Ratchet Feminism: Get That *Schmoney*

So, how does Cardi B go from Instagram sensation to Grammy Award–winning artist? Her role on *Love & Hip-Hop: New York* results in the release of her two independent mixtapes, *Gangsta Bitch Music, Volume 1* and *Gangsta Bitch Music, Volume 2*, followed by her breakout solo hit "Bodak Yellow." As the debut single from her album *Invasion of Privacy* and her first with top recording label Atlantic, "Bodak Yellow" topped the Billboard Charts for three consecutive weeks. Cardi B became only the fifth female rapper to lead the charts and just the second to do so with a solo song (the other is Lauryn Hill). "Bodak Yellow," a monolingual sensation where Cardi B raps entirely in English, serves as an anthem of feminist empowerment and an example of ratchet feminist sonics and melodies.[3] Cardi B lyrically engages with issues of gender, class, and sexuality, proudly claiming her previous work as a stripper and thereby challenging respectability politics while demonstrating her lack of investment in an aspirational, teleological, progressive narrative of "upliftment." Rather, in acknowledging her work within the sex industry, she chronicles and grounds her current success in her strong work ethic and immigrant roots. This track begins with a subtle snare drum downbeat and an ominous minor chord—*dun dun dun den dun dun* (pause) *dun dun dun den dun dun*—a sound crafted by a synthesizer whose understated quality accentuates Cardi B's bravado as she raps:

> It's Cardi
>
> (Ayy
> Said I'm the shit, couldn't fuck with me if they wanted to
> I don't gotta dance)
>
> Said little bitch, you can't fuck with me
> If you wanted to
> These expensive, these is red bottoms
> These is bloody shoes
> Hit the store, I can get 'em both
> I don't wanna choose (Cardi B 2017)

Cardi B's lyrical braggadocio undergirds a track that does not include a melodic hook or familiar musical structure—there is no bass, for example—while working to create a ratchet soundscape that enables her to lay claim to her own musical space. She uses trap hi-hats and jumps on the synthetic 808 drum machine beats to complement her sexually explicit, raw, and deliberately abrasive message

of feminist empowerment. Instead of apologizing for her previous employment as a stripper, Cardi B celebrates it and uses the monetary compensation and goods purchased, rather than any form of class ascendancy, as evidence of her success. For example, the "red bottoms" mentioned in the track refer to the signature red bottoms of French designer Christian Louboutin's shoes, which range in price from $700 to $1000 or more. Here, Cardi B expresses that she has earned enough money to purchase more than one pair and how she no longer has to choose between one style or colour over another. The Louboutin red bottoms, in conjunction with the next line—"these is bloody shoes"—frame her purchase as the result of hard work, the red blood adhering to the idiomatic expression of blood, sweat, and tears. Later in the song, Cardi B confronts those who continue to view her as "just" an exotic dancer:

> Look, I don't dance now
> I make money moves
> Say I don't gotta dance. (Cardi B 2017)

While she clarifies that she is no longer a stripper and that she is a successful hip-hop artist, she importantly does not denigrate the exchange of money for titillation or sex, evidenced in later verses when she compares her vagina (she refers to it by the slang term "pussy") to a lake that a man wishes to swim in. She agrees to let him perform cunnilingus, but only if he purchases Yves St. Laurent for her, lyrically articulating a feminist position that refuses facile categorization and disrupts the familiar virgin-whore duality used to frame comportment for women, and especially women of colour. Cardi B's usage of "pussy" rather than "vagina" draws attention to how she deliberately uses language deemed vulgar as a tool for enacting agency over her body—both in how she refers to it and whom she chooses to share it with. Further, by brashly framing her exchange with the man seeking sex as entirely predicated on monetary compensation, Cardi B contests a narrative that rewards women with respectability if they engage in sexual acts with the hopes of securing long-term romantic coupling or possibly marriage. Through "Bodak Yellow," Cardi B expands on her sex-positive message initially affirmed in the Instagram videos she recorded while still employed as a stripper and also affirmed in her earlier argument with Gunz, who sought to denigrate her by referring to her as a ho. She further boasts about her monetary success when she raps:

> be in and out them banks so much
> I know they're tired of me
> Honestly, don't give a fuck
> 'Bout who ain't fond of me
> Dropped two mixtapes in six months
> What bitch working as hard as me?
> I don't bother with these hoes
> Don't let these hoes bother me
> They see pictures, they say goals
> Bitch, I'm who they tryna be (Cardi B 2017)

Significantly, she uses these verses to position herself as the person whose success and persistence should be emulated rather than disparaged, thus positing herself as the aspirational template for female success and empowerment. She does not draw a distinction or cast a value judgment on how she earned and continues to earn her money, whether it be as a stripper or as a hip-hop artist.

Performing a Sonic and Visual Diaspora

Alongside issues of sexuality, Cardi B's music showcases the relationship between race, class, and gender, as evidenced in the video for "La Modelo," her 2017 collaboration with Puerto Rican reggaeton trap artist Ozuna. In "La Modelo," she maps out a sonic and visual diaspora, specifically placing herself within Latin trap, a musical genre that combines Southern hip-hop with Dominican dembow and Puerto Rican reggaeton. Significantly, "the trap" in trap music initially refers to the neighbourhoods in Black Atlanta where drugs are sold on the street while also serving as a descriptor used by hip-hop artists who feel "trapped" in these same neighbourhoods under oppressive economic conditions. In "How New York Dominicans Helped Launch the Latin Trap Explosion," Matthew Ishmael Ruiz discusses how Latin trap began in New York City clubs by US-based Dominican singers and musicians, later migrating and enjoying a wide reception and subsequent circulation to and from Puerto Rico. Although similar to rap, trap differs in terms of production and reception, aesthetics and beats. Dominican rapper Lady Vixxen offers up the following:

> In my opinion, trap is more commercial. You're rapping, but you're giving them all a bouncy flow to get people to vibe with you. Rap is something that you sit down and you listen to and you listen to the lyrics. [In trap] priority is on the swag. Trap is swag and rap is the lyrics. (quoted in Ruiz 2018).

What Lady Vixxen distinguishes here is the relationship between the lyrics, the rhythm and flow of the music, and the audience's consumption of each. The "bounciness" provides the listener with a danceable groove and a head-nod-worthy beat. The listener's corporeal response reflects how trap's bounciness makes audible the swag of both artist and listener. Trap's swag, its affective cool, is thus a sonic strategy where it's more about the music and the listener's ability to move to it than the lyrical emphasis of rap and harder forms of hip-hop. Yet that does not mean Latin trap represents a musical genre devoid of meaning or political content. While the lyrical swag and sonic bounce of trap music can easily result in a deemphasis of the lyrical content, one need only listen to the lyrics of recent releases such as "Yo Perreo Sola" by Latin trap superstar Bad Bunny or watch his videos and live performances to understand trap's potential as a vehicle for sonic intervention. In "Yo Perreo Sola," Bad Bunny adopts the voice of a young woman who chooses to twerk alone rather than subject herself to the objectifying male gaze as an articulation of feminist resistance. In the music video, he visually extends his feminist politics by dressing in drag, thereby challenging simplistic constructions of Latino machismo and masculinity. In subsequent live performances, he wears clothing that draws attention to the violent murder of a Puerto Rican transwoman. Through his musical and visual productions, Bad Bunny evidences how Latin trap, as a movement, "reflect[s] the struggles faced by many Latinx people within urban settings such as drugs, gang violence, relationships, fidelity, identity, and more" (Reyes 2019).

In addition, as a subgenre of bilingual reggaeton, Latin trap also enables an audience of any linguistic fluency to enjoy a song beyond its lyrical content while simultaneously allowing for English-Spanish bilingual audiences to participate in a musical experience that reflects their bicultural experience. In this regard, this bicultural experience necessitates an interrogation of the racial politics inherent in the production and circulation of trap music. In "How New York Dominicans Helped Launch the Latin Trap Explosion," Ruiz (2018) highlights the emphasis placed on White Latinidad, marketed as Puerto Rican, as opposed to the Afro-Latinidad symbolized by Black Dominican artists, as playing a

key role in the production and circulation of trap. For example, artists like the Afro-Latino Ozuna, who is both Dominican and Puerto Rican, are urged to highlight only their Puerto Rican ancestry. What does it mean, then, to have Cardi B—a Dominican and Trinidadian from New York City who acknowledges her Blackness—collaborating on a trap song with Ozuna, whose music video is filmed in Jamaica? Especially within the genre of Latin trap? How does the music video for "La Modelo" visually and sonically engage with diaspora?[4]

I turn here to the opening scene of the video for "La Modelo," wherein the strum of a guitar chord opens up the video while the tracking numbers and the word "PLAY" on the top righthand corner suggest what will follow has been recorded on a VHS tape. Along with the 90s-era typography, this throwback feel is further evidenced in the white lines that cut across the screen intermittently, mimicking the experience of a VHS tape skipping or having tracking issues, visually interrupting the aerial shots of lush greenery. The camera lingers on a statue of the late reggae singer and international music icon Bob Marley, followed by shots of Jamaican flags everywhere. As the strumming stops for a moment, we are then greeted by the faces of two dark-skinned men, the first wearing a knit cap over his grey locs and a broad smile surrounded by a bushy white beard, with two beard locs hanging down. The second man sports a red bandana folded into a headband that pulls back his twisted, greying hair away from his face; he wears a striped polo shirt as he holds up three fingers on his right hand, then smiles. The musical interlude is brought to a close by a lengthy electric bass chord, while a series of neon-coloured triangles in bright colours—the type of geometric imagery characteristic of 1990s-era TV—serve as the backdrop to the "Ozuna, FT. Cardi B" branding. Following this moment, we are greeted by Black men, one of them smoking and holding the cigarette between his thumb and forefinger like a marijuana joint. The men knock on the door of a dwelling painted with red, green, and yellow horizontal stripes—the colours of the Rastafarian flag. The door opens, and out of it emerges Ozuna, wearing a bright and vertically striped polo with a matching hat, worn backwards. Underneath his hat, his hair is also in locs, and he proceeds to greet the men around him, slapping palms and gripping hands as he moves forward, and the camera pans out. Immediately following this, we are introduced to Cardi B, walking down the stairs of what looks like a mansion, a stark contrast to the setting of Ozuna's introduction.

Cardi B wears a red lace bodysuit with a gold lion's face emblazoned across the chest, a long, blonde weave, and red thigh-high boots as she saunters down the stairs. The lion serves as another visual marker situating the video in Jamaica—the lion of Judah was one of the titles of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, whom members of the Jamaican Rastafari religion worship as the messiah. At the base of the stairs stand four women wearing jean pum-pum shorts, leaning to one side or the other, each with one hand on her hips. The women are all Black, both light and dark-skinned and of varying sizes; their dancing and clothing style are revealing and sexually suggestive. The women gyrate on screen, opening and closing their legs, thrusting their buttocks in the camera's direction, and swaying in time with the music. Their movements combine different forms of West Indian/Caribbean dance that include winding—the rhythmic rotating of the pelvis in a circular pattern; rolling—the fluid rolling of the hips in a wave-like motion; and hip ticking—moving the hips in time with the beat in a metronome fashion, reminiscent of the ticking hands of a clock. These movements draw from African dance forms that focus on isolating different body parts and operating in unison with polyrhythmic music. The isolation of the hips, the emphasis on the pelvis, and the accompanying leg lifts, all while wearing very short shorts, draw attention to the dancers' bodies and function as signs of their corporeal presence and bodily-based pleasure. Importantly, these movements also highlight the dancers' virtuosity, talent, physical strength, and labour. In turn, the song and the dancing work alongside one another to visually map the diasporic relationship

between the island nations of the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica, as well as Cardi B's home space of the Bronx/New York City.

The video continues with Ozuna and Cardi B alternating verses and performing in Spanish, yet three-quarters of the way through the song, Cardi B shifts from Spanish to English and begins rapping while staring directly into the camera, in a manner both assertive and defiant. The dancers either stand alongside Cardi B, dance alone in one of the mansion rooms, or participate in the party scene toward the end of the video. They operate as complementary to Cardi B and the action on-screen rather than as objects to be gazed at as they dance with fellow partygoers, refusing to be placed on display and objectified for male gratification. For example, these women alternate between dancing in a circle, with Cardi B and Ozuna shifting in and out of the centre of the frame, to dancing in pairs next to each other and then to partnering at a distance with men who are also dancing, as opposed to merely observing the women as they perform. Their constant movement—looking at and away from the camera, and their solo, group, and partnered dancing with men—disrupts common visual representations of women in music videos. The dancers are not so much looking at the camera nor performing for it—they are dancing to the music and the camera "happens" to record them. The smiles and looks of pleasure function as forms of resistance, and the women don't direct their gaze at the camera or at their dance partners for extended periods—be they male or female—their primary focus is unmistakably on the music and their bodily enjoyment of it. The dancers' movements are analogous to Cardi B's linguistic code-switching, her moving back and forth between English and Spanish, and her shifting between rapping and singing. These complementary flows work together to create a sonics that situates this musical collaboration within the genre of Latin trap, musically framing Cardi B within both a geographic and aural (Afro-) Caribbean diaspora.

"All I Really Wanna See Is the (Money)"

Cardi B continues her engagement with money, class, diaspora, and ratchet feminism by mapping her trajectory as an artist in the song and video for her 2018 track, "Money." The song begins with a piano downbeat as Cardi B raps the following lyrics:

> Look, my bitches all bad, my niggas all real
> I ride on his dick, in some big tall heels
> Big fat checks, big large bills
> Front, I'll flip like ten cartwheels
> Cold ass bitch, I give broads chills
> Ten different looks and my looks all kill
> I kiss him in the mouth, I feel all grills
> He eat in the car, that's meals on wheels (Woo!) (Cardi B 2018)

Video viewers are then greeted by the following imagery: a stripper twirling on an invisible pole in an empty, Victorian style room, Cardi B standing centre-frame, flanked by six dancers on either side of her, while wearing a long black skirt with a black-and-white striped open jacket, exposing her bare cleavage. The jacket's exaggerated collar extends behind Cardi B into a Byzantine-style headpiece that halos her head, which is covered by a short black wig. The women surrounding her wear large black fascinators and open black blazers that expose their breasts and nipples, adorned with white lapels, and black stockings and garter belts. Three women are sitting on each side of Cardi B, and

three are standing behind those seated. The women are of all different shades, and they stare, unsmiling, straight ahead. While the snare drum's beat reverberates throughout the otherwise empty room, Cardi B's rapping centres her and the women's presence, a direct challenge to their erasure in the multiple historical eras represented. The room functions as analogous to hip-hop, with Cardi B as the marker for a markedly diasporic, ever-present female presence. Further, her verbal articulation allows her to assume a position of power over the women who surround her, instructing their gaze to the woman dancing on the invisible pole. Through her lyrics, Cardi B claims ownership over the term "bitch," reappropriating the word from its regular pejorative use by male rappers, when she begins her flow with the emphatic, "Look, my bitches all bad." She then proceeds to assume the physical posture usually occupied by these men by standing at the centre of a group of scantily clad women (Cardi B 2018). Calling these women "bad bitches" operates as an honorific, exalting the women's presence and agency, as Cardi B situates herself within an anti-sexist hip-hop legacy by redefining terms of sexist abjection to signify Black and Latina empowerment.

The video then presents Cardi B in a jewel-covered, gold-sequined bodysuit with a low neckline, sporting a matching gold headdress similar in structure to the one worn by the Ancient Egyptian Queen Nefertiti. Cardi B wears this outfit seated in a glass museum case, placed in the same room as before. Here, Cardi B functions as a museum object; as she leans back in the case, the camera zooms out to show many of her previously worn, recognizable outfits on display. The soundtrack for this moment includes the emphatic piano downbeat and Cardi B's staccato and forceful lyrical delivery. She reconfigures the dynamics of museum exhibits, sonically disrupting a museum etiquette predicated on hushed whispers, the light tapping/clicking of shoes as people walk from one display to another, and the classical music often filtered through speakers set to low, almost imperceptible volumes. Rather than muting herself, Cardi B vocally projects, directly meeting the gaze of anyone walking by her encased body, refusing her silencing. In simultaneously expressing herself visually and verbally, Cardi B controls and curates her positioning as she dances and poses in the glass case; she frames herself, her body, and her outfits as art canonical. Yet, in spite of her costuming, Afrocentricity isn't really at work here. Cardi B invokes Egypt not to position herself within Afrocentric ideologies of humanity's origins but to become a museum artifact similar to the Egyptology of Michael Jackson's "Do You Remember the Time?" music video or Beyoncé's concert film *Homecoming* and photoshoots where she visually references a Yoruba mythology. Thus, Cardi B's costuming enables her to capaciously position both herself and her wealth among iconic artistic/historic eras celebrated by white society and within a specifically Black musical legacy of greatness.

The video transitions from Cardi B as a museum object/art installation under dim, nighttime lighting to Cardi B in the daylight, the room converted to its original set-up. The viewers once again see the stripper twirling on the invisible pole as Cardi B stands with the original twelve women. She raps:

> I like boardin' jets, I like mornin' sex (Woo!)
> But nothing in this world that I like more than checks (Money)
> All I really wanna see is the (Money)
> I don't really need the D, I need the (Money)
> All a bad bitch need is the (Money) (Cardi B 2018)

Here, Cardi B expresses her enjoyment of luxury and sex while affirming that, more than anything else, she appreciates "checks." These checks are her compensation, the money she earns as a result

of all of her hard work. Her delivery of the line "But nothing in this world that I like more than checks" operates as a call and response between her and another woman, who responds "money." Cardi B positions herself as being in conversation with other women who similarly seek to be paid for all types of labour, and on their own terms. The scene then shifts to a bank, dimly lit and full of customers, while one of the women from the opening scene—still wearing an open blazer, fascinator, and garter belt with her backside exposed—walks with a briefcase to a bank teller to deposit more of Cardi B's money (Cardi B 2018). This moment pertains to the lyrics in this song and also harkens back to Cardi B's line regarding her frequenting of banks in "Bodak Yellow." As the camera pans from the scene of the woman dropping off the briefcase to the bank teller, the next frame includes an image of Cardi B wearing her bejewelled bodysuit and headdress, squatting on a circular, swivelling platform. No longer a museum piece on display behind glass, this iteration of Cardi B positions herself within the bank's safe, a protected commodity always and already increasing in value.

In a subsequent scene, Cardi B sports a blonde wig/weave, long hair piled high atop her head, wearing a black ball gown with the chest exposed as she cradles a nursing infant to her breast. This child stands in for her daughter Kulture Kiari Cephus.[5] Cardi B's delivery of the following lines references her new status as a mother and enables her to express her economic autonomy as a parent:

> I got a baby, I need some money, yeah
> I need cheese for my egg (Cardi B 2018)

Whereas prior to becoming a mother, Cardi B affirmed living off a man and having him pay her rent, such as in the *LHHNY* reunion special and her Instagram videos and lyrics, motherhood seemingly shifts her out of mercenary financial transactions and mercantilism as she re-imagines herself as, and with, lucre. She repositions herself as a sex-positive, agentive symbol of motherhood while drawing on religious iconography. For example, Cardi B holding a baby in the video proves reminiscent of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus to her chest within Christian imagery. In turn, the Virgin Mary becomes linked to the sex-negative, reserved behaviour demanded of women when positioning them within the virgin/whore binary. Rather than adopting the sonics and appearance of respectability as signified by the quiet, modest Virgin, Cardi B appropriates this imagery, recontextualizing it through her brash vocal performance. In referring to her daughter Kulture as an egg and money as cheese, Cardi B invokes her own maternal imagery through a particular class-inflected Black vernacular.

Further, Cardi B appears on screen with her breast partially exposed as she briefly nurses the baby before the video shifts abruptly to her dancing in another revealing outfit in the bank, throwing dollars, and then patronizing a strip club. In the strip club, Cardi B is both customer—dressed in a strapless gown with an oversized hat—and stripper. Thus, she is both served and servant. She sits at the bar, watching a version of herself as the video cuts between the different locations and iterations of self-stylings, symbolic adornment, and costumes. Here, Cardi B challenges the aspirational logics imbricated in the politics of respectability, though leaving firmly in place the hyper-capitalist imperative of most commercial and successful hip-hop lyrics and artists (Jay-Z, Kanye West, and Drake are well-known and theorized examples). She narrates and embodies a diasporic and multivalent Black womanhood that links the stripper to the mother, to the treasured art object, to sequestered wealth. She refuses a teleological performance, however, as she moves back and forth between strip club, gallery, and bank. Whether dancing on a stripper pole, wearing couture gowns,

or nursing her child, Cardi B's investment lies in making music and money so that she and Kulture might not only survive but thrive. In "Money," she presents herself as object and subject, money and money maker, mother and stripper whose being eschews dichotomies such as mother/whore, client/stripper, commodified object/desiring subject. She engages with hyper-capitalism while pushing the audience to understand how the money is earned and examine the economic underpinnings of social critiques judging those who perform labour that refuses adherence to politics of respectability. Cardi B plays with those same politics while actively working to disrupt them sonically and visually, regardless of medium or performance genre, as evidenced even further by her appearance on *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* months before the release of "Money" and the birth of her daughter.

Sounding "Hood": Cardi B on *The Tonight Show*

In April 2018, late-night talk show host Jimmy Fallon interviewed Cardi B for his program, *The Tonight Show*. Cardi B wore a peach silk pant and blazer set with a thin, white, almost transparent top for her appearance on the show. The long-haired wig she wore was dyed a complementary shade of blonde, and her nude-toned make-up completed her look, which served as a visual marker of her economic success and class ascendancy. Sitting on *The Tonight Show* couch, Cardi B visually articulated a "respectable" and rich version of herself that contrasted her earlier Instagram videos, her appearance on *Love & Hip-Hop: New York,* and the overtly sexual imagery she performs in her music videos. Yet what I continue to find most compelling about this interview is Cardi B's aural and sonic refusal of the so-called progress narrative expressed by her dress. For example, following Fallon's introduction, he informed her that she was to translate two of her famous catchphrases: two versions of eeeeoooowwww! and okuuuuuuurt! Cardi B went on to define eeeeoooowwww as both a "sad, cat sound" and a more guttural expression when enunciated at a higher register (*The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* 2018). She explains that it can be used as vocal punctuation, connoting celebration and affirmation when performed one way, and the phrase can also be deployed when hearing news that is not particularly exciting. "Okuuuuuurt" also changes in definition depending on pronunciation and tone, ranging in meaning from a reaction to someone calling another person out to a slower, softer sound, reminiscent of "a cold pigeon in NYC" (*The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* 2018.) Her delivery of these phrases is playfully pedagogical while putting both Fallon and the audience on notice—demure clothing aside, Cardi B is *still* Cardi B, and her mode of speech is not going to change. She deliberately does not tone down her "hoodness" but rather uses it to disrupt expectations of propriety put forth by her clothing. She introduces an ethnically and racially marked vernacular while explicating its nuances. Each expression varies in meaning depending on vocal inflection and tone, challenging audiences beyond her own vernacular communities to hear the sophistication of slang and expropriated hood speech. Hers is not an aspirational progress narrative predicated on moving up and away from her class-based, ethnically and racially marked geographies, but one wherein she continues to bring those experiences and ways of being into dialogue with her current reality as generative sites for articulating her ratchet, feminist politics. Specifically, in crafting cultural productions, Cardi B consistently pushes listeners and viewers to reimagine feminist practice. Through her movements between different geographies, languages, and musical genres, Cardi B carves out space for unapologetically expressing subaltern subjectivities, for challenging the politics of respectability through her lyrical and sartorial deliveries, and for subsequent performances that audibly and visually disrupt facile categorizations.

Notes

1. *Love & Hip-Hop: New York (LHHNY)* is the original version of VH1's television franchise focusing on the personal and professional lives of hip-hop performers, producers, and managers. Alongside New York, the franchise showcases performers in Atlanta, Hollywood, and Miami.

2. Cardi B has been accused of transphobia and homophobia due to social media posts in September 2018 (she later attributed the posts to a member of her team) and the track "foreva" from her first mixtape *Gangsta Bitch Music, Vol. 1*. She has since apologized, vowed to continue to educate herself, and reflected on her experiences as an openly bisexual woman who has confronted homophobia from her own family and community.

3. The video for "Bodak Yellow" has been called out by Arab feminists as problematically Orientalist. Although I do not explore Orientalism in this essay, I agree with Su'ad Abdul Khabeer who, in an article by Isha Aran, "The Charged, Complicated Racial Dynamics of Cardi B's 'Bodak Yellow' Video," argues that Cardi B's engagement with the Middle East in "Bodak Yellow" is more complicated than cultural appropriation. The taking on of another culture is about power and privilege, and Cardi B, as a Black woman, is disempowered both in the US and in the Arab World. For more on the relationship between hip-hop and the Middle East, see Khabeer (2016).

4. To be clear, Cardi B and Ozuna are not the first Latina/o/x artists to set their videos in Jamaica as a way to frame their sonic production as part of a longer diasporic lineage. Here I am thinking of the work of Vico C and El General.

5. Cardi B is married to rapper Offset from the rap group Migos. She gave birth to their daughter on July 10, 2018.

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The Right to Remain "Silent": Deaf Aesthetics in *GANGSTA.*

Aidan Pang

This is a work of fiction. There is no relation between characters and groups depicted with those that actually exist. Due to the nature of the main character, subtitles will appear in some places.
—*GANGSTA.* opening notes, episodes 1–12

To assume deaf people live in silence is to wrongly assume that sound has no place for deaf people.
—A. Avon

In the opening to every episode in the 2015 Japanese anime series *GANGSTA.* (ギャングスタ), there is a cryptic explanation regarding the show's use of subtitles for its main character, the hitman Nicolas Brown. What is not mentioned is that the subtitles are intended for hearing viewers and that it is Nicolas's hands rather than his mouth that require translation. Nicolas's signing reveals that the "nature of the main character" is, in fact, a roundabout reference to his deafness. By framing parts of the narrative from Nicolas's "point of audition," the subtitles emphasize what hearing characters and viewers alike lack in their reliance on hearing, that is, "a reminder of the 'hearingness' of narrative" where meaning uninterrupted by hearing may surface via other modalities of the body (Davis 1995b, 115).[1] While audism assigns hearing to the auditory, Nicolas's signing foregrounds sound's visual and kinesthetic qualities to reveal its fluid movement across the senses. Kanta Kocchar-Lindgren describes this sensorial hybridity as the "third ear"; she reminds us that "there is not just one type of 'voice and body,' understood along essentialist lines, that can be responded to through the body," but rather "various points of the body speak; they are vibrant transmitters of meaning, nodes of sensory and perceptual quotation of a fully material way of being in the world" (2006, 17).

As audist listening practices restrict sound to an auditory phenomenon, a commonly held misperception about deafness is its complete disconnection from the realm of sound. However, deafness's "disruption in the visual, auditory, and perceptual field" creates productive defamiliarizations of the normative to underscore other ways of feeling and being in the world that is often treated as other by hearing culture (Davis 1995b, 129). In *GANGSTA.*, deafness is not a state of being but a socially constructed relation that highlights not what deafness prevents Nicolas from hearing but rather what an audist conception of deafness prevents a hearing audience from perceiving. As such, Nicolas's signing demonstrates the synesthetic nature of hearing to interrogate a framework of perception based on excluding differently abled bodies. When Nicolas signs, he enacts what Lennard Davis describes as a "deafened moment" where hearing (through the ear) and speaking (through the mouth) are not central, and perhaps even inadequate, to the meaning-making process in the text (1995b, 100–101). The "sensorial instability" of Davis's deafened moment requires "more supple modes of interpretation" where hearing "becomes a matter of perspective that involves the whole-body attitude that we take through our ears, eyes, and other resonating points of the body (Kocchar-Lindgren 2006, 4, 6).

Aidan Pang is a graduate student in the Department of English at the University of Oregon. His research interests include East Asian film and new media, vocality, embodiment, gender, posthumanism, and disability studies.

This essay focuses on how cinema and the screen may further develop how the "third ear" can be useful in interpreting meaning systems specific to certain media forms. Theatre and film both have distinct advantages on account of their respective mediums, providing viewers with different and wholly unique perceptions of performance. What is particular about film is its ability to get into the "head" of characters through their point of view, or in this case, point of audition, which I will discuss in more detail later. I suggest that while "the implications of deafness as part of the theatrical sensorium are [often] omitted" in the realm of performance," Davis's "deafened moment" is all the more important in narrative as it allows the "third ear" to unearth meaning obfuscated by listening (Kochhar-Lindgren 2006, 1). Via Nicolas's point of audition, *GANGSTA.*'s "deafened moment" is not meant to reproduce a true-to-life rendering of reality, but to "(convey, express) the feelings associated with the situation" (Chion 1994, 109). It magnifies a moment that opens up a conversation of what Nicolas hears through his body. By treating sound as a synesthetic phenomenon, its production and reception can rewire how sound is interpreted beyond the ear.

Animation is an especially apt medium to explore how the "third ear" defamiliarizes conventional sound practices. Whereas sound facilitates a 360° experience, Robin Beauchamp points out that an audience's field of vision is limited to 180° on screen (2005, 18). As such, the critical role sound plays in animation cannot be understated as the form relies heavily on the sensorial texture afforded by sound to assign meaning to hand-drawn or computer-rendered visuals that may lack the "liveness" found in live-action film. Unlike images trapped on screen, sound can encompass the audience in a full-bodied sensory experience. Its objective, according to Michel Chion, "must [be to] tell the story of a whole rush of composite sensations and not just the auditory reality of the event" (1994, 113). As such, sound in *GANGSTA.* has layers of meaning that cannot simply be heard through listening with the ear. The anime's use of subtitles is just the beginning of a series of cinematic techniques that enforce a synesthetic mode of listening through the "third ear." In this paper, I examine a scene from *GANGSTA.*'s first episode depicting one of Nicolas's hits as the anime's stylistic use of sound, image, and touch demonstrates how the "third ear" enriches the kinds of perception and meanings made possible in mainstream sound aesthetics.

Deafness, Disability, and Japanese TV

Upending an audist framework of listening via the "third ear" also affects the way power is relegated in the body. As audist standards determine who is and who is not deaf based on the ability to hear through the ear, the extent to which one hears sound is a political act. As such, "far from being a natural or arbitrary function of perception," "listening is an act riven with power relations" (Stoever 2010, 80). Examining the power imbalance between hearing by the ear and hearing through the "third ear" reveals how audism is built into how sound is shaped, both in performance of stage and screen and in real life. In essence, the deaf body disrupts the social construction that relegates hearing as just an auditory phenomenon. As Tobin Siebers points out, "constructions are built with certain social bodies in mind, and when a different body appears, the lack of fit reveals the ideology of ability controlling the space" (2008, 124). Through Nicolas's deaf point of audition, the deaf body forces viewers to interpret the narrative beyond the capacity of the ear so that seeing and feeling become a recognized part of the hearing process. All too often, as Kocchar-Lindgren argues, "not only do we have great difficulty 'seeing' the other, but we also have great difficulty 'hearing' the other as well" (2006, 3). The "third ear" offers a solution to "hear" the other where before, the other was rendered invisible as audist conceptions of hearing was (and still is) an act exclusive to hearing bodies.

GANGSTA.'s casting of a deaf character in a major role and its inclusion of Japanese sign language and subtitles foregrounds how audism, rather than deafness, obstructs the means of meaningful communication. *GANGSTA.* is set in a mafia-run city named Ergastulum at a time where its city inhabitants are coping with the aftereffects of a past war in which super-soldiers were created using a toxic bio-enhancement drug called Celebrer. Nicolas, a descendant of Celebrer users (called Twilights), has inherited not only his parents' dependence on the drug and a shortened lifespan but also a bodily impairment paradoxically termed as "compensation." Each Twilight has their own form of compensation, and for Nicolas, it is his deafness.

Television has often conflated deafness with disability, and as such, both are represented with similar perspectives regarding ability and the body. Historically, the most common media representations of deafness and disability subscribe to the medical model of disability, where disability is a problem unique to the individual that must be "cured" so as to reintegrate the so-called disabled person into society. Oftentimes, these characters function as a "narrative prosthesis" where the disabled person drives the (able-bodied) character or plot development (Mitchell and Snyder 2001, 47). In Japan, televisual representations of disability have typically followed the Western medical model of disability with a cultural emphasis on the performance of disability through the terms "gaman" (我慢) and "ganbaru" (頑張る). In discussing the disability boom in Japanese film and television in the mid-90s, James Valentine describes how deaf characters in particular were constructed "in terms of tragic loss of communication potential" (2001, 707–8). Due to their deafness, such characters could only "suffer in silence" or "gaman" in silence. "Gaman" can be described as endurance or perseverance, a concept typically applied to situations in Japanese society where one must stoically overcome an obstacle for the common good.

I use the term "gaman" to amplify how Japanese societal perceptions presuppose that the limitations of a person's disability are their responsibility alone, and that they must strive to remedy it for the sake of able-bodied others. This treatment follows the medical model, where the disability is central rather than ancillary to character development so that the focus is on how deafness prevents the character from communicating rather than the audist prejudice responsible for it (Valentine 2001, 711). The limited amount of time allotted to people with disabilities on prime-time television in Japan means the audience's understanding of disability is dependent on limited and often skewed misrepresentations discussed above (Saito and Ishiyama 2005, 446–47). As the medical model defines people by their disability, the person, as a result, becomes their disability. Disability studies scholars like Lennard Davis (1995b, 2) and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997, 6) critique such representations of disability by arguing that the issue is not in the individual but in how society shapes nonnormative bodily experiences into a disability.

Successive disability rights movements throughout the twentieth century contributed to the public shift from the medical to the social model of disability, the latter of which moved the focus on disability from an individual issue to a sociopolitical one. Under this model, society itself and its infrastructure are responsible for branding nonnormative modes of being and feeling in the world as disability. This focus on social dynamics and structures is crucial in examining the construction of disability, as Rebecca Mallett and Brett Mills emphasize, articulating the value of a sociocultural approach in looking at "how environments and social expectations enable, disable, define and redefine people" (2015, 157). However, this model is not without critique. Alison Kafer points out that it "erases the lived realities of impairment; in its well-intentioned focus on the disabling effects of society, it overlooks the often-disabling effects of our bodies" (2013, 7). Through a feminist and

queer approach, Kafer pushes the social model further through a political/relational model that recognizes disability "as a site of questions rather than firm definitions," whose unstable nature has the potential to effect a political transformation of disability futures (9–11). It is in the context of this model that I demonstrate how *GANGSTA.* offers one such active (re)imagining of a disability future through the "third ear."

Anime's Approach to Deafness

Even while most Japanese TV programs represent deaf and disabled people as stigmatized groups that need to be saved, anime stands out as an exception because its themes and stylized aesthetics allow for more flexibility and experimentation than live-action shows. While it is misunderstood as a low-brow form of entertainment, anime has historically engaged with topics deemed inappropriate in Western cartoons catering to children, such as gender, sexuality, class, and, in this case, disability.[2] In addition, as a made-for-TV product, anime is a mass popular cultural form known for its wide viewership and easy distribution. While television viewership has decreased with the current rise of online streaming services, anime's flexibility allows more venues of exhibition and influence. At the time it was aired in July 2015, *GANGSTA.* was broadcast on the TV channels TOKYO MX, TV Aichi, BS 11, and ABC and livestreamed from *GANGSTA.*'s official website, Bandai, and niconico every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday at different PM times.[3] *GANGSTA.*, as an anime series, is not only able to depart from media conventions, but the series itself portrays deaf characters outside of the "gaman" and "ganbaru" model often seen on Japanese TV. Its unorthodox ways of representing the experience of deafness expose an audist conception of listening that is often left unchallenged. The amount of airtime invested in the anime points to its mainstream consumption and a possible shift in response to deafness and disability in mainstream Japanese popular culture.

Nicolas's "Deafened Moment" in *GANGSTA.*

The "deafened moment" in *GANGSTA.* is a fight scene quite different from all the others in the anime series as it alludes to Nicolas's deafness through its stylized use of sound. At the climax of episode 1, "Naughty Boys," Nicolas and his partner-in-crime Worick assassinate Barry, a new mafia don who oversteps his boundaries with the four ruling mafia groups of the city. In this part of the narrative, Nicolas pursues Barry and his men in a back alley. The chase is punctuated by the screams of Barry's men, gunshots, and the visceral sounds of a blade slicing into flesh. When he finds himself at a dead end, Barry attempts to buy out Nicolas, but his plea falls on literal deaf ears as the latter stares impassively at him. Up until the negotiation, Nicolas's leitmotif, "Sword and Bullet," plays in the nondiegetic background, yet its volume is nearly equal to that of the diegetic track; the leitmotif thus becomes an integral part of the soundscape.

The equal attention given to both nondiegetic and diegetic sound signals not only the important role both play in the scene but also the strength of Nicolas's aural presence via his leitmotif. On account of its volume and aural association with him, Nicolas's leitmotif signals his command of the scene, overtly transitioning the hearing audience into his point of audition. Once "Sword and Bullet" establishes Nicolas's presence, the music fades out with a mechanical twang so that only the bass remains. As the camera pans across a close-up of Nicolas's profile, both the bass and Barry's voice become muffled. Both sounds reverberate to impart a sense of spatial distance from the sources producing them. The audio distortion fades in the next shot as the camera cuts to an extreme close-

up of Barry's moving (but soundless) mouth. In this shot, a thumping sound overlays the receding sounds of Barry's muffled voice and the score's bass. Then all three sounds pause. This silence lasts two seconds before it is broken by the abrupt return of "Sword and Bullet" in the following shot. This scene is the only place in the episode and overall series where Nicolas and the audience share the same point of audition where deafness and the deaf body are overwhelmingly represented in the soundscape.

A Deaf Point of Audition

While the "deafened moment" in *GANGSTA*. revolves around Nicolas's point of audition, *GANGSTA*. is not so much reproducing deafness but approximating a point of audition that challenges preconceived notions of what deafness typically sounds like on television. More so than an accurate representation of a deaf experience, the show brings attention to cross-sensory forms of hearing that can be foregrounded through this medium. Unlike point of view, point of audition occupies a slippery subjectivity; as Chion states, due to its omnidirectional nature, sound does not have a "precise position in space [like an image on screen], but rather of a place of audition, or even a zone of audition" (1994, 91). As this zone is fluid, it operates throughout the diegetic world of the screen as well as in the nondiegetic world of the audience. This zone leads the audience to the critical question: whose point of audition am I hearing and why? The political consequences of Nicolas's point of audition position it as a methodological tool of performance analysis. As Sandahl states, "without the distancing effects of a proscenium frame and the actor's distinctness from his or her character, disability becomes one of the most radical forms of performance art, 'invisible theater' at its extremes" (2005, 2). The silence Nicolas performs is a strategic one as it shows how the ear becomes an inadequate means of gleaning meaning in a scene teeming with other sensorial cues. However, the show does not ignore the ethics involved in taking on an othered position.

Nicolas's point of audition challenges the way television typically presents listening as a singular mode of perception and instead shows that listening is not as straightforward as it seems. Listening is messy. In describing the sound installations she curated for her exhibition *LOUD Silence* in 2014, Amanda Cachia asserts that "there is no such ideal 'seeing,' 'hearing' or vibrating" (2016, 326). Rather, sound "can be quiet and loud, physical, conceptual, visual, metaphoric, synaeshtetic [*sic*], tactile, inaccessible and accessible, inclusive and exclusive, captioned, and more" (338–39). As such, there is no "ideal" hearing practice. Instead, hearing involves a dynamic interplay of senses that encompass the whole body, allowing for accessible, meaningful, and versatile communication without a sensory hierarchy to isolate them into neat categories. The "deafened moment" here is not an entertaining moment, but a *teaching moment*.

By forcing the audience to adopt Nicolas's point of audition, *GANGSTA*. inverts the relationship of sound with marginalizing deafness by rendering an audist point of audition unfamiliar. This heightened emphasis on "noise" and explicit minimization of dialogue in a scene of violence challenges how a typical hearing audience would filter these layers of sound according to volume and relative importance in aiding the narrative (where dialogue would be most prioritized). However, Nicolas does not converse except through the screams he evokes from others. In other words, noise is just as important as dialogue, if not more, for this part of the narrative. This democratization of sound challenges a hearing audience's reception of the scene as *all* sounds must be taken in to fully perceive Nicolas's role in the narrative. His sonic profile, then, is characterized by the soundscape in its entirety.

As the juxtaposition of a hearing character with a deaf character typically revolves around the lack of sound or its distortion, it is necessary to parse how these sounds can be stylized to defamiliarize an audist soundscape. After studying 276 television programs that aired between 1986 and 2013, Katherine Foss observed that "sound cues often serve as the first indication of hearing loss, as distorted, muffled, or even silenced audio," which further marginalizes the deaf or hard of hearing (HoH) person through their association with this distorted audio perception (2014, 895). However, her criticism of televisual strategies to convey hearing loss does not account for ways these conventions might be subverted. Rather than focusing on repackaging a deaf individual's experience to a hearing audience, *GANGSTA*. uses sound effects typically associated with deafness to challenge a hearing audience's expectations as to how sound can be perceived.

Anti-Naturalistic Selection—Internal Rhythms of the Deaf Body

GANGSTA. complicates Nicolas's point of audition by the interplay of diegetic with nondiegetic sound to listen with the "third ear." The interplay of sounds between the audio foreground and background is an example of "anti-naturalistic selection," what Barbara Flueckiger describes as "a shift in the acoustic processing" that "simulates the focusing of attention of a character as a function of his specific interests and objectives" (2009, 177). In listening to this scene, a hearing audience temporarily occupies the phenomenological experience of a deaf body—a move that distinguishes *GANGSTA*.'s use of sound from other television shows that attempt to address the deaf experience.

Such a stylistic move mindfully signals the ethics of representing deafness through aural sympathy on the part of the audience. The audio distortion applied to Barry's voice in this scene extends to the score as well, extending Nicolas's auditory experience in the diegetic world of the anime to the nondiegetic music ostensibly perceptible only by the audience. By pushing Barry's voice to the background and foregrounding the score's bass, the listener's aural awareness attunes to the latter; when the score superimposes a thumping sound, it combines to resemble a heartbeat. This visceral sound simulates Nicolas's point of audition as it roots the reader in the body of the deaf man himself. The thumping not only establishes Nicolas's spatial nearness to the listener but also directs attention to his own body as an auditory organ. Furthermore, the bass also presents an awareness of how a deaf or HoH listener would potentially hear the score. As low frequencies are more easily discernible among deaf or HoH listeners, the increased volume of the score's bass attunes to Nicolas's hearing experience and, as I discuss later, a tactile experience of sound. This scene thus illustrates Chion's statement that "sound here must tell the story of a whole rush of composite sensations and not just the auditory reality of the event" (1994, 113). Anti-naturalistic selection in *GANGSTA*. attempts to relay more than an objective auditory reality of the scene as it puts diegetic and nondiegetic sound and its layered effects in conversation with each other to recreate Nicolas's spatial body through sound. Prior to this, the sounds driving the scene forward were from outside forces, but here, Nicolas's internal rhythms dictate the action rather than those around him. Nicolas's deaf body renders the soundscape for the audience on his own terms.

Sound Effects: Low-Pass Filter and Fade-Out—It's Not Me, It's You

In *GANGSTA*., sound effects help sonically signal a shift in perception as they tend to reflect a character's interiority. In this case, sound effects—including audio fade-out, echo, and reverberation—ground the audience in Nicolas's point of audition. The additional stylization of the diegetic and nondiegetic sounds strengthens Nicolas's point of audition which, in turn, ruptures a

hearing audience's "natural" perception of sound and reveals the parameters defining sound as central to the ear. Since sound effects are usually relegated to the supporting role of soundscapes, little attention is paid to how they work to convey important yet oft-overlooked, or oft-overheard, sensorial information to listeners. As hearing is a continuous process, it is easy to disregard what it is that makes something sound "natural" or aurally fitting. It is not until this "acoustic continuum" is interrupted that hearing audiences become aware of its significance (Flueckiger 2009, 173).

A sound effect contributing to the anti-naturalistic process involves the use of a low-pass filter to fade out the score and Barry's voice—a technique that sonically signals a significant shift in perception. In this scene, Barry negotiates with Nicolas, saying: "We have no intention of taking a Tag head-on. Who is it that hired you? If you switch over to our side, we'll pay you double. (Hey . . . you listening to me?) [fade-out in parentheses]" ("Naughty boys"). The gradual decrease in volume is a transition leaving the remaining dialogue lost to the hearing audience. Whatever Barry has said can only be inferred by an extreme close-up profile of his moving lips. Low-pass filter furthers the effect achieved through foregrounding the bass in Nicolas's leitmotif earlier in the scene. This effect filters out high frequencies while simultaneously allowing low frequencies to pass through. As a result, the continuation of low-frequency sounds initiated by Nicolas's leitmotif ensures the listener's grounding in Nicolas's point of audition. In effect, low-pass filter fades out the higher frequencies of Barry's speech so that only the lower frequencies remain. While fade-out is commonly used to signal a character's disconnection from reality, that is not the case in *GANGSTA.* (Flueckiger 2009, 173). Nicolas does not undergo any marked psychological change, so fade-out does not impart any useful information on the part of his character. But, as the hearing audience occupies Nicolas's point of audition, fade-out overtly signals to the hearing audience that *they* are being sonically disconnected from reality. In effect, fade-out renders audible the constructedness of this deaf point of audition for a hearing audience by gradually muting an important aspect of the soundscape, that is, a character's speech.

Fade-out typically acts as aural transitions from hearing to hearing "loss" that emphasizes the constructed nature of deafness to a hearing audience. This sound rupture signals that the ear is no longer functioning as expected. In contrast, fade-out cues nothing to a deaf or HoH audience about hearing "loss" as they are proficient in other ways of hearing the soundscape; their ears are working as *they* expect them to work. For a hearing audience accustomed to the interplay of moving image and sound to convey information, this sound effect emphasizes the loss of sonic immersion in the scene's action. With the fading soundscape, the hearing audience has limited access to how the sound in the scene works within the diegetic world. They are forced to rely on other sensory cues—vision—to pick up what they have "lost" in sound. However, this seeming loss for a hearing audience opens possibilities as to how sound can be perceived by listening with the "third ear." Sound is heard through not only the ear but also the body via echo and reverberation.

Echo and Reverberation—Feeling Sound

Like fade-out, echo and reverberation are also indicative of "auditory subjective transformation," in this case cueing an introspective turn for the character (Flueckiger 2009, 173). However, despite the scene's occupation of Nicolas's point of audition, it is the hearing audience affected by this transformation and Nicolas its instigator. After the fade-out prepares the audience to enter Nicolas's point of audition, echo and reverberation introduce the hearing audience to hearing through the body. Echo and reverberation impart a sense of space in the soundscape, where the former conveys

distance between the sound's source and its reflecting surface, and the latter a culmination of echoes bouncing off multiple surfaces within a closed space. These sounds inform the audience of the proximity of the reflecting surfaces and whether the environment is an open or closed space. The function is the same for both audiences, except a hearing audience would prioritize ears over the body rather than body over ears as with a deaf or HoH audience. Echo and reverberation enhance Nicolas's point of audition as these sound effects show how Nicolas would process sound through feeling rather than hearing. Hearing for Nicolas involves an awareness of sound throughout his entire body, as opposed to a more localized sense of sound entering through the ear that may be common among hearing persons. As such, echo and reverberation illustrate how sound also involves touch, a sensory experience that deaf and HoH individuals would consider an element in the act of hearing. Accordingly, the combination of fade-out, echo, and reverberation enacts an auditory subjective transformation for the hearing audience rather than for Nicolas, thus questioning the former's aural privilege in a soundscape that does not attempt to normalize hearing.

Silence

The audio stylization of the previous shots culminates in the final shot with two seconds of silence that severs the hearing audience from the "hearing" world. The abrupt change in volume causes an even more dramatic effect, as the actions in the scene continue without change. It is only the sound that is different. Complete silence is usually avoided in film because of its disconcerting effect in confronting the audience. As Mike Figgis explains, with complete silence, "you can literally hear everything, and you don't have the protection of this sound blanket of mush, or just ambient noise, or whatever, which we come to expect of a soundtrack (2007, 2). Silence confronts the listener and makes them hyperaware of the soundscape it unmasks on- *and* off-screen. In *GANGSTA.*, this silence facilitates a productive discomfort where the hearing audience's ears become dysfunctional. Barry's negotiation with Nicolas is central to the scene, and by silencing him, the hearing audience is left to lip-read Barry's words. At this point, the hearing audience must turn to other sensory means of interpreting the scene or become lost in the silence.

The Resonating Body

Nicolas undermines the usual silence assigned to deaf characters through his ownership of the soundscape. During his hit on Barry, the handyman is the instigator of violence, and its corresponding sounds are jarring against the sudden use of silence. Before Nicolas is even seen on screen, his leitmotif aurally heralds him into the action, and the camera frames Barry and his men's reactions to Nicolas's entrance in a medium shot. The score compensates for his visual absence by an aural presence that is further strengthened by the desperate faces of the mafia. Similarly, the brief jingle of Nicolas's dog-tags—the volume of which is just as loud as the score—acts as a secondary aural signature of himself. Although Nicolas chooses to remain orally silent, his aural body has no such boundaries as he materializes in scenes of violence where noise reigns. Regardless of if he is onscreen or offscreen, Nicolas's aural signature permeates the diegetic and nondiegetic space so that he becomes an aurally omnipresent body. Nicolas is a perpetrator of violence, and this violence, in turn, shapes his aural body. The scene is characterized by gunshots, the plying of Nicolas's sword through flesh, blood splatter, the dull thud of bodies, the rush of footsteps, and men screaming. His deaf body is shaped through sounds associated with violence, which upends other televisual representations of deaf bodies as silent or ghostlike. Conversely, Nicolas's body becomes

substantiated through the sounds he evokes from others. In *GANGSTA*., deafness does not lack sound, as Nicolas calls upon an excess of it to establish his presence.

While the sounds of violence give shape to Nicolas's body, *GANGSTA* also withholds sound in ways advantageous for a deaf and HoH audience. To a hearing audience, this restriction of sound upends the common assumption that deafness disables rather than enables. Rather, hearing through the "third ear" enables a deaf and HoH audience to perceive the scene in a more meaningful way than a hearing one. Nicolas himself withholds "intelligible" sound, that is, spoken word, to keep Barry, his henchmen, and the hearing audience uncertain of his intentions. The only way to listen to Nicolas is through the "third ear." In film and television, typical conversation scenes like Barry's negotiation with Nicolas would be filmed as a shot-reverse shot where the camera alternates between the faces of the speaking characters. Full access to the speakers' range of facial expressions complements the spoken dialogue. However, *GANGSTA*. modifies the conventional shot-reverse-shot for an audience familiar with lip-reading (in Japanese) as the camera only alternates between Barry's silently moving lips and Nicolas's eyes. As Nicolas can lip-read, this silence leaves the audience unable to hear or likewise read Barry's lips as the camera frames Nicolas's profile in a close-up, where we see how his eyes are listening with the "third ear." This shot-reverse shot leads to silence, further precluding a hearing audience's participation in the scene. While the camera is focused on Nicolas, the hearing audience is excluded from this conversation because they can neither hear nor see what Barry says. The hearing audience is left adrift in the two seconds when Nicolas smirks in response to words that the hearing audience cannot hear. Barry's lines are no longer intelligible for a hearing-dependent audience, and the scene is only accessible to those who can lip-read. The lack of sound enhances the hearing audience's dysfunction as the only two sensory options open to understanding the dialogue in the scene are closed off because Barry's voice cannot be heard, and his words cannot be visually read. Listening becomes an experience that goes beyond hearing via the ear to other modes of perception—in this case, sight. *GANGSTA*. uses the presence of sound to challenge audist conceptions of hearing, revealing that seeing is just another mode of hearing the world.

Nicolas demonstrates how sight is another mode of hearing, and it is the camera's lingering on Nicolas's "hearing" eyes—his gaze—that completes the destabilization of the hearing audience. Traditionally, the gaze is a power act where power rests in the controller of that gaze over its subject. But, as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson points out, "because both lip-reading and manual gestures are integral to Deaf communication, Deaf people are *starers*" (2009, 121, emphasis added).[4] Under the normative power operations subtending the gaze, Nicolas's disability would be visible, positioning him as the object of the gaze. However, he flips the framework to position himself as the subject (a position, as Garland-Thomson points out, particularly amenable to the deaf individual). As such, the power of the gaze accrues to Nicolas, who thus undermines the observer's ability to exert the power of the gaze over his body. Nicolas engages with the soundscape in two ways: feeling through the body and seeing through the eyes to demonstrate that listening is not exclusive to the ear. The information he gleans from this scene is multiplied through the layered modes of perception that other hearing characters tend to dismiss in favour of auditory hearing.

Conclusion

To return to the opening of this essay, it is not the "nature of the main character" that requires subtitles but the "nature of the hearing viewer" instead. From the moment Nicolas first signs in

GANGSTA., he enacts one of many "deafened moments" that unravel audist expectations embedded in mainstream sound aesthetics through his rejection of auditory hearing. By using the "third ear," Nicolas's point of audition demonstrates how sound operates under different parameters than those prescribed by audism to acknowledge a multisensory experience that cannot be contained by the ear alone. My analysis of just one "deafened moment" in *GANGSTA.* reveals how the modality of film can be used to normalize an inclusive and responsive listening practice that can inspire further experimentation and exploration of the perception of sound from the screen to real life.

Notes

1. I am using the term "point of audition" to refer to Nicolas's sensory experiences as an interconnected whole rather than a single isolated modality like hearing through the ear.

2. For example, early televised anime series like *Princess Knight* (*Ribon no Kishi*, 1967–68) explored "mature" themes such as gender and sexuality, which American-based television broadcasting company NBC viewed as problematic for American audiences because of the main character's "sex switch" (Ladd and Deneroff 2009, 67–68). Subsequently, this conservative attitude continued to the 1990s where Sailor Uranus and Neptune's lesbian relationship in *Sailor Moon* (1991–97) was changed in the English dubbing so that instead of lovers, they became very intimate "kissing cousins." However, in recent years, Western cartoons such as *Steven Universe* (2013–19) and *She-ra and the Princess of Power* (2018–20) suggest a shift toward topics that would have been labelled as too "mature" for children in past decades.

3. "ON AIR | TV アニメ『GANGSTA.』公式サイト." kohsuke / shinchosha・gangsta.committee, 2015, gangsta-project.com/onair.php.

4. In an interview with Garland-Thomson about signing, a deaf signer admitted that "she stares a great deal in general, certainly too much she thinks, at least by hearing standards" (2009, 121). The reason, she explains, is that she stares "'to "hear"' and understand better" (2009, 121). Benjamin Bahan additionally notes that "when engaging in discourse, the listener usually fixes and maintains his gaze on the signer's face, particularly the eyes, thus creating a conversational partnership in regulating different discourse functions" (2008, 86). However, in this scene, the conversational partnership fails because of Barry and the hearing audience's inability to lip-read.

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Embodied Collective Choreographies: Listening to Arena Nightclub's Jotería Sonic Memories

Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr.

"The rhythms gave us life. The sounds created a space, and we created a space through the sounds to be able to express ourselves. The beats allowed people to transform themselves. Oh yes, the foot stomping . . . even if you didn't know the *comadre* next to you, you were still connecting or communicating through the sounds, as you stomped your feet together." (Jessie)

The quote I start with above is by Jessie, a queer Chicano from LA who attended Arena Nightclub in Hollywood, California, in the 1990s and early 2000s. Jessie's thoughts capture the power of dancing, sounds, collectivity, and transformation at Arena, which opened its doors in 1991. His quote serves as a map and a reminder of the importance of Arena for many of us in Los Angeles as a space to express ourselves as queer youth in the 1990s. Jessie's comment reminds us of the function of the beats and the music in individual and collective experimentation and coming of age experiences, of the queer world-making that happens in the club. His reflection references the specific gestures and corporeal language we used on the dance floor to connect and communicate—communicate with each other but also to the world, as we claimed space with foot-stomping, collective clapping, and whistles, exclaiming that we were free and everything was alright, if only in that moment. These sounds—the whistles, the foot-stomping, and the clapping—were sonic invocations of community and of claims to space in an otherwise hostile political and social urban landscape for Latinx queer youth and their families in the 1990s. Like Pan Dulce, a short-lived but memorable nightclub in San Francisco in the 1990s, Arena was what Horacio N. Roque Ramírez called a "momentary queer Latino home" (2009, 276). Indeed, Arena was home to many of us.

When I was coming of age, and for many other underaged queer Latinx youth who came into their own there, Arena was a haven. The sonorous experience began with the intimacy of people's bedrooms and bathrooms as they got ready while listening to music with friends and continued to the pre-party in the car while music from the radio or the CD changer played the jams! As we drove closer to the club, we heard traffic on Santa Monica Boulevard, car alarms going off on nearby streets, and the sirens of the ambulances. Before we could even see the parade of fashion, styles, and drama in the parking lot, we could hear Arena and/or feel its pulse out from the street. The sounds in the parking lot became part of the usual "nocturnal soundscapes" of the city (Matless 2005). We could hear the cackling or the loud laughing that would take place, deep house or hip-hop music blasting from cars, the loud conversations, the "shit-talking," and the shade. Once inside the club, sometimes after waiting hours to get in, our ears were flushed with cheers from the crowds, voices coming through the microphones of the DJs and MCs like the infamous Stacey Hollywood, and turntable wizards and goddesses like DJ Irene. Irene's trademark call and response: "How many Latinos are in this motherfucking house?" at the beginning of her sets allowed queer Latinx dancers to be seen and heard in an otherwise hostile historical moment of exclusion and demonization outside the walls of the club (Alvarez 2018). Among the explosion of sounds were clapping, stomping, and whistles, which Jessie and many others I've talked to remember vividly.

Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr. is an assistant professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies at California State University, Fullerton.

Locating Arena

Arena was located at Santa Monica Boulevard near Highland. With an art deco-like design, the 22,000-foot building was converted from an old ice factory, Union Ice, that closed in 1985 (Appleford 1991).[1] In the late eighties, Gene La Pietra and his partner Ed Lemos, who also owned Circus Disco right next door, purchased the building. La Pietra and Lemos saw the need to open clubs like Circus and Arena because of the discrimination people of colour experienced in gay spaces in West Hollywood and other places in LA. By the time Arena opened its doors, the ice factory floor was long-gone, but in its place was a dance floor—workers replaced by dancers. Although many of us were unaware of Arena's past, we were dancing amid the ghosts of deindustrialization. We were also dancing among the ghosts of those lost to violence and to AIDS.

As I listen carefully, I imagine and hear the haunting sounds of generators, cooling devices, and ice picks, industrial sounds replaced with technologically mediated sounds emanating and mediated from dance music rhythms and from and through the bodies of dancing youth. The sounds of refrigerators and ice picks and other machinery replaced by the sounds of thumping music, of DJ turntables of the screaming crowd, microphones, cheers, of DJ Irene's "how many Latinos are in this motherfucking house." On the dance floor, these sounds made up the auditory landscape while sweaty bodies witnessed and spoke to each other through corporeal and gestural communication: stomping feet, clapping, or the Arena clap—when dancers would clap fast and in unison, the sounds circulating as our bodies did around the club, as we cruised, doing the rounds from the bar to the dancefloor, to the patio, to the bathroom, back to the dancefloor, and all of that all over again a few more times before the night ended. Sound permeated, and bodies spoke. Tina, one former patron who drove to Arena all the way from Simi Valley, recalls, "I remember the lights, the smell, the loud music, and the most interesting people I had ever seen." The comments of Tina and others I talked with reveal that senses are archival, and they activate memories of transitory and liminal moments in queer LA Latinx histories. Abel Alvarado, an artist in LA who is producing a musical based on memories of Arena, remembers "standing on the side ramp looking at hot guys, the outfits people wore and the smell of day-old alcohol, sweat and too much cologne." He remembers the "Hey girls," the "Hey girl this, hey girl that" referring to the vernacular gay men often used to talk to each other (Riggs 1991). The music, he remembers, was an "explosion of sound and energy. At Arena, the sound was so crisp and clean. It filled the whole room" (Abel Alvarado, interview with author, June 10, 2019).

From beginning to end, Arena provided an intimate and collective sonic experience—a cacophony of sounds that were part of the multisensorial experience of going to the club—for club kids, ravers, rebels, kids from LA suburbs and exurbs, youth of colour, and drag queens throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The collision of sounds, mediated through the body and the walls and floors of the club, is a metaphor for the collision of worlds that took place at Arena, where queer youth of different class backgrounds, first, second and third generation and immigrant alike, with varying style and aesthetic tastes, came together from different parts of the city. These were important liminal moments in jotería histories of LA. At Arena, dancing bodies and sonic choreographies are enmeshed with the spatial and industrial history of the physical site of Arena.

I hear Arena's sounds as embodied forms of knowledge archiving a queer past that has become trivialized or erased in both mainstream narratives of Los Angeles and queer histories of the city (Alvarez 2018). After the physical site of memories is demolished, our senses serve as a conduit for

memories. These multiple methods help us arrive at and understand nuanced knowledge production at the intersection of multiple disciplines and epistemologies.

I argue that the sonic memories of Arena provide a rich archive of jotería life. The soundscapes of Arena function as a sonic epistemology, inviting readers (and dancers) into a specific world of memories and providing entry into corporeal sites of knowledge for these youth. I listen "in detail" (Vasquez 2013) to three specific "soundmarks" or recognizable sounds for members of particular communities, sounds that can be identified by their source and move certain listeners to perform particular actions (ambulance siren, a doorbell, a car horn) (Bieletto-Bueno 2017, 117). In doing this, I register the movement of sounds as performances that mark and claim space. These sounds mark, act, and move; they moved us then into euphoria, community, and temporary freedom, and they move us now into reflective nostalgia meaning-making and history-making. These soundmarks are not static. They exist beyond the specific moment in time and the walls of the club. What does the sonic *do* for our projects of archiving and listening to queer Latinx histories and performances? This essay is an example of how the sonic is important in conveying certain feelings that capture a historical moment. These three soundmarks are whistles, foot-stomping, and clapping: whistles heard in house songs and whistles worn and blown by dancers; sporadic collective and choreographed foot-stomping by people across the dance floor; and clapping that reverberated from one side of the building to the other, the Arena clap (Galloway 2015). Influenced by Kate Galloway's and Natalia Bieletto-Bueno's work on soundmarks in Newfoundland and Mexico City, respectively, I hear Arena's soundmarks as "defin[ing] the acoustic community of a specific area and the social and sonic lives of those situated in that place" (Galloway 2015, 122). Similarly, the acoustic community of Arena remembers certain "soundmarks" that were part of their sonic lives. I also hear these sounds through what I call jotería listening.

In exploring the interstitial space produced by interconnected histories, bodies, sounds, spaces, and affects, theories in sound studies, queer of colour, and performance studies help me hear these negotiations as they provide a vocabulary and set of frameworks to contextualize, make sense of and "listen" to the memories of Arena, to understand what the sounds of Arena as choreographies *do*, what the dancing bodies as archive *enact*—what they perform, how they *act*. Sound studies asks the critical questions about the role of sound in our culture, what sounds *do*—the semiology of sounds, sounds as epistemology, sound as connection, sounds as resistance, sound as history and liberation (Casillas 2014; Stoever 2016; McMahon 2017; Anguiano 2018a, 2018b; Tongson 2019). Performance studies and queer of colour critique help us think of how the rituals and their sounds tell us about life, survival, and freedom (Muñoz 1999; Chambers-Letson 2018; Rodriguez 2014). These writings help us remember the relevance of the quotidian, the ephemeral, and the forbidden—the power of intimate gestures, dancefloor *movidas* (Sandoval 2000; Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018).

Jotería studies, building on women of colour feminisms, explores the embodied and quotidian among queer Latinxs and has helped me think about the interconnected nature of our stories; what the pleasures of the body-dancing, intoxication, laughter, friendship, sex, and hope can tell us about our communities. This corpus of scholarship has documented questions of critical Latinidad, community, corporeality, desire, grief, and joy (Urquijo-Ruiz 2014; Ochoa 2015; Hames-García 2014; Galarte 2014; Revilla 2014; Alvarez and Estrada 2019). As former patrons of Arena have shared with me and described on the Facebook group, for queer Latinxs, Arena functioned as that practice of resistance to the "stronghold of our parents," a 1990s society in which funding for public education and social services were drastically cut (Armbruster-Sandoval 2017). At the same time, the

media demonized queer youth, and schools practised intolerance and erasure when it came to issues affecting queer students.

In the case of Arena, sound, space, feelings, and bodies cannot be disconnected. The physical site of Arena is important not only for the meaning that clubgoers gave it but also for the layered histories within the structure of the club that can be understood by connecting their spatial and sonic dimensions. Wisely, I listen to women of colour feminists as critical geographers, spatial theorists, and sound studies practitioners, even if we haven't thought of them as such. Folks like Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and bell hooks and their concepts of bridges, borderlands, nepantla, "center to margins," have been theorizing the immutable nature of space, gender, sexuality, and history for decades (Anzaldúa 2008; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015; hooks 2000). They have been listening to the pulse of the country as they listen to their hearts, theorizing in the flesh (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015).

While certainly the Moraga and Anzaldúa (2015) and other women of colour texts are loud, as are the texts within jotería studies, and we can hear sonic colour lines they are writing about, sound has been undertheorized in relation to these intersections. I think with them and in relation to Edward Soja's trialectic of Spatiality-Historicality-Sociality (1996, 81), all of which open up radical spaces of epistemological and ontological possibility. Kate Galloway argues that aural histories and aural memory of place are "intersensorially connected to experience and remembered place" (2015, 121). Like the Newfoundland harbour Galloway writes about, Arena becomes an instrument itself, and folks remember it in part based on the intersensorial connection they have to it. I draw and build on all of these by paying attention to the sonic, bringing out (loudly) an undertheorized aspect of sound.

Methods: Listening, Archiving and Sounding an Aural Community

Listening practices are part of creating collective queer knowledge. Drawing from sound studies and scholarship on queer of colour nightlife, I emphasize sound and listening practices as part of the queer Latinx archive. I engage with the interconnected nature of space, sound, and the body in the archive and highlight the interplay between the three; how collective queer knowledge is produced. I also emphasize the process of listening and coconstruction of knowledge as critical to collective queer memory and archiving. Inspired by Jade Power Sotomayor's project on Puerto Rican bomba dancers (2015), I claim that the dancers at Arena were using their dancing, pulsating bodies and gestures as instruments and as communication while they choreographed temporary, ephemeral moments of queer Brown freedom and collective queer memory. Like Power Sotomayor, Horacio Roque Ramírez (2007) and others cited here, I am interested in the dancing body as an archival possibility—in this case, what the memory of these collective dancing bodies tells us about what was good, what felt good, how sound acted—to offer instances of liberation in an otherwise hostile world (Bory 2015). My listening to Arena is informed by queer oral histories, ethnographic interviews, archival material, social media content, and performance analysis. It is part of what I call jotería listening, as described below.

Participant observation in a public Facebook group dedicated to Arena and the 1990s inspired some of my thinking here. Videos posted or shared with me document the sounds and styles of Arena on Fridays. These videos and the memories they document form a sonic archive, intricately tied to affective registers, feelings and senses invoked by members talking about their experiences. My analysis is also based on my own fragmented memories, using them as a source for creating what

Gloria Anzaldúa calls "auto-historia teoría"—using embodied knowledge as a form and basis for theorizing, using our feelings and memories to create theory (Bachattrarya and Keating 2018). Above all, this is a *collective* methodology: the ways folks make meaning of these sonic memories make possible my reading of sound *as* knowledge. As I "listen to the listeners," I engage with aural and sensorial memories and the meanings they carry for Arena goers (Aparicio 1998). This listening demonstrates how we were all part of an "acoustic community," that we reconstruct history together, and that feelings are integral to that collective sense of history (Miranda 2014; Bieletto-Bueno 2017, 108). Through this lens, it is important to ask how these sounds shaped us as we shaped, mediated, and coproduced them and how these aural markers were important to broader sonic forms of resistance in the city. Together, these methods are helpful to explore how sonic, visual, spatial, and embodied aspects work in tandem to produce Arena as part of, and interconnected with, "sounding communities" in Los Angeles in the 1990s and early 2000s (Perea 2014).

Much of this "listening" to Arena relies on the sounds remembered, even if there is no actual record. For example, Christabel Stirling, as part of her research, recorded herself inside a club and then wrote about it, insisting on "audibility . . . as a valuable way of knowing and understanding the texture of the urban social world and its musical and sonic environments" (2019). Similarly, Allie Martin argues that "soundwalks" in her project on gentrification in Washington D.C. function as "engines of knowledge production" (2019). Following Stirling and Martin, I propose a different version of soundwalking that takes shape through the recreation of memories and sounds as invoked by narrators, participants, and my own recollections. Rather than recording the sounds themselves, the sounds are remembered and then documented to create a sonic tour of "choreosonicity" or performance form of the sounds (Crawley 2013).

This choreosonic tour includes collective sounds heard and made by patrons inside and throughout the club, sounds in the parking lot such as music blasting from car stereos, honking, clacking of heels, clinking of glasses, shattering of bottles, and cackling and laughter. One of these I describe in more detail below was the rhythmic stomping of feet, a popular club movement that brought people together in a collective choreography of Latin@ comunitaas and dissent (Alvarez 2018). We felt, heard, and saw these embodied sounds in unison. Part of the challenge of describing in writing the sensorial memories at the heart of this project is their ephemerality but also the inability to verbalize something that was so guttural, visceral, and embodied. Capturing the memory of those sounds is difficult as social media did not exist back then. You had to be there to understand it. But as we remember and listen together, the aural archive we collectively invoke helps us put a name to these kinetic and affective moments that are in many ways beyond words, beyond capturability.

Memories about Arena derived from interviews are central to my reading. These interviews were collected via snowball sample and consisted of individual oral histories, semistructured interviews, and informal group *pláticas* among friends and participants (Fierros and Delgado Bernal 2016). Several former Arena-goers I interviewed, such as Xenia and Adilia, had forgotten some memories until we started talking about it. The sounds started to fill our collective memories, propelling us into a further dialogue about the meaning of Arena for us at a time when few places offered this radical possibility of being. Writing about interviewing methods and knowledge generation, Marla A. Ramírez argues that oral histories from individual interviews capture different recollections than a group setting where participants listen to each other's memories (2018). Ramírez's points ring true in my case, as memories were invoked in a collective setting that could not be remembered

individually. There were memories I had forgotten that wouldn't have even made it to this analysis if it weren't for collective remembering among jotería.

Finally, my own *recuerdos* or memories are part of this project. Chicana and Latina feminists, Black feminists, and jotería studies scholars remind us that our own experiences are a valid source of knowledge. Testimonios allow personal stories to fill in the gaps that quantitative research alone cannot fill (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Carmona 2012). In this way, my project follows others at the intersections of sound, performance, and memory who have used their sonic memories as part of their method and archives. For example, Martha González, scholar and lead singer of the Chicana/o band Quetzal, writes about memories of growing up in East Los Angeles, the role of music in her family, and the importance of beats and rhythm in the barrio as she makes connections to and produces knowledge about "zapateado Afro-Chicana fandango style" (2014). Like González, my memories are intertwined with the queer Chicanx and Latinx histories of the city and, in conversation with the memories of other jotería, add rich texture to the archive. There is a relationship, then, between this scholarship and the collective archive. My own embodiment as a scholar and the places that have shaped me, like Arena, are linked to the collective construction of these resurrected memories.

Jotería Listening

Jessie's memories at the beginning of this paper are part of what I call jotería listening. As a listening practice employed to navigate racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-immigrant discourses and spaces, jotería listening builds on the work of Chicanx, Latinx, and performance and sound studies scholars (Tongson 2011; Vasquez 2013; Casillas 2015; Stoever 2016; Alarcón 2017). Dolores Inés Casillas' scholarship on Spanish language radio and Latino listening practices is instrumental here as she explains, "the very public nature of Spanish-language radio listening represents a communal, classed, and brown form of listening that differs markedly from 'white collar' modes of listening" (2015). Similarly, jotería listening to the radio and otherwise offers a unique communal form of listening anchored in common experiences, affects, and epistemologies as jotería.

Jotería listening is facilitated by Alexandra T. Vasquez's "listening in detail," a feminist genealogical practice. This method allows for intentional listening found within the details of music and sounds, evoking history, diaspora, and intimacies. This practice allows for an imagining of what folks were listening to or how certain songs took hold of them in their worlds and music (Vasquez 2013, 25). For Karen Tongson, listening to music together allows connectivity, and a song can be like a glue that brings people together (2019). Listening in detail is what Wanda Alarcón does when she "listens" to flashbacks in queer Chicana literature (2017). Influenced by these scholars, I offer jotería listening as something more than a mundane practice but rather an invocation of constellations of embodied memories, histories, and resistances. This essay is an invitation to listen to the details and what these tell us about jotería world-making; this auditory practice is about listening intersectionally across race, gender, class, space, and time. Through jotería listening, we can hear a jotería past and its potential and radical futures (Alvarez 2021).

Among jotería studies scholarship, William Calvo-Quirós's essay on jotería aesthetics and Anita Tijerina Revilla and Jose Manuel Santillana's on jotería consciousness and jota-historias inspire my thinking here. I also find inspiration in Gloria Anzaldúa's call in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* when she says, *"People*, listen to what your jotería is saying" (2008, 84–85). Expanding on

Anzaldúa's words, I say, listen to what your jotería is listening to, *how* we are listening? How do our listening practices—individual and collective—offer possibilities beyond the limits of a world full of binaries, violence and heteropatriarchy, even in our own racial and ethnic communities? How are we making sense of our listening? What are we saying about our listening? What makes our listening practices remarkable? How do we, as jotería, make meaning of sonic archives typically understood through heteronormative white Western ways? What can we hear collectively that we can't hear individually? This last question is taken up by Jessie in the epigraph when he invokes collective communication on the dancefloor, a mode of being together that required a corporeal experience beyond the ears and enveloped our whole bodies. "Even if you didn't know the *comadre* next to you, you were still connecting or communicating through the sounds as you stomped your feet together." Jessie's comment and the comments of others with whom I share memories of Arena have helped me "listen in detail" to the three particular sounds I focus on here. These are recognizable sounds that Arena-goers remember: claps, whistles and foot-stomping. These sounds were all heard on a typical night at the club—all corporeal gestures that brought bodies together, claiming their existence in a world where queer brown youth were invisible, demonic, sinful, an aberration, sometimes to our families, to the church, and in our schools.

Jotería listening, as I describe elsewhere, is composed of forms of resistance against silencing, policing and powers that insist on erasing our histories as jota historias. Anita Tijerina Revilla and José Manuel Santillana (2014) remind us that our jota historias have been erased. How do jotxs listen together to music from Juan Gabriel to Selena, to dancing to Bad Bunny? What about the beats and grooves and melodies, the lyrics connecting us across time and space? Perhaps overlapping histories and connectedness give us a shared understanding of the meanings of sounds and the histories of desires and of putería, the way our desires and sexual practices and sex-positive stance shape our visions of the world (Xuanito 2007). Our experiences of shared worlds, dancefloors, afterparties, t-parties, house parties or queer cumbia nights, academic conference afterparties, and our collective listening experiences are sacred.

Methodologically, when listening to the sounds of Arena, their collective nature is important, at least on two levels: how the sounds at that moment in time functioned as liberatory modes of expression and community, and secondly, how we listen to the sounds in the present, how we remember those sounds and the meaning we make of them today. This is an interplay between individual memories and collective listening and remembering. Through this lens, jotería listening is a nepantlan form of listening that hears in-between and outside of binary understandings of the world.[2] Jotería listening is part of transing Latinx sound, moving us across static gendered perceptions of the world, transmoving us into worlds of possibilities, listening closely to what the jotería margins tell us (Hernandez, Alvarez, and Garcia 2021; Omi Salas-SantaCruz, conversation with author, March 2, 2021). This aural method is facilitated by our experiences as nepantlerxs, as racialized subjects navigating interstitial spaces, in-betweeners, constantly attuning our ears and hearts and bodies to the shifting worlds around us and the expansive ways we understand and live out gender and sexuality in our familias, our activist spaces, our putería (Xuanito 2007; Rodríguez 2021).

One aspect of jotería listening is the act of listening to ghosts. When we hear the sounds in the archive of Arena, we hear the ghosts of Arena—phantom buildings, lives lost too soon to AIDS, historical erasures, loss and displacement lingering as reminders of a queer Latinx past, and as signals of a queer future yet to be seen. The sounds function not only as registers of momentary collective ecstasy like the Friday nights at Arena, but also as signals of an incomplete queer liberatory project, always in perpetual limbo like *almas en pena,* souls who cannot rest. For Avery Gordon, "grappling

with ghosts is part of American history," where the "unseen and people banished to the periphery" are the ghostly subjects of modernity. (2008, 196). "Haunting is the sociality of living with ghosts, a sociality both tangible and tactile as well as ephemeral and imaginary," she argues (201). Theorizing hauntings in the work of Toni Morrison and Valeria Luiselli, Gordon writes that "the ghost registers and it incites. We have to learn how it speaks" (207).[3] Similarly, jotería sonic archives and the ghostly matters of their contents also register and incite us. The sounds speak a language we make sense of through shared collective histories as jotería. Jotería listening is also about collective translation of sounds that "speak" and incite memories, offering prescriptives for more just futures. Using jotería listening as an analytic, I pay close attention to the sounds that mark queer Latinx histories, sounds that offer haunting reminders of loss, pain and displacement but also signal celebration and collective proclamations of life. A jotería listening approach can help us listen critically to the sounds remembered in the club and their multiple meanings and functions, allowing us to hear the histories, affects, memories, and dreams attached to these sounds. While I discuss each sound—of the whistle, foot-stomping, and claps—individually, they are all interconnected sonic elements of the nightly cosmos of Arena.

Collective Choreographies: Whistles, Foot-Stomps, and Claps

The whistle. El chiflo. Un silbato. More than just a sound, a whistle, with varied utilitarian, historical and symbolic meanings, is a sonic reminder that brings up feelings and conjures community. Historically whistles have been used to convene, signal authority, squash riots, and alert to potential violence and assault. Outside the space of the club, whistles are often associated with other environments like ships and trains. Their everyday uses include survival emergency preparedness, crime prevention and campus and workplace safety, and they are often associated with events and rituals like boot camp, traffic management, and sports competitions indicating start and end times or fouls in sports such as soccer. Whistles can also represent sports or be gym class or police whistles (Jennings 2020; Hernandez 2005; Henneberger 1993). A whistle can convey "authority and convinces the participants and fans of the authority and presence of the ref" (Wagner 2016). A whistle can communicate more than just an order to stop.

Another element of whistles is their sacred and ethnically specific cultural meanings. For example, in Northern Plains Native American pow-wow ceremonial dancing, the singers at the drum all remove their hats as a sign of respect for the dancer who blew the whistle. This is an acknowledgment of the voice of the eagle represented by the sound of the whistle (Johnston 2004, 20). In this example, the whistles, which are often handed down within the family, function as a sign of change or emphasis but also sacredness (20). I examine the specific felt, experiential memory of the whistle at Arena, as these associations are imbricated with the identities of the club patrons.

For many minoritized youth in LA in the 1990s, the whistles were a symbol of the dreaded LAUSD physical education classes, a space that, for many, was hostile (O'Connor and Graber 2014). As Juan, one of the dancers, recalls, "school was not a safe place for queer kids back then." The whistle, associated with gym class, becomes an aural reminder of shame and exclusion, one which at Arena was resignified. At a time of racial tensions in the city, whistles were also sonorous reminders of police brutality and police surveillance experienced by queer youth. On the flipside, whistles have been a tool of protest, like when in 1992 Justice for Janitors took over the "Rebuild LA" headquarters. As Mike Davis recounts, hundreds of supporters were outside beating drums and blowing whistles on the sidewalk (1993, 48).

For those engaged in jotería listening and remembering Arena, the whistle becomes a sonic marker that listeners associate with Arena's heyday. Resignification of the sound of whistles is a resignification of the sound as celebration, reclamation, and permission to be, a sound like the others of momentary liberation. Traditionally, in house clubs, the whistle was used to rally dancers from behind the stage and eventually made its way to the dance floor. As described in *Electronic Beats,* ravers used the whistles as a form of applause and later attendees used actual whistles (2017). Arena patrons I interviewed recall the whistle intermittently blown throughout the night as part of the house remixes or hanging around people's necks as part of the outfits. Sergio remembers, "I remember the necklaces with the whistles. [They] were really big, but like whistles with pearls on them and like sequins or like glittery stuff. Whistles were really big you know?" (2018). These were markers of excitement, as Sergio describes. Within the club and for the community of dancers at Arena, whistles were sartorial and aural elements of the experience of the night. As Sergio suggests, the whistles were an important part of the aesthetics and the sonic memories. This is reminiscent of the tequila whistle in Tijuana right before the waiter chugs tequila down patrons' throats. At Arena, the sound emitted usually came to mark certain hours and functioned as a way to rally the dancers. Resignified and similar to how activists used them in protests, at Arena, whistles were used as a way of claiming community. A whistle in the club functioned as a sound to signal celebration.

Stomp. Stomp. Stomp. The sounds of choreographed stomping also form part of the memories of Arena accessed through jotería listening. The sound of the foot-stomping fills Jessie's memories in the epigraph above and mine as we talk again. Depending on the song, dancers would begin to stomp together as their bodies crouched down, the sound accentuated by the thick soles of Doc Martens, platform heels, or boots. The foot-stomping, as Sergio remembers, was heard as one large choreography, but people in different parts of the club would start it, and then it would pick up. A singular body stomping their feet was powerful but not like the roar of everyone doing it together. The body through the hands, the feet and the mouths blowing whistles became part of the sonic landscape of Arena; bodies as vehicles for sound but also shaped and moved by the sounds. The stomping feet became a moment of collective choreography where dancers would come together and stomp with the music. These stomps were emphatic, like knee-slapping as a form of claiming of space, like crowds at concerts and their ability to take up space with sound.[4]

The stomping is reminiscent of fandango dancers and of jarocho stomping on the *tarima* (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández 2013; Power Sotomayor 2015; Viveros Avendaño 2017). About these jarocho choreographies, Micaela Díaz-Sánchez and Alexandro Hernández (2013) write that explicit corporeality is linked to racialized identities, that certain bodily movements have been historically connected to lasciviousness and marginality. Hence, the dancing body tells histories. Writing about dancing in the 1960s, Marie "Keta" Miranda argues that mod dancers were invoking history through their movements, particularly the heel-toe stomping of what some of the boys she writes about called the Aztec stomp, which was really a Native dance (2009, 68). In Miranda's analysis, the stomps were signalling protest (69). Like the authors above, scholarship on dance points to the Afro-diasporic history of foot-stomping. The stomping happening at Arena was reminiscent of and influenced by African American stepping.[5] As the examples above show, the stepping speaks to camaraderie and collectivity. It is this collectivity that is signalled by the foot-stomping at Arena. I borrow from Miranda (2009), Bufanda (2004), Power Sotomayor (2015) and others to argue that dancers at Arena were dancing and stomping as they *made* history (Miranda 2009). Their bodies, sweaty and adorned, their feet in unison with the beats and the music of DJ Irene, became sounds of resistance, sounds that not everyone hears, but as Jennifer Lynn Stoever (2016) reminds us, even

sounds we cannot all hear are important. The stomping feet brought people together in a collective choreography of Latinx communitaas, dissent but also emphasis (Alvarez 2018).

Clap. Clap. Clap. Clap. Depending on the cultural and historical context, clapping is a corporeal gesture historically used to get someone's attention, hurry them up, or show respect, admiration, praise, or support. It is used in different dance genres such as flamenco and lindy hop. At Arena, the clapping, happening as house music beats filled the vastness of the club, was similar to the feet meeting the ground during stomping—hands meeting each other rhythmically, becoming instruments. In Chicanx communities, clapping has relevance in the context of the Chicano activist group Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA): "The unity clap originated with the United Farm Workers as a way to bridge the communication gap between Latino and Filipino Farm workers who did not share the same language; the idea was to create unity. The clap starts off slowly, then gets faster and faster like a heartbeat. We use the clap to have a collective gathering and close and to signify when we have made a decision" (Clark 2017; De La Garza and Ramirez Angeles 2018; MEChA OU 2022). The unity clap is also used by teachers to create community, and other youth groups have used it, modelled after the farmworkers. The role of the unity clap as a form of communication is very important and relevant to this discussion. At Arena, the clap was also a way to communicate from one side of the club to the other. For Jotería Studies scholar José Manuel Santillana, who attended Arena in the early to mid-2000s, the clapping was a way to see each other through this collective gesture, to feel connected to others in ways that we often didn't at home. "I had never been to Arena, the place had a softness," says Santillana, speaking to the club's inviting and welcoming character (conversation with author, February 14, 2022). The softness he refers to was a sensorial and affective contrast to the harshness many youths experienced in their families or hometowns.

As a collective corporeal choreography, the clap brought folks together at sporadic moments of the night. Jessie remembers: "Clapping, of course, [there was] clapping that would be resonating throughout the entire club, somebody would start, somebody picks it up. Similar to the stomp, someone would start and all of a sudden everyone was clapping." The clapping was another gestural sign of being in communion through sound and dance, of creating a resonant murmur across the club, like the wave at sports events, except this one has sound, forming a corporeal choreography of sonic gestures. The rhythm has a unifying force, the individual in the collective. Juana María Rodríguez illustrates that "thinking about queerness through gesture animates how bodies move in the world, and how we assign meaning in ways that are always already infused with cultural modes of knowing" (2014, 2). She argues that gestures give life to "the possibility of a 'we'" (2). Just as the clapping at Arena linked the individual to the collective through rhythmic unison, so do memories of clapping gesture toward collective queer memory, creating community with others who remember and keeping alive the memories of people and places who have passed on.

Although clapping filled the room after and during ballroom shows, I am mostly interested in the spontaneous collective clapping, not applause during the show but clapping while people were dancing. The clapping after and during shows at Arena was part of a panoply of sounds that included shout-outs, whistles, and occasional exclamatory yelling. In one of the relatively few videos from the 1990s at Arena on the Facebook page, we can hear someone yelling "Arena is Gay" into a microphone, making a loud sonic claim to the space as they resisted normativity. This statement on the microphone was a reminder and a way to reclaim Arena's queerness, especially on Friday nights.

This comment is particularly telling and a response to the fact that over the years into the early to mid-2000s, Arena on Fridays started to feel too "straight" and no longer a safe place for queer people or for girls and women who liked to go there to be free of harassment at traditionally straight and heteronormative clubs like Florentine Gardens, another popular club in LA in the 1990s. This is not to say that Arena was free of risk or harassment for women or femmes, but they have expressed feeling safer then and now compared to other clubs. As discussed earlier, Arena provided a sense of safety.

Conclusion

As I've described above, the whistles, foot-stomping and clapping were sonic invocations of community and claims to space in an otherwise hostile political and social urban landscape for Latino queer youth and their families in the 1990s. The sounds made through corporeal gestures and in unison with the music were critical to the freedom discussed here. As Santillana suggests, when the home or schools operated to restrict or discipline and silence young queer people, Arena offered a space to break speak and be heard through our bodies, gestures, and rituals on the dancefloor. Arena allowed us to "be" ourselves (Santillana, conversation with author, February 14, 2022). As such, sonic memories of Arena provide a rich archive of queer Latinx life. After the physical sites of memories are torn down, our senses serve as a conduit for memories (Alvarez 2018). The sonic choreographies are performances. The stomps and claps and whistles were performing but also watching and cheering. These gestures were moments of ritualistic community making through our bodies, in unison with the music, our bodies extensions of each other but also islands, in ecstasy, in love, sometimes inebriated, and often in sync. These were about "sonic cultural citizenship" (McMahon 2017). At sporadic moments throughout the night, the sounds connected us to each other beyond just sharing the space (Alvarez 2018). These sounds summon queer Black and brown Latinx youth—demonized and made invisible and inaudible in the spatial and cultural politics of 1990s Los Angeles—and ensure they are seen and heard. As Casillas (2014) reminds us, sound has the ability to shape the lives of Latina/o communities, and for Latinos listening to the radio in Spanish, for example, and talking about their situation, that was critical.

These sounds interpellate a broad aural community of 1990s house and dance culture and a geographically specific dance culture in Los Angeles. In the present, this aural community is connected through memories of those moments and through jotería listening to house music, especially songs often heard at Arena, the call and response of DJ Irene, or specific soundmarks like sirens and, as I've argued above, whistles, foot-stomping, or clapping. When heard by former Arena patrons, these sounds are archival material, queer collective memory, belonging, community, resistive practices of community formation of a time in Los Angeles when queer brown youth were sounding their histories.

As discussed here, jotería listening is a collective mode of listening together and making sense of the present and the past. It allows us to conjure worlds and make sense of the sounds of Arena, both at the club in the 1990s and then years later in the early 2020s. This technology, both an active practice of listening together in the moment and listening to the past, allows us to make sense of and collectively hear what would otherwise seem like mundane sounds.

The afterlife of Arena lives in its sounds. The sounds are hauntings, echoes that remind us of the sequins in the rubble—metaphorically and physically—as the memories of claps, whistles, and

stomps mesh with the bulldozers that brought Arena to the ground literally. These hauntings are sounds that don't scare us but remind us of both happy and sad times, and that so much is yet to be done (Gordon 2008). Urban sounds that remind us, bind us, and make us laugh—that won't let us forget. These are sounds of celebration but also of mourning because sometimes we were grieving the loss of friends to AIDS, the destruction caused by the 1994 earthquake, the heartbreak, the LA riots; our collective mourning was sweated out on the dancefloor. These sounds and sonic memories of Arena continue to bring people together.

Notes

1. Other sources report the square footage of Arena as much smaller. I cited a different number in Alvarez (2018).

2. Linda Heidenreich (2020) argues for history as motion, as nepantla, a Meso American concept for in-betweenness. Using a nepantlan perspective on history, Heidenreich argues, will help make sense of the global shifts we have experienced. Nepantla is a middle space of ambiguity, both fraught and generative.

3. For more on my engagement with Avery Gordon and ghosts as they relate to gentrification in Los Angeles and lost or hidden histories that linger, see Alvarez (2021).

4. Foot-stomping is distinct from clapping, but they are both about syncopation, meaning they are improvised or rehearsed executions of step patterns that have more nuances than standard step patterns (New World Encyclopedia). As such, syncopation accentuates the different ways that bodies synchronize to regular but rhythmically complex beats, the most overt expressions of music-induced pleasure (Witek et al. 2014). In this case, the syncopation accentuates through embodiment, the breath in the whistle, and the foot-stomping created by bodies but also felt by bodies up from the vibrating floor.

5. Literature on this art form traces it back to slavery when enslaved Africans in the US used these dances as a form of survival, a means of communication, and a way to maintain traditions and a link to African tribal dance, which in many places was restricted (Bufanda 2004). Stepping became part of fraternities and sororities in the late 1960s and was further popularized in the 1990s at the apex of Arena when shows like "STOMP" became popular. There was even a stepping show at the inauguration of Bill Clinton. These histories and popular cultural expressions made their way onto the dancefloor at Arena.

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Against Conventional Harmony: An Interview with the Cuban Theatre Company El Ciervo Encantado

Mariel Martínez Alvarez

El Ciervo Encantado is a Havana-based company founded in 1996 by Nelda Castillo, a director and teacher whose trajectory is well known locally and internationally. The company is one of the most groundbreaking initiatives in the current Cuban theatrical landscape for their focus on the actor's body, the experimental use of sound, the constant fight for redefining the urban landscape, and the imaginative use of language. They explore themes of scarcity, migration, violence, memory, and belonging in the context of post-Soviet Cuba.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the economic networks of solidarity between communist countries, Cuba entered a period of economic scarcity whose end was never officially announced. Some of the racial, economic, and cultural dynamics extended beyond the more acute economic crisis into the twenty-first century. Nowadays, the theatrical companies strategically move between the dual currency, the state support, and the regulatory measures regarding the content of artistic productions to stage disruptive plays that push the boundaries of Cuban national theatre. In addition to the performances at El Ciervo Encantado theatre space, they had presented what they call "public interventions" (off-stage performances), which are rare in the Cuban context due to the high regulation and supervision of the public spaces.

El Ciervo Encantado's name derives from an allegorical short story by Borrero Echevarria called "El ciervo encantado," which tells of an imaginary island and its fight for sovereignty. The company envisioned itself as an exploration of Cuban identity through unconventional theatrical language, and the *ciervo* (deer) became a symbol of these efforts. In the words of Nelda Castillo, "El Ciervo Encantado symbolized freedom, the need to hunt a deer that did not want to be hunted—a very difficult deer to hunt, a symbol of liberty and also, for us, of identity. . . . We took it as a premise, as the basis of the group's meaning, and as a concept for the group: the hunt for identity. We started out with that particular hunt."[1] Theatre critics such as Amarilis Pérez Vera (2013) have noticed the Cuban neobaroque aesthetics in El Ciervo Encantado's creations in relation to simulation, carnivalization, choteo, parody, and camouflage, among other distinctive performance styles. Nevertheless, their cultural specificity has not been an obstacle to international appreciation. They have performed in different countries around the world, such as Canada, the United States, Mexico, Ecuador, Perú, Brazil, and Italy.

This interview was conducted in El Ciervo Encantado's theatre in Havana, located on 18th St between Línea and 11th St, on May 14, 2019. While drinking coffee in the empty theatre, Nelda Castillo talked about the company and Mariela Brito—the actress in the plays *Departures*, *Arrivals*, *Rhapsody for the Mule*, and *Triunfadela*.[2]

Mariel Martínez Alvarez is a PhD candidate in Spanish at the University of Michigan who works on Latin American literary and cultural studies.

Mariel Martínez. In El Ciervo Encantado performances, the voice of the actor is central for understanding the meaning of the play. In your opinion, why is the relationship between voice and body on stage so important?

Nelda Castillo. In Cuba, we normally train both things separately. One professor teaches you diction and another one teaches you corporal expression. Nevertheless, the voice and the body are essentially the same thing. You cannot train both things separately. It would be like playing the guitar with the strings removed from its wooden body. Every wooden body is different, and it is not possible to separate both things because the body contains our memory. The body is the place where memory dwells. Consequently, the voice links the body with all of that past from which memory is built. It is necessary to abandon those imperatives towards the voice as something that should be "beautiful." We often hear that someone sings "lovely." Those ideas do not promote artistic exploration.

M. M. Could you provide a couple of examples where El Ciervo Encantado uses the sound of the voice in relationship with memory?

N. C. Yes. El Ciervo Encantado has two plays about migration: *Departures* and *Arrivals*. It is a diptych, and they are both based on testimonies. *Departures* is the first part. In order to create the play, the actress [Mariela Brito] asked her friends, family, and acquaintances: "Why did you leave Cuba?" Later, on the stage, the actress reads the letters with the testimonies of all these people combining them with her own personal story. The testimonies belong to different historical moments of the island. Consequently, the spectator hears about why people from different generations left Cuba, and why they keep leaving. It is very relevant because this memory has been erased and it is somehow lost.

In this play, the actress's delivery is clear and precise. Here, we don't find vocal explorations, nor do we highlight the theatrical dimension of the voice, no. Her voice is sober, very precise, and charged with meaning more by what is not said than by what is.

Arrivals is the second part. Again, to create the play, we contacted our friends living outside the island and we asked them to send us a recording of their voice listing the things they bring to Cuba each time they return. All intellectual, socioeconomic distinctions are erased in the moment of preparing the suitcase. All the Cubans that return are united at this moment.

Arrivals performance. Image reproduced with permission of Cubanet.

M. M. In this play, we see the actress packing on stage while we hear the recordings. By the end, the audios are superposed. Would you say that that acoustic superposition is related to this commonality?

N. C. Yes, to this commonality, to this community, they are united in this same voice that is saying what they need to bring to the island. Although the lists are very personal.
Let me tell you an anecdote about this. One of our friends was delayed in sending his recording. He was travelling, he had problems, and he couldn't send it. He only sent the written text and we said, "Ok, we'll include it." First, I read it as if it were my list, and it sounded so bad, fake, it didn't belong to me at all. Even though we had similar items on the list, it was something strange for me. Then we tried with an actor. It didn't work. Then, somebody else. It was impossible. We contacted our friend and told him, "Look, we are not going to include your list in our play." Finally, he sent the recording with his own voice. And through this recording you can hear how he is defending his items; you can notice the deep connection he has with his own list. Because when people return, they all have a list, and they all defend it.

M. M. The voice and its singularity in *Arrivals* seem like a contrast with *Rapsodia para el Mulo*, a performance where you only have one sentence towards the end of the play.

N. C. Only one sentence: "Y por fin Cuba en qué paró?" People living outside the island sometimes wonder, so, after all, how did Cuba end up? Nevertheless, when this question is coming from the mule, you realize that he is absolutely disconnected from the right to exist as a

Cuban. He is marginalized, he is far from reality, he is an animal. It is as if he were no longer human, fully human, and, of course, no longer a Cuban.

M. M. It is very different from *Triunfadela*, where the main character keeps producing these enthusiastic rhythms: "¡Pam-param-param Pam Pám Pam! ¡Pam-param-param Pam Pam Pám!" sometimes without articulating words.

N. C. That is the Cuban press from the seventies to the present. Those rhythms, those tones which are very triumphal. Everything is fine, everyone is united, the future, the production, the young people, the hope, etc. That's why this performance is entitled "Triunfadela": it refers to the triumphal city, the triumphal space.

Nevertheless, these tones are produced by a character that is crazy. He is dressed in rags, with a spoon in his nose. He carries his own two microphones and his own podium. This character has some echoes from *King Ubú Roi*, Alfred Jarry's play, where the discourse of power is a grandiloquent and pompous discourse. Our character is completely alienated since reality follows one path and the press follows the other.

M. M. For your company, what is the difference between sound and noise?

N. C. I think that you cannot say that noise is something inharmonic and, consequently, something that is not beautiful, and something that can bother you.
If you can create meaningful relations between the noise and what is happening on stage, that noise can have a sense, a meaning, and it can even be harmonic and beautiful. I think the sounds don't need to be beautiful, pleasant, nice. Sounds shouldn't be correct and proper. It is necessary to discover all the possibilities of sound since they have unusual and mysterious potentials.

I think theatre, that theatre which is able to create, needs to be in a state of discovering and not in a state of searching. When you search, you are looking for something you already know, and you are following paths that will lead you to those things you are searching for. But these paths do not lead to discovery.

Theatre needs to be in a state of openness. We need to have our senses open. We need to stop searching for what is beautiful, what is proper, what is "harmonic." We need to be in a state of discovering and not of searching. That is the place where what is new appears. Maybe the public will find this unpleasant because it is something they don't know, but this is the way in which the unknown can emerge until it becomes necessary.

M. M. I often think about El Ciervo Encantado with the world incalculable.

N. C. Yes, you must be available for what you don't know, for what is not calculable. Because if you are searching, you are calculating, but if you are discovering, then the incalculable can appear.

El Ciervo Encantado blurs the distinctions between harmony and dissonances, sound and noise, speech, and silence. It allows for an exploration of issues of ownership, belonging, memory, and resistance. Moreover, these aesthetic ruptures allow the emergence of belonging and commonality in a society profoundly marked by discourses of national unity and homogenization.

Notes

1. The full text can be found here: https://ciervoencantado.hemi.press/chapter/chapter-2/.

2. Some performances are housed in the digital archive of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.

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The Queer Nuyorican: Racialized Sexualities and Aesthetics in Loisada. By Karen Jaime. New York: New York University Press, 2021. 207 pp.

Reviewed by Kristopher Pourzal

In *The Queer Nuyorican: Racialized Sexualities and Aesthetics in Loisada*, Karen Jaime argues for the constitutive presence of queerness in the cultural life of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. Popularly known for the slam poetry competitions it started hosting in 1989, the Cafe began in the 1970s as a noncompetitive artistic hub in New York City within the Nuyorican movement. Reclaiming the Spanglish term "Nuyorican"—initially used as a pejorative against Puerto Ricans living in New York City—these poets and artists articulated a countercultural consciousness born of their particular diasporic location. Previous historicizations and analyses of the Cafe have tended to emphasize it as a space of masculinist literary production. Patricia Herrera's book, *Feminist Nuyorican Performance: From the Café to Hip Hop Theater* (2020), is a notable exception, reframing the Cafe's history to centre its cisgender women performers. Jaime's book extends this historiographic intervention into the realm of queerness. To do so, she looks to the oppositional aesthetics of the Cafe's queer and trans artists, demonstrating how they both formed and were *in*formed by the political thrust of its Nuyorican genesis. Coining a lower-case-"n" version of the term, Jaime theorizes the "nuyorican aesthetic" as a queer/trans-of-colour performance strategy that shares the resistive orientation of the original term but departs from its ethnic fixity and (hetero)sexual presumptions. Through "recombination, positionality, gesturality, and orality" (5), the nuyorican aesthetic entails both drawing and intervening upon multiple cultural lexicons, especially hip-hop.

Methodologically, Jaime foregrounds her experience as "a queer of color, a first-generation, butch Dominican lesbian born in the United States" (4) who has performed and hosted events at the Cafe since the late 1990s. In addition to autoethnography, she uses aesthetic analysis and literary criticism, deploying a myriad of theories and frameworks to trace a performance genealogy of the nuyorican aesthetic. Overall, Jaime incisively demonstrates how the artists she considers contend with the logics of US imperial domination that mark them as raced and sexualized minoritarian subjects; in so doing, she lucidly—and lovingly—recovers a queer history of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

"Chapter 1: Walking Poetry in Loisada" firmly roots us in the time and place of the Cafe's beginnings—1970s Loisada (a colloquial term for the Lower East Side amongst its largely Puerto Rican, Spanish-speaking enclaves). Tracing Cafe cofounder Miguel Piñero's "queer strut" (45) around town, Jaime posits his many activities—performing poems, cruising for men, buying and selling drugs—as resistive to the encroaching gentrification of the area. Piñero's explicit expression of his (racial and sexual) minoritarian subjectivity enacts a tactical recodification of the abject, a manoeuvre which, for Jaime, prefigures the shift from Nuyorican as an ethnic identity marker to "nuyorican" as a queer aesthetic. Jaime ends the chapter by describing a walk of her own to the Cafe in 2012, by which point it had become a well-known bastion of slam poetry that often lacked the insurgent political edge of Piñero's work. She notes the effects of gentrification on the look, feel, and structure of the venue and neighbourhood.

In "Chapter 2: This Is the Remix: Regie Cabico's *Filipino Shuffle*," Jaime charts the nuyorican aesthetic in the 1990s through the work of Regie Cabico, a queer Filipino American artist and 1993 Nuyorican Grand Slam Champion. Through analyses of Cabico's monologue-like performances across multiple venues, his uses of queer aesthetic tropes—e.g., camp and parody—are

foregrounded for how they both articulate and intervene upon the emergent hip-hop and spoken-word aesthetics of the time. In his enactments of what it means to be queer and Filipino in the US, Jaime identifies the expression of a diasporic minoritarian subjectivity that bears the imprint of US imperialism; such a reckoning, offering potential coalition between Filipinos and Puerto Ricans in an era of postcolonialism, is a hallmark feature of the nuyorican aesthetic.

"Chapter 3: Tens across the Board: The Glam Slam at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe" centres on a drag ball poetry series started at the Cafe in 1998. Dubbed the Glam Slam, this event merged the Harlem ball community with the slam poetry scene and—importantly for both Jaime's project and personal formation—expanded the expression and presence of gender variance in the Cafe. Chronicling her own gender presentation "devoid of queerness" (94) at that time, Jaime recalls attending her first Glam Slam, and "unlike the predominantly heterosexual and gender conforming crowd" of other events, being "surrounded by queer Brown and Black bodies expressing verbal and corporeal realities in ways completely new and thrilling to [her]" (94). Through analyses of the heterogeneous minoritarian subjects in the many roles of the Glam Slam—audience, judges, performers, host—Jaime argues that they collectively comprise a forceful rejoinder to heterocentric histories of the Cafe.

In "Chapter 4: Black Cracker's 'Chasing Rainbows': Hip-Hop Minstrelsy, Queer Futurity, and Trans Multiplicity," Jaime turns to the Afrofuturist poetics of the work of Ellison Glenn. Glenn, a Black American trans artist who uses the moniker Black Cracker, performed at the Cafe early in his career. Jaime figures Glenn's near-constant travel and move to Berlin as constitutive of his oppositional aesthetic, generated by what she terms "a trans(itory) queer Black Atlantic" (125). Analyzing Glenn's performances and representations of himself across multiple different modes—performed poems, a Myspace profile picture, a music video—Jaime underlines his tactical recodification of racist forms and tropes (e.g., minstrelsy), queering them towards unfixed yet liberatory futures.

The conclusion highlights Stephanie Chapman, a lesbian musician active in the Cafe scene from its beginnings, yet heretofore absent from its historical accounts. For Jaime, such recovery of queer lives is key to fleshing out a fuller understanding of the Cafe's countercultural aesthetics. Her case studies, taken together, demonstrate how these aesthetics have travelled far and wide, distinctively recombined to express the racialized sexualities of minoritarian artists and their communities.

Jaime's book is a pleasure to read. Her authorial voice is pithy, personal, and forthright. Most of all, I appreciate her allegiance to artists, as she powerfully illuminates the realm of aesthetics as political. By quoting at length the poems she analyzes, the artists' works are given space to speak for themselves, underscoring Jaime's intention to analyze what these poems do rather than define what they mean. Toward the book's end, Jaime mentions conversations she had with cofounders of the Cafe as she was writing it, receiving their blessing and gratitude for her work. This moment underwrites what is otherwise already palpable throughout, which is that Jaime, as a community member involved with the Cafe for over two decades, is uniquely situated to critically historicize it. Moreover, the book is peppered with photographs and screenshots taken by the author, inviting us into a sense of her embodied proximity to the venue and its archival presences.

On the whole, Jaime's theorizing is deftly wrought, and the "nuyorican aesthetic" effectively propels the project. Her methodological manoeuvre is emblematic of performance studies in that the object of analysis simultaneously serves as a distinct analytic as well as a historiographic intervention. The

book will appeal to scholars of performance studies, hip-hop studies, Latina/o/x studies, Black studies, and queer and trans studies. It is essential reading for all those thinking through minoritarian cultural production and its worldmaking capacities—a women-of-colour feminist intellectual lineage taken up by the late José Esteban Muñoz, with whom Jaime studied. The book demonstrates the continued efficacy of such thinking to animate and incarnate queer/performance genealogies. Ultimately, Jaime's prismatic analyses move alongside and through her own becoming in the artistic milieu of Loisada, bodying forth an ardent countermemory of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.