



Heaven Was A Sound Solitude Journal

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Solitude Journal 5
A Sound Was Heard!

And We Can Feel It!

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Greetings

Dr. Anne Fleckstein

The fifth issue of the *Solitude Journal*, titled *A Sound Was Heard!*, focuses on our sonic environment, sound, and its myriad expressions. Highlighting the importance of hearing both as a physical experience and as a social and cultural phenomenon, the journal explores the different ways in which sound affects the body, travels through space and time, and shapes our perception. It opens with a science-fiction essay, which imagines a world without sound, and closes with reflections on the future of post humanist listening, including the idea of streaming music directly to the brain. In between, the *Journal* offers a wide range of contributions by former Akademie Schloss Solitude fellows, exploring different aspects of sonic experience, from historical technological media developments to artistic experiments and political dimensions of sound.

Former fellows contributed with writings, audiovisual material, and experiments. Some bring us closer to an understanding of non-anthropocentric music, sharing notions of sound that take into account the experiences of both human and nonhuman entities, advocating for interdependence. Others delve into the history of radio technology, the evolution of domestic technology, and media theory or shared pieces that explore the intersection of sound with cultural and social dynamics. They discuss linguistics, the evolution of instruments and musical and poetry genres, and the questioning of social norms, particularly in relation to gender, identity, and cultural tropes. Some of these authors speak of sounds and voices that have resisted oppression, expressing

mourning and resistance, focusing on the voice as a tool for social change, exploring breath and body work or karaoke as a communal and transformative practice.

In her conversation with Dzekashu MacViban, Edna Martinez writes that through her experiences as a DJ and music curator, and also by working closely with her communities, she has »witnessed how art can serve as a catalyst for social cohesion and collective expression, transcending linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries to create meaningful connections and shared experiences among diverse communities.« Echoing Martinez's words, other texts recount how experiencing people, spaces, and various entities in relation to sound shapes manifold experiences, mobilizing a force of utopian visions that provoke our imagination and memory. With this in mind, I hope that *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!* transcends the confined formats of the written word and sparks multidimensional experiences as sound travels time and space.

I would like to thank Denise Helene Sumi and Jazmina Figueroa for their profound work and commitment as editors of this issue of the *Solitude Journal*, as well as the entire team at the Akademie Schloss Solitude. Many thanks to all the authors of this issue for their contributions and to everyone who worked on *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*

I hope you enjoy reading the contributions
and listening to the sounds!

Dr. Anne Fleckstein

Please note that many of the articles are accompanied by audio and/or audiovisual material. To listen to and access these songs, videos, and recordings, please visit the *Journal's* online version.



The Sound of Breathing

Jazmina Figueroa

The following piece by Jazmina Figueroa navigates the liminal spaces between reality and speculation. Part science-fiction essay, part short descriptive story embedded in theory, Figueroa ties together narratological and theoretical threads from J. G. Ballard's short story »The Sound-Sweep« (published in 1960), Ursula K Le Guin's seminal essay »The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction« (2019), and the recently published work by Jean-Thomas Tremblay titled »Breathing Aesthetics« (2022).

In J. G. Ballard's »The Sound-Sweep,« the protagonist cleans up stray sounds in a world devoid of music. »The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction« challenges the entrenched norms of storytelling beyond traditional hero-driven narratives. Meanwhile, Tremblay argues, in »Breathing Aesthetics,« that labored breathing reflects the unequal distribution of risk in today's world, which is marked by increased air pollution, weaponization, and commercialization. The short story »The Sound of Breathing« connects these threads and tells a narrative around heavy sound sweeping, the rise of ultrasonic technology, and its effects on breathing, as a measure of decline that ultimately is a portrayal of our sensory (embodied) experience on a planet in collapse, where the air becomes thicker and silences those within its atmosphere.

Getting into places was difficult too, however, I'll try to draw them out here as thoroughly and carefully as possible.

A special wood was dehydrated and carved for the purpose of sustaining extraordinary metallic tonal qualities. Once metals are twisted and stretched, their alloying elements are plucked to resonate.

[Notation: At this moment, that fullness bears no fragrance but wood and metal do – made up of properties that change when damp, wet, or rusted.]

Resounding chords ascend and diminish, and in time, a quaver suspends until a single keystroke plucks at its corresponding twine – burgeoning, crescendos, and all over. The flight resembles prickly timbres emanating from a knife gliding atop another metallic surface-thing.

[Interval: Skirt any urge to craft an object, instead, work to bluff perceptivity.]

This wooden surface has survived one place and time. As a series of simultaneous and successive chords, perfect fourths, scales, and their replications, this remarkable thing breaks away from its anchor.

An oscillating theater of permanence and sensation. Embellished inside an era, »and [brought] home with us.«

As cunning as trailing noises moving over epochs and gravel. [A break or snap.]

Fluttering notes, flickering sequences, blazing timber – like scratching.

Pinpointing, piercing sodden earth, *sottobosco* releases some mulchy tinge.

Whatever else arises from corrosion – sheer strings tangle and coil to form a silken sheen above the brush.

Suddenly, a sigh clears the hazy air to an expansive terrain.

Dew, well, any atmospheric performance is also a radiant and conspicuous place.

And inside, droplets fall like notes or characters – abruptly turning over toward another room.

I am supposed to coalesce into or feign a timeworn situation.

— from *Antechamber Music*, 2021

The protest became quiet and still, the leaves no longer rustled. They were just carried around by the wind. Rain fell unaccompanied by a thunderous roar, and occasionally chaos broke out, but it wasn't riotous. A body produces voices, growls, squeaks, bellowing, purrs, hissing, chirps, buzzing, howls, chatter, and so on, but we couldn't hear them. What could be moved no longer made noise. Any awareness of the wind could only be felt like a small caress and without its whistling soundings through grassy fields of grass or nearby tree branches. The sense of sound had changed, and since the onslaught of sound sweeps and ultrasonic technology, listening was obliterated. Now, the air is thick and inaudible.

The early side effect of heavy sound sweeping was tinnitus, which also caused migraines. The sonovac was created and swept away any and all background noise. This sort of silencing sanctification, the absence of sound, is what caused ringing, buzzing, hissing, or other noises in the ears. This ringing of their ears that induced migraines was treated with regular sessions with a *sound-off* device specialist. Meanwhile, ceaseless sound sweeping carried on. The frequent use of sonovacs, designed to clear away unwanted noise, would eventually silence voices over time. Voices were swept right from the mouth. However, with the introduction of ultrasonic technology for faster sound transmission, people stopped caring about having a voice.

The effort it took to speak became too laborious for many. There was no need to process or generate sounds through the manipulation of airflow from the lungs through the vocal cords in the larynx, followed by shaping these sounds in the oral and nasal cavities with the body's innate use of various articulators such as the tongue, lips, and palate – since the rise of ultrasonic technology. The production of speech sounds that convey meaning, which is further enhanced by intonation, rhythm, and other prosodic features was not and is still not possible to achieve with ultrasonic technology. Technology, policy, and governance took sway, which so readily relied on quantitative methods based on manipulated sentiments. Everyone seemed to prefer ultrasonic technology for its time-saving results, leaving communication and exchanges with others to a cognitive process of comprehension, thought formulation, and conceptual transmissions.

I was the only speaker I knew, as in the only person who could use their voice, and I wanted to know why. What determinants impacted this current and alienating space? My fixation grew, since I was no longer able

to tell what something meant once I voiced it. Every time I tried to open my mouth to speak, my breath was obstructed. My ability to comprehend or hear what I said was difficult to discern from my voice. There were no other embodied representations or sources for me to refer to; no one I could speak with, like a fever that doesn't break.

Long after the pacifist propagandistic warnings that led to the suppression of noise, toxicity replaced the ambient noise that once filled the atmosphere, and the impossibility of discerning breathing and sonic characteristics was more common. The air itself no longer moved.

My grandmother, the sister of a defamed Metropolitan Opera House singer, led a loud and resounding protest after her sister's public betrayal by a top ultrasonic record label company. The media portrayed my grandmother and her sister in a derogatory, slanderous manner, likening them to having the candor of banshees, associated with wailing and bad fortune, simply for insisting on the importance of vocalization. My grandmother later went on to be a poster child of the bigger issues arising from the incessant use of sound sweeps. She warned us about the existential threat to the experience of being human, »We need all possible sensory registers, drifts, and import-exports. These are the driving force of life,« she once exclaimed during a rally, »there are no technological fixes to our social problems!«

By the time of my grandmother's death, the anti-sound sweep movement had dwindled. She was portrayed as a tyrant and thoroughly smeared by major ultrasonic industry campaigns for attempting to incite revolt and chaos.

Our DNA defines us to some extent, but breath is what sustains us. Before the sound sweep, the air was usually only associated with nasal passages and sensory connotations like smell. A sense of the world that is lived and made vulnerable by the atmosphere. And while the temperature declined, causing the clouds to form and settle over the hills, and the sun fell behind them each night, the thick layer of haze was noticeable on that horizon, the constant blurry and heavy density of the air. This haze is the air that muffles a voice, this sort of airflow when it enters the body makes it especially difficult to produce sounds using vocal cords.

I never understand why someone wouldn't keep a memento, *mə'men,tōs – kēēpsakes* – making '*in,deks*. Often, I try to remember how things sound by outlining the vowel and consonant arrangements of the word.

Acknowledging the significance of pronunciation, which is likely attributed to my own recorded history, my mementos consist of a family archive of sound recordings dating to my grandmother's youth before the sound sweep. Maybe it's a grounding practice, tuning in from the newfound era of loud silence, and feeling like I've never really had ground to stand on in the first place. Without the voice, all that we can do is observe.

My grandmother's voice is played on a digital file of a voice note she once sent to a friend:

I only ever hear cars in this city, their alarms, police sirens from time to time, and the sound of tires moving over asphalt and cobblestone. I supposed that type of noise is what reminds me that I am in this bustling eternal metropolis. When I'm walking around aimlessly here, attempting to take in the scenery, I'm mostly just looking out for cars – the hotel is lovely, a room with a view over Rome's rooftops. On the fourth floor, I'm often visited by chirping birds fluttering their wings excitedly. It's also very bright here in the mornings, despite the smallish windows in my room.

In the background, the noises from the street are also audible from this MP3 file. Suddenly a car horn breaks up the city's white noise as the driver, obviously annoyed at some hold-up, presses on their horn for what feels like three minutes. I can feel his fervor and the annoyance he caused others – maybe keeping these mementos is affecting me, moving me toward anger. I am haunted by the question of why I still have a voice, even if I barely know how to use it.

In silence, the way light travels over surfaces becomes discernable. There never seems to be enough light because of the toxic haze that fills the still air. I could alter the stillness of light if I am deliberate in my movements, deep breathing, and mental focus, and shaping a different configuration of myself, the air, and the space. Similar to ways that the moving car tires over asphalt rattled the windows of my grandmother's hotel room in Rome.

The days are let go by the light and the night does what it does, a new configuration forms. With all my might and effort to conjure the ability to move the air forcefully, I begin to speak, sing, and shout around. I fill up the night with what was swept away.

Jazmina Figueroa is a writer based in Berlin.

Šoqo Pawlu and His Passengers
Šoqo Pawlu nižaša niž chhichs' zoñinaka

Ariel Bustamante and
Germán Lázaro

Śoqu Pawlu and His Passengers is written in both English and the Uru-Chipayan language. While a fictional tale, it draws inspiration from Uru-Chipayan practices and the artist's collaborative work in creatively coexisting with wind people. Set in the Collasuyo desert between Chile and Bolivia, the story follows two protagonists named after Bustamante and Lázaro's grandfathers as they navigate the challenging terrain. As the air family gradually reduces their forceful winds, the travelers return home, sharing their experiences.

By recognizing these winds as beings, Bustamante and Lázaro explore the affective, sensorial, and social relationships formed within our atmosphere – where shared coexistence and knowing how to be in good relational terms between beings is instrumental to survival. Similar to the wind, this story transcends borders, not solely coming from an Indigenous practice. Instead, it signifies a fusion of different worlds, entities, and practices. Ultimately, blurring the parting of air, wind, sound, and breath.

Not long ago, the west winds relentlessly passed over the *Collasuyo*, located between Chile and Bolivia's shared deserts.

This violence caused great resentment in others.

Ana ancha ažqa, ni taxata thami anchaž thamatčha ana susikchiś ni
Collasuyu ch'eqti yoqa nuž, ni Bolivia nižaša Chile ch'eqti yoqkiś
Xalla nižtikiśtan ni thamiki walxa žoñinakž žaxwa šhiknatčha.

- Because the winds uprooted the plants, there was nothing to eat.
- Because the rain clouds from the east could not arrive, there was nothing to drink.
- Because neither the llamas, the flamingos, nor the humans could hear each other speak, there was no understanding.

- Ni śqalanaka śep'a kalhsipachaž phujśnatčha nužkiś anaž čhhulu lulhśmi želatčha.
- Ni tuwantan ulžkiñi thiri anaž irantižkatčha nužkiś anaž čhhul qhaś likhśmi želatčha.
- Ni xwalanakami, parinami nižaša žoñinakami ninakpora anaž nonśñi atatčha. Ana nășukatačha.

No trace in the sand.
The frozen quinoa.
The dead animals.

Philkiś liju t'arhputačha
Kulašti liju ch'iwžta
Uywanakami tikhśi.

At that time, the authorities of the Urus gathered in a *Putucu*, a sturdy shelter made of mud, to rest and converse in silence, protected from the winds. Once inside, one next to the other began to share alcohol and coca leaves, which slowly diluted their wisdom into the authorities' tongues.

Raising from the porous earth of the *Collasuyo* desert, the breath spirits of *Śamiris* awaken and lead the conversation. More than clear voices, dry asthmatic whispers began to emerge as words.¹

Xalla ni timpu, ni qhaś žoñinakž jilirinakaki parliśapa tshi putukkiś aksičha.
Ni qhuyaki walxa śuma phaykiśtan qhuytatačha jejšapami parliśapami
śirwatčha ni qhuy qos ana thamiž šhoxricha khiśapa. Xalla nuž thappacha
qhuyi jiyara jułsi, khoka askan parla śumat śumat thelhžnatčha.

Ni Collasuyo ch'eqti uchh yoqkiśtan žaśičha, ni śamirž animunakaki
nužkiś śuma parla thelsqatchičha.

Ni qostan čiśmi qhoñ xorami tshan kana khissičha.

»We must send an emissary to go to the root of the problem...«
 »To follow the path of these winds...«
 »To walk *ažkin* (far away)...«
 »Where they speak other *taqunaka* (languages)...«
 »To learn where the wind originates from and why it is coming so strong...«
 So they said.

»tshi žoñi ni thamžpuntu šíši kuchanchukača, ni thamž jikhś apžla
 ažkinx oqhla...«
 »ni yaqha taqu chñinakaž nikhu...«
 »nižaša xaqhsikištan ni thami thon ni šíšla nižaša qhažtikištan ni thami
 ancha phorśanti thon! ...« Xalla nuž khetča.

Word-of-mouth began to spread the *arawaś* (rumor) of the need for an emissary within the town, but no one volunteered until Geronimo, who, the moment he heard about it, quickly decided to step up and take on the mission.

Xalla nuž ninakpora walxa kintu oqhqatchiča tshi žoñi ti wathkištan
 kuchanchukapanča khikan, pero ana jekhmi oqažkhiñi želatkiča, xalla
 nužkiś Geronimo ni kintu šíšku rattulla quśh thutśiíča weril oqaž khikan.

That same night, he prepared his meal for the adventure, *ch'arkhi de Llama* (llama jerky), *Coquita* (coca leaves), *Pito de Quinoa* (toasted quinoa flour), water, and some alcohol. In the morning, he set out on the journey west, always walking against the wind. He said that he was walking slowly, with his head down, making force with his entire *xanchi* (body).

This is how he said he was walking, while the winds were blowing him from one side to the other, from left to right, as if someone with their invisible hands were pushing him. After many hours, he had arrived, without realizing it, at a village called *Villa Vitalina*. Right there on that pampa, he decided to rest.

Xalla ni wenpacha žaqa pāchiča, ch'arki, khoka, koñi, qhaś, awarinti liju
 quži thakśiča. Nužkiś xaqawenśan taxachuk wiyaja saraqchiča, thami
 thonśqutñi, šumat acha kolśi oqatkiča walxa ni thamkiś thurt'aśkan.
 Xalla nižtax oqatkiča. Ni thamišti tshi lātuša tshi lātuša tekWatkiča
 šqarqhuttan nižaša žewqhuttan tekWatíča, tshi žoñi ana naychuk
 qharhžtan tewkžkas nižta. Neqhštan šita oqhžku wax Witalina khita watha
 irantichiča, xalla neqhś ni pampikiś xaraśśiča.

The next day, he passes by two great mountains that he only knew about in stories. The mountain *Tata Sabaya*, and *Mama Písa*. Surprised and intimidated, he offered them some of his food in exchange for protection on the trip.

Geronimo *qhawś* (shouts) while looking up. »You take care of my steps, *Mallku Sabaya*, and you too, *Mama T'alla Písa*,« so he said.²

Neqhštan xaqatažu, tshi piśk ana paxta paqh kur kežu watča, ni Tata
 Šaway paqh kuru, nižaša Mama T'alla Písa ni cheržku walxa íspantichiča

nizaša tsuksiča nužkiš nīž žaqalla onanchiča ti wiyajkiš ni tshitsinaxu. Gerónimo tsewkchuk cherši qhawča, »mallku asim werh thāžkakiča« xalla nuž khichikiča.

He continues on the road without knowing that he was walking near different towns that the winds were directing him toward while pushing him from left to right, which is also north to south. He was passing through *Pisiga, Sitari, Escapina, Sitani, and Mauque*. As the days went by, the fatigue became more and more difficult to ignore.

Tira oqhchiča, ana nayžku yaqha watanak kežu watča xalla nuž ni thami ni žoñi irpatča žew qhuttanša śqar qhuttanša tekwžku tewkžku xalla niki użatintan wartintanča, xalla nižta Pisika, Sitari, watatkiča, Sitani, Escapiña, Mauque. Xalla nuž śapuru oqhkan tshan tshan ch'amax khisnatča ni wiyaja oqhski.

One day, when he reached *Isluga*, he decided to seek refuge in a ravine, where he met another walker.

Nužkiš thsi nōx, Isluka irantižku, thsi q'awkiš xaraña qhursiča pero neqhs thsi yaqha oqhlayñi žonžtan śalchiča.

Geronimo first talked to him in different languages; in Aymara, »*khistitasa?*«, in Ckunsu, »*lticku Tchemaya?*«, in Quechua, »*Pitaq Kanki?*«, in Castellano, »*quien eres?*« The traveler listened and replied, »*Yo soy Alfredo*; I am a walker, and I come from the south,« so he says the other said. »Very well,« declared Geronimo. »Then here, we will both rest quietly.«

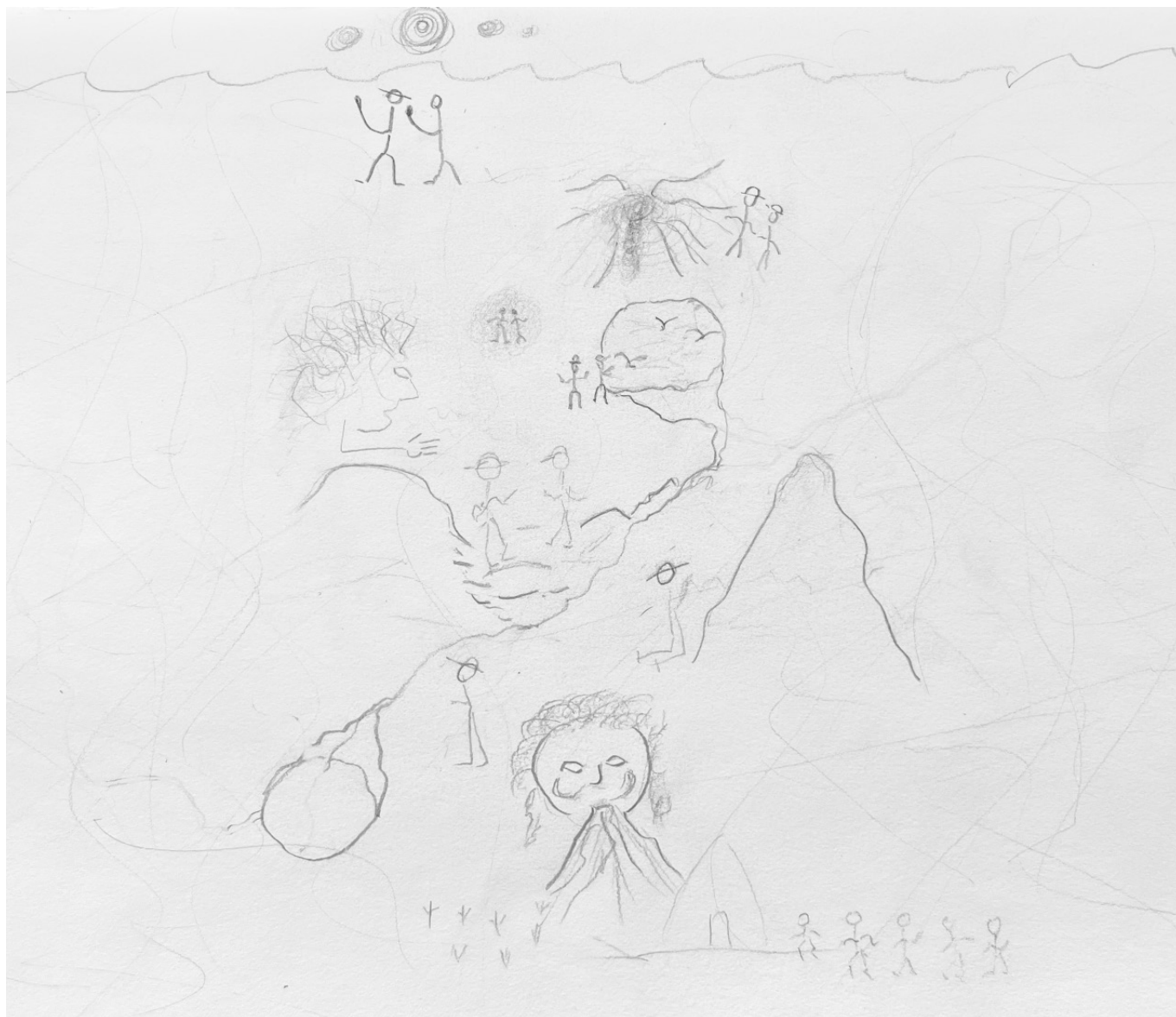
Gerónimo ni oqhlayñi žonžkiš thapamana nīž śišta tawqkištan pewksikiča, taqu aymara »*khititasa?*« taqu español »*Quién eres?*« taqu quechua »*Pitaq Kanki?*« taqu Ckunsu »*lticku Tchemaya?*« ni žoñiki ch'uj nonsiča nužkiš khičiča, »*Alfredo khititča*, wiyaja oqhlayinča warchuktan thonuča.« Xalla nuž khichikiča ni yaqha žoñiki.

Gerónimo khiča, »*Ancha walil nužkhanak,*« »nižtak teqhs pukultanž quśh phiya jejžla«

That day, as the night passed, unexpectedly the same dream visited them; they dreamt that a tall, white gentleman (*q'ara*) with long and tousled hair greeted them and wanted to shake their left hands, but the humans offered him their right hands. Confused, nobody could shake hands.

The long-haired person told them both: »This ravine is our resting house; here I sleep with you too; I am Śoqo Pawlu, a wind-person, my younger brothers are Kaśpara, the next one Paltaśara, and the last one is called Qalasaya. We are a powerful wind family from the west that travels to the east, to different places, taking in different routes. If you want to know us well, go and see us being born.«

Ni šeś ninakaki ni q'awkiš thxaxča nužkiš ni wēn, ana pinsita tshi wiyazaž čhhūžqalča; tuž čhhūžqalča tshi lachh k'ankhi žoñi chertqalča ana žhikta ch'aški lachh charchiś, ni žoñi ninaka tsānchiča nizaša śqar qhara



Drawing by Ariel Bustamante and Germán Lázaro.
Courtesy the artists

thās pekchiča pero ninakašte žew qhara thās pekchiča, nužkiś inaq khissiča ana qhara tansini atassiča.

Ni lachh charchiś žoñi ninakžkiś khichikiča: »ti q'awaki wethnaka xaraśiś qhuyača, xalla teqhsísaqaś ančukatan thxaxuča, werhki Šoqu Pawlutča, tshi tam-žoñi, weth laqhnakaki tinakača Kašpara, niž xaru Paltašara nižaša ni pichuki Qalasaya khitača, werhnakki taxachukta žonča, paqhi nižaša walxa aśšiś. Taxatan tuwanchuk thapaqhutñi oqinča. Werhnakž paxšpekčaxniki ančuk oqa werhnak saltiñiž nikhu.«

The next day, to better know these winds, they decided to obey what they had dreamed and walk together to the west. So, they continued the journey together while the winds covered their skin, hair, and eyes with *philžtan* (sand). Almost blinding to them, without knowing where exactly they were walking through, they arrived at Aravilla Lagoon.

Xaqatažu ninakaki ni čhhüzta íspantichi ninakaž čhhüzta xaru oqhś quśh thutśiča ni thami šuma paxšapa. Xalla nuž, ninakaž tira nuž oqan ni tamiki ninakž žhuki pilžtan thatžinča, ninakaki xos šuransi, anaž nāšnatcha xaqhsi yoqažlax ni nužkiś tiripinti Arawil qotkiś irantichiča.

When Alfredo saw the water, he tried to bathe in it, but Geronimo told him, »No! That water can swallow you and transport you; who knows where you'll end up? That's a Saxra route; better we follow the paths of winds!«³

Ni qhaś cheržku, Alfredo eqhsa neqhs waynuś nižaša Gerónimo nižkiś khiča, ana! »Ni qhaś am lhapžnasača nižaša xaqhsikinax am jeksqatčan, saxriž jikhś niki, wakiri učhunakki thamž jikhśqaz apžla!«

So, under the sun, they let themselves be carried by them, becoming passengers of winds, sometimes drifting a bit north and sometimes a bit south, though never failing the west, fleeting nearby different cities such as Coipoma, Latarana, Uscana, and the Isluga volcano, which gave off a strong smoke that traveled to the east. Seeing this smoke-road, Alfredo took out some raisins and a small bottle of alcohol to feed the volcano.

He said, »*Eat tata* (grandfather), protect us, and talk to the winds about us so they guide us well.«

In this way, Alfredo and Geronimo kept going, entrusting themselves to others because they both knew how to ask for help while walking in the desert.

Xalla nuž si qhaqkiiś ninakaki oqhča, ni ch'eqti yoquñ, ni thamiž chhichta, ni keraž qužtažtaqaś oqhča, awišan warchuk awišan užachuk, pero anapanž taxachuk oqhś tatanča. Ana šišku, ninakaki Coipoma, Latarana, Uscaya nižaša Isluk žqetñi kur kežu watča ni kurkiśtan žqeti tuwanchuk ulnatča. Alfredo ni žqeti cheržku niž uli xōž nižaša tshi putill qhaś ni žqetñi kurkiś onanšapa.

Tuž khiča, »lulhžnal Tata, werhnak tshitsinall nižaša ni thami šuma wethakakiśtan palxayžina šuma werhnak irpaxu.«

Xalla nuž, Alfredo y Gerónimo qušhsassa ninakaki ni ch'eqti yoqkiś oqhlayskan ayura mayś šiśatča.

Now, with the protection of Mallku Isluga, they continued wandering with confidence and joy, learning more and more about the living wind roads that passed close by Berenguela and Chiapa, Camiña, and Culco, sleeping in the lodges of the wind, while walking the air of Ariquilda and Calatambo, towards Tilviche, below Saya, and Pisagua. Finally, and almost dead from exhaustion, after two weeks of adventure, they managed to see the sea! Right there, they saw on the horizon four whirlpools in the air that were all turning to the left, like big mills, like big gray *žqoñinaka* (excrements) revolving.

Xaši ni Isluk Mallkuž tshitsinta, qhažta pašpaškumi tiraž oqi tirt'icha thupi qušhšís kuntintu, ni thamž jikhš tshan tshan šišša ni Berenguela nižaša Chiapa sariri nuž watča nužkiš qossuk Camiña nižaša Culco, ni thamž xarañaran thxaxžku, Ariquilda, Calatambo nužkiš qossuk Tiliwiche qhutñi, Saya nižaša Pisagua. Nužkiš ninakaki irantiš žkati ancha ochchi nižaša ñawjtichi, pišk šimana wiyajžku, ni laram qota cherža! Xalla neqhs ni qhaš ažkin payšñi cherča nižaša paqhpik waywaranaka šqarqhutñi wiltiñi cherča, nukta waywaranaka, tshi saxw qhxes urpu wiltiča nižaša phujžkiča.

It was at that moment that Alfredo and Geronimo realized they were witnessing the birth of the four western winds being coiled out of existence to the left. This discovery made them jump with joy, embracing themselves and the wind-people with their hands, who in turn also hugged them back (*žkorhža*) because, just like humans, these winds also have a head, legs, and hands.

Feeling the western air on their skin and hair, they both screamed: »Hello Soqo Pawlu!, hello Kašpara!, hello Paltašara!, hello Qalasaya! Now we know you,« said Geronimo. »We will be your friends! And we greet you now with our left hand!« said Alfredo. »Yes! Because of how you all are; you are all going to the left; so you must be left-handed!« said Geronimo.

Ni ora ninaka nāša ni waywaranaka ni taxata thaminakataqal khikan šqar qhutñi wiltikan parišñiqal khikan!

Xalla nuž nāšku nižaša šišku ninakaki kuntintu žkorhsassa nižaša ni thaminakamiž žkorhža, nižaša ni thaminakami ninakašaqas žkorhža ninakaki žoñi irata qhxochiš, achchiš nižaša qharchiššaqasša.

Geronimo khiča »Oye Šoqu Pawlo!, oye Kašpara! Oye Paltašara! Oye Qalasaya! Aši werhna ančghuk paxchinča nižaša ančhuka mašil khača! Xaši šqar qharžtan am tsānača, xalla nuž amki, šqar qhutñi oqhñamqalča.«

»*Jallalla* to the winds of the west!«⁴ Alfredo said with affection while feeding the winds with Coquita, *ch'arkhi*, water, and raisins with his left hand! Then, little by little, the winds began to disappear; gradually, the windmills settled down *tshorča* (become still).

Xallalla ni taxata thaminaka! Xalla nuž ninakžkiš khatžkhila ninakaž khoka, ch'arki, žaqanaka nižaša qhaš šqar qharžtan onan, xalla nuž ni thaminakaki šumat šumat thsorča, nižaša ni waywaranakami šumat qatča!

With a full heart, Alfredo returns to the south and Geronimo to the east. They have already learned (*paxs*) one of the roads of the winds and one way of traveling with them, as there are many others. With happiness, they arrived, walking into their villages, telling everyone everything that had happened. They said that the west winds were people with whom humans can communicate, that they sleep in the ravines, but they were left-handed, so they had to be fed and greeted with those hands as well, always with *suma* (affection) and without *chhawxs* (hate).

Thapa quśh, Alfredo warchuk kutticha ni Gerónimo tuwanchuk. ninakaki ni thaminakz tshi jikhś paxchicha, nizaśa inakztan oqhś. Kuntintu thapa quśh ninakaki ninakz watha iranticha xaqhnuz watchizlax xalla ni thappacha kint'icha. Ni taxata thaminakaki žoñiqalcha khikan xalla ninakztan žoñinakaki parsaqalcha khikan, ninakaki ni q'awaran thaxñiqalcha nizaśa jejsñiqalcha, pero ninakaki sqarantanakaqalcha ninakzkiś luli onanku nizaśa tsānku nizaśa q'achiśpekkus qar qharztan q'achiştanča, suma quştanpan ana žaxwchi.

- Because they learned how to be passengers of the winds, trust in *Tsewka pacha*⁵ returned.
- Because they learned how to be affectionate to the west winds, to recognize them, and greet them with the correct hand, the winds rested.
- Because the winds rested, the rain clouds from the east returned.

- Ninakaki thamiż chhichta oqi śiśśicha, ti yoqkiś quśh thupins kuttizkiča.
- Ninakaki ni taxata thaminaka q'achi śiśśicha, thaminakaki jejsa.
- Ni thaminakami jejsa, tuwantan chijñi tshirinaka ulzkiča.

Now.

The animals grow

The quinoa grows

The traces in the sand remained.

phiya returns, (joy, day without noise or turbulences);

nons returns, (listening, understanding).

Ni uywanakami mirča

Ni kulami paqča

Ni pilkiś thekzta qhxochanakami thenča

Phiya khissiča, tintaśmi kephzkiča.

Ariel Bustamante is an artist dedicated to the acoustic, affective, and spiritual technologies of air. His works are developed through long processes of creative accompaniment using breathing, listening, and singing as means of conversation between humans, winds, or flamingos. He lives in Bolivia and is a member of the Laboratory of Ontological Multispecies Research at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in the city of La Paz. His works and collaborations have been presented at the Venice Biennale (IT), SAVVY Contemporary (DE), Het Nieuwe Instituut (NL), International Festival of Electronic Arts and Video (MX), Liquid Architecture (AU), The New Museum (EU), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (CL), Gessnerallee (CH), and Centro de la Revolución Cultural (BO).

Germán Lázaro is an Uru-Chipaya Indigenous writer, linguist, researcher, and musician. He currently lives and works in Santa Ana de Chipaya, Bolivia. Germán Lázaro is a key figure in the preservation and promotion of both the ancestral and contemporary cosmological practices of his nation. He has published a large number of texts, including dictionaries and pedagogical material, through the Machaqá Amawta Foundation. His book *El Pueblo Uru-Chipaya*, written in collaboration with the Bolivian teacher and researcher Evangelio Muñoz, provides a holistic overview of the Chipaya history, language, sovereignty, economic, and ecological struggles. Lázaro's music has been part of the sound archive of Cecilia Vicuña's *Brain Forest Quipu*, exhibited at the Tate Museum in London in 2022, and has participated in numerous international events spreading the Chipay Taqu language.

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1 The Chipay Taqu orality, unlike the local Aymaran, Quechua, and Spanish languages, does not rely solely on the larynx and its vocal cords to speak; instead, Chipay Taqu is a highly whispered, »dry« form of breath modulation. See Rodolfo Cerrón Palomino: »El chipaya: relicto idiomático uro,« in: *Revista andina*, no. 42 (2006), pp. 79–98.

2 Mallku is an Aymaran term to describe a human or nonhuman male authority, whereas Mama T'alla describes a human or nonhuman mother or an old woman authority. See Teófilo Laime Ajacopa, Virginia Lucero Mamani, and Mabel Arteaga Vино: *Paytani arupirwa: diccionario bilingüe: Aymara-Castellano*. Maputo 2020.

3 Saxra, often associated with malignity, is a both creative and destructive entity whose reign lies within the underworld Qosta pacha (*Manqha Pacha* in Aymara), under caves, water springs, or the underground water channels of the Andes plateaus. See Verónica Cereceda: »Una Extensión Entre El Altiplano y El Mar: Relatos Míticos Chipaya y El Norte de Chile,« in: *Estudios Atacameños* no. 40 (2010), pp. 101–30. <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-10432010000200007>.

4 Jallalla is an Aymaran expression of victory, agreement, and joy widely used across the Andes. See Ajacopa, Mamani, and Vино: *Paytani arupirwa: diccionario bilingüe: Aymara-Castellano*.

5 Tewkta Pacha in the Chipay Taqu language, or *Alax-pacha* in the Aymaran language, is the time-space kingdom of the above: the sky, clouds, winds, and other beings that conform the atmosphere. In this sense, Tewkta Pacha is the opposite of Qosta Pacha (*Manqha Pacha* in Aymara), the underworld. See Gerardo Fernández Juárez: *El banquete aymara: mesas y yatiris*. Hisbol, 1995.



Considering Non-anthropocentric Music

Robert Blatt

»What is music when conceived for humans and nonhumans?« asks Robert Blatt in his essay »Considering Non-anthropocentric Music.« This raises ontological questions about our human-centered perspective in experimental music. Blatt's shift from anthropocentric to non-anthropocentric music presents the possibility for vast environmental receptivity that is inherent in experimental music, and the impact of anthropocentrism on human and nonhuman entities alike. Non-anthropocentrism suggests the experience of music as something beyond human perceptual limits, considering the diverse sensory experiences of different beings. Touching upon ethical considerations in environmental sound art, Blatt advocates for non-extractive practices and interdependence, and proposes an ecocentric approach to music. What is the *nature* of music when it is created for humans and nonhumans?

Frans Snyders, *Concert of Birds*, 1629–1630.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

He has [We have] not learned to think [make
music] like a mountain.¹

...

The prevalence of silence and field recording, or for that matter sound walks, environmental installations, and site-specific performances in experimental music echoes the advancement of environmental sound and natural phenomena in experimental music in general. While these practices have been framed as expanding musical constraints by integrating non-musical sound and noise,² chance and the everyday,³ and deepening connections with a site,⁴ a less-discussed aspect are the implications of their radical receptivity to the environment – a responsiveness that challenges conventions of authorship, artwork, audience, and material; assumptions about the primacy of the human and a subsidiary treatment of the environment; and even any supposition of music as a human phenomenon. Nevertheless, a strong anthropocentric tendency in experimental music persists. Consider how the widespread practice of field recording involves capturing and repurposing the environment strictly for human listening. Akin to natural resource extraction, this process treats the environment as a resource to take, a postulation deeply rooted in an anthropocentric perspective. Such forms of extraction are seemingly incongruous with the implications of experimental music's environmental receptivity and encourage an expansive reconsideration of the environment's relationship to humanity in music, one that would seemingly necessitate a shift from centering the human, i.e., non-anthropocentric music.

...

Anthropocentrism is a human-centered perspective that ethically valorizes humanity over nature. Non-anthropocentrism, in contrast, negates such human centrality and valorization, leaving undefined what, if anything, is centralized or valorized. Consequently, non-anthropocentric music represents an open aesthetic framework that encompasses different and diverse relationships with humanity and any and all elements of the environment beyond the anthropocentric paradigm.

...

An outcome of anthropocentrism has been the widespread assumption that plants are noncognitive and incapable of perceiving their surroundings. Despite lacking a central nervous system and specialized

sense organs, studies have increasingly contested this assumption through experimental evidence of decision making, learning, and memory,⁵ as well as responses to light, chemical signatures, touch, temperature, electricity, and sound.⁶ Plant bioacoustics research has focused primarily on the agricultural benefits of exposing plants to specific sounds – electronically generated tones (ultrasonic and audible), noise, music, and environmental field recordings – demonstrating effects to germination rate, crop yield, and nutrient content, among others.⁷ A small fraction of plant bioacoustics studies have found evidence for sound perception in particular by identifying behavioral responses in plants to natural acoustic stimuli, demonstrating increased release of defense-related compounds in response to recordings made of caterpillar chewing played from transducers,⁸ higher sugar content in flower nectar when exposed to honey bee sounds from loudspeakers,⁹ and directional root growth in response to the live sound of flowing water through a physically isolated pipe.¹⁰ Moreover, plants also make sounds, including ultrasonic acoustic emissions from the release of tension in a tree's water-transport system. Some scientists have suggested these sounds are more complex than a mere mechanical byproduct of the plants' vascular system.¹¹ These developments challenge longstanding assumptions about plant cognition, audition, and sound production, while outlining actual prospects for exploring non-anthropocentric musical interactions. Furthermore, as plant bioacoustics significantly differs from that of humans or other animals, music that integrates these differences offers the possibility for a wholly other form of music.¹²

...

... the distant lowing of some cow in the horizon
beyond the woods sounded sweet and
melodious and at first I would mistake it for the
voices of certain minstrels by whom I was sometimes
serenaded, who might be straying over hill
and dale; but soon I was not unpleasantly
disappointed when it was prolonged into the cheap
and natural music of the cow. I do not
mean to be satirical, but to express my appreciation
of those youths' singing, when I state that I
perceived clearly that it was akin to the music of the
cow, and they were at length one articulation
of Nature.¹³

...

Music canonically occurs within the narrow band of human perceptual and cognitive limits. In contrast, non-anthropocentrism challenges or discards such boundaries. Sounds in music need not be limited to the frequency and dynamic range of human hearing. However, as music is more than just sound, a non-anthropocentric perspective compels a reconsideration of the entire wave propagation spectrum inherent to music – acoustic and electromagnetic – as well as encouraging consideration for entirely other sensory possibilities. This includes animal hearing and vision range differences, as well as nonhuman sensory systems like magnetoreception, found in migratory birds, or electroreception, found in fish and amphibians. As experimental music already incorporates human imperceptible phenomena, like radio waves and other forms of electromagnetic radiation, it is only a matter of reconsidering how and for whom these phenomena are used.¹⁴ Music's temporal and spatial qualities may also be all the more strange, occurring beyond that associated with human habitat and perception, even interacting with processes on ecological, planetary, or quantum scales. Additionally, an openness to what musicality can be for other life forms is essential. Harmony, rhythm, and/or melody may be entirely different or carry no relevance, whereas other attributes, possibly yet to be understood or conceived, may be needed, considered, and composed. These qualities will likely not be found by human imagination alone but through interaction and investigation. Ecological psychology studies behavioral responses to sound for survival purposes in biological organisms, providing approaches and findings which a non-anthropocentric musical practice may gain insight from. But music also demands such explorations across aesthetic experiences. This begs the question: Could we recognize such a thing, and if so, how?

...

As an increasingly dominant ethical and political response to anthropocentrism, ecocentrism advocates for equality of intrinsic value across all of nature, living and nonliving, and its systemic interrelations. An ecocentric approach to music would be system-informed and, to a degree, nonhierarchical: decentralizing aesthetic and experiential value across the environment, with interdependence and coexistence treated as primary. As ecological systems exhibit diverse coexistence qualities, from mutualism to parasitism, such music could occupy a variety of exchange qualities. It would

be formally manifold in its possible interactions with an environment's individuals and systems, as well as cognizant of its own emergent systemic properties. Therefore, it would not reflect one relational approach but an attitude toward relations, emphasizing interconnectedness within complex systems. Experimental music, known for fostering interdependence between performers, instruments, and listeners alike through strategies like improvisation, open notation, interaction, networks, and conceptual approaches to social relations, has a foundation for considering interdependent approaches across the environment and its relations – a somewhat germane starting point for non-anthropocentric musical work.

...

Birdsong has a longstanding history in music through vocal and instrumental imitation and transcription, and more recently with sound recordings, in otherwise conventional performance contexts.¹⁵ A few instances, however, express some non-anthropocentric tendencies: In a 1924 BBC radio broadcast, Beatrice Harrison performed cello works by Edward Elgar, Antonín Dvořák, and an arrangement of »Londonderry Air« in her garden to the accompaniment of nightingales.¹⁶ Ric Cupples and David Dunn's »Mimus Polyglottos« (1976) is an interactive composition for mockingbird and tape playback system with electronic sounds suggestive of the rhythmic and timbral characteristics of mockingbird songs.¹⁷ Wendy Reid's »Ambient Bird series« (2018–ongoing) creates an interacting environmental soundscape with improvising musicians guided by scores alongside one or more parrots and, particularly in its outdoor realizations, any fortuitous environmental occurrences – a flock of birds, dogs, rustling leaves, etc.¹⁸

...

... he entered into the field, and began to preach to the birds that were on the ground. And suddenly, those that were in the trees came around him ... all the multitude of these birds opened their beaks, and stretched out their necks, and opened their wings ... and thereupon all those birds arose in the air, with wonderful singing ...¹⁹

...

Non-anthropocentric music raises questions about the extent to which the diversity of the nonhuman can authentically experience music. Can aesthetic

experiences occur across the diversity of the environment? Can an aesthetic experience take different shapes for the different elements of the environment? Is an aesthetic experience even essential for music? Panpsychism, a philosophical theory discussed since antiquity and experiencing renewed interest as a possible solution to the so-called hard problem of consciousness, postulates that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous across the natural world. In its contemporary manifestations, panpsychism advocates for some form of panexperientialism, where conscious experience is fundamental and ubiquitous; it is only the degree of its richness and complexity that varies across different beings.²⁰ This seemingly non-anthropocentric extension of mind provides a perspective for how some form of aesthetic experience might unfold at likewise varying degrees of richness and complexity throughout the natural world. Perhaps in the same manner that a trained musician has a different qualitative experience when listening to music than someone with little to no musical background – such as perceiving intervallic relationships or historical references – yet both still have genuine aesthetic experiences, so too may such a musical continuum of experience exist to nonhumans. A similar analogy could be made for those with different cultures, ages, or life experiences, which beckons one even more to consider how the prospect of differing experiences of music across nature need not be thought of as superior or inferior, just different.

...

Premised on the idea that nature resides outside human culture and at scales beyond human perception, Stan Godlovitch has proposed an acentric aesthetic – a nil perspective from which to valorize nothing – to experience nature on its own inaccessible, alien terms. Godlovitch presents three potential approaches for how this may be realized: through the removed objectivity of science, an affective-reverential view of nature that transcends human interest, and an attitude of aesthetic aloofness and sense of insignificance toward nature as mystery.²¹ As an aesthetic experience of nature readily emerges when considering music from a non-anthropocentric perspective, these approaches add insight for how one might realize such music, particularly when confronting the imperceptible, unknown, and seemingly unknowable qualities of nature. Additionally, Godlovitch advocates for nature from the perspective of terrain rather

than habitat to avoid the centrist position that habitat holds as defined by the beings that use it. Therefore, let us rewrite the statement: »**Habitat** [Habitat music] is unavoidably hitched to a centric outlook. **Terrain** [Terrain music] is outside all this desperate fuss.«²² This adaptation shifts the framework for considering music not as a practice defined and sustained by human use, but instead acentrically as an open, nonhierarchical framework across the environment. However, in contrast to Godlovitch's premise, a non-anthropocentric perspective to music inherently questions a distinction between culture and nature. It intertwines the two practically and aesthetically, challenging the validity of a dialectical tension between them and suggesting a deeper connection where both are entangled.²³ This underscores consideration of the environment, not just nature, in the context of non-anthropocentric music to embrace the ambiguous reality between natural and built environments. For in the era of the Anthropocene, distinguishing between the two becomes increasingly complex.²⁴ Furthermore, non-anthropocentrism's extension to the nonhuman would seemingly also extend to technology, such as artificial intelligence. Thus, a non-anthropocentric approach to music could express an acentric aesthetic terrain where culture and nature, or the natural and artificial, are intricately entwined.

...

A prerequisite for exploring non-anthropocentrism in music involves understanding relationships between human-generated sound and the environment. For instance, the effects of anthropogenic noise on animals is well studied, encompassing reductions in mating, breeding, and foraging, as well as changes in vocalization structure, frequency, amplitude, and timing.²⁵ Moreover, studies have revealed an inverse correlation between anthropophony and biophony across urban and rural environmental gradients.²⁶ These studies contribute to a sensitivity that is needed toward the ethical considerations of human-derived sound. In environmental or Land Art, ethical debate has developed concerning the ecological, moral, and aesthetic impacts artworks have on the environment – harmful, neutral, or beneficial.²⁷ Such concerns have arguably influenced the development of ecologically conscious, social practice environmental art as a reaction to the questionably deleterious approaches of early Land Art practitioners. These concerns have been framed from the perspective of visual art practice, yet with

little consideration directed to the effects of sound, even though works of environmental sound art have existed for decades. Alternatively, experimental music, inclusive of environmental sound art and non-anthropocentric approaches, is in a ubiquitous position to contend with such ethical environmental considerations of the sonic – across the human and nonhuman, individual and system, culture and nature.

...

When species meet, the question of how to inherit histories is pressing, and how to get on together is at stake ... I am drawn into the multispecies knots that they are tied into and that they retie by their reciprocal action.²⁸

...

Anthropocentric perspectives are deeply rooted in the intellectual history of Western culture. Judeo-Christian scripture describes humanity as uniquely formed in God's image, and Aristotle philosophized nature as a system of hierarchical relationships.²⁹ These ideas have had long-lasting impacts, from the Neoplatonic and medieval Christian Great Chain of Being to numerous dominant philosophical systems perpetuated into the modern era.³⁰ This anthropocentric worldview has undoubtedly influenced Western society's treatment of nature, with subsequent maleffects that we grapple with today. This was not always the case. In pre-Socratic societies, humankind's unity with the environment was a widely held view that changed with the development of agriculture and cities.³¹ Simultaneously, non-anthropocentric worldviews have increasingly resurfaced, finding early expression in Maimonides and Saint Francis of Assisi.³² Yet, it is scientific developments since the Age of Enlightenment that have most steadily attenuated anthropocentrism's long-standing hegemony – including the heliocentric to acentric expanding universe, the theory of evolution, and the development of ecology as a natural science – which in turn influenced and ran parallel with sympathetic philosophical and ethical systems – from Spinoza, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Alfred North Whitehead to ecosophy, environmental ethics, and the so-called greening of the humanities.³³ Additionally, non-anthropocentric perspectives from religious and philosophical systems outside the Western tradition have exerted profound impacts on Western thought in the last century. Dominant critiques of anthropocentrism currently exist throughout intellectual discourse.

As such, experimental music's radical receptivity to the environment is just a reflection of a more far-reaching non-anthropocentric arc that can be seen throughout the arts, such as in environmental art, nature writing, and ecocinema – for which non-anthropocentric music is merely another development.

...

The plant acoustic frequency technology generator, manufactured by the Qingdao Physical Agricultural Engineering Research Center in China, produces electroacoustic sound demonstrated to enhance agricultural plant yield. This solar-powered device has variable frequency (60 to 2,000 hertz) and sound pressure levels (50 to 120 decibels) that can change according to air temperature and humidity, covering a distance of approximately 50 to 100 meters.³⁴ While conceived from a resource-focused anthropocentric framework, one is compelled to ask what the implications are for repurposing the device as a non-anthropocentric musical instrument.

...

Some unusual ontological questions are raised by taking a non-anthropocentric musical perspective: What is music when conceived for humans and nonhumans? How and in what ways can nonhumans be composers, performers, and/or listeners? What constitutes nonhuman music? Is it distinct from human music? Is it even possible? Such questions inevitably lead to the more fundamental query, what is music, as to determine if and how such non-anthropocentric extensions even are music. Definitions for music based on sonic characteristics always seem to fail as other musical practices contradict or supersede them. Music rather evolves and is redefined between individuals and groups as a dynamic cultural phenomenon. As such, the feasibility of non-anthropocentrism in music appears in question. How can music, an apparently human cultural phenomenon, occur within a nonhuman context? Is this not an absurd proposition? Perhaps not when viewed from two different directions: [1] If music is an evolving phenomenon, non-anthropocentric music may be its natural progression, particularly with experimental music as its harbinger.³⁵ [2] Who are we to assume that the elusive activity of music does not or cannot exist for nonhumans? Clearly nonhuman species make complex music-like sounds; zoomusicology studies this phenomenon and sustains contested positions on the matter.³⁶ David Dunn has noted the

structural similarities between cetacean speech, early language play acquisition, and music to suggest a shared phenomenon,³⁷ and Marcello Sorce Keller has demonstrated that annual changes in humpback whale songs share the same transformational qualities expressed in oral music traditions studied in ethnomusicology.³⁸ Moreover, artificial intelligence, a completely other kind of nonhuman, has created music of increasing complexity for decades.³⁹ It appears that at least something akin to music is occurring outside of humanity, and if we turn the question around, is it clearer that such articulations are non-music? Must we even have a shared understanding of music across species – it hardly exists across our own? Ultimately, this all may stay veiled, hidden within perspectives we,

as humans, can never fully transcend. Non-anthropocentrism provides a perspective to engage such questions, but it also compels humility that the answers may remain to some degree unknowable.

...

Some animals started avoiding human beings.

Others were concerned because they liked the human people and enjoyed being near them for their funny ways. Bears sort of cared.

They still wanted to be seen by people, to surprise them sometimes, even to be caught or killed by them, so they might go inside the houses and hear their music.⁴⁰

Robert Blatt (b. 1984 in Anaheim, California) is a composer, artist, performer, and writer. His practice is rooted in explorations of expanded situations that seek to reevaluate sound and listening through environment, community, and language. Recent projects include the publication *The Free Air* on Andromache Records (C84 cassette tape with field recordings and voice, and book with the work's score and the essay »Music and the Weather«); *Works on Paper: Experiments in Language and Sound*, a three-month project organized with poet David Abel at Passages Bookshop in Portland, Oregon, featuring realizations from Blatt's text score collection *How to Read a Book*; and the sound/score for the film *Luz, Clarão, Fulgor–Augúrios para um enquadramento não hierárquico e venturoso* by Sílvia das Fadas, with collaborative expanded cinema performances at 2220 Arts + Archives and Miragem–Arte Cinemática na Paisagem, and a publication by Rotations / Poetic Research Bureau Editions with scores from the film. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Saturated Borders, Sonic Clashes



Still from the video *Chunchus* on YouTube

Carlos Gutiérrez

In his sound practice, Carlos Gutiérrez thinks through the idea of borders and their impact on Indigenous cultures in the context of the Andes-Amazonia border, exploring native dances and music as tools for preserving historical perspectives. Archives, which are considered archeological records, can reveal how borders impact our cultural memories and stories. Borders are not just lines on a map, but are more complex, often serving as symbols of division, separation, and difference among people.

Gutiérrez uses media archeology to uncover power dynamics in information creation across different technological times. Old media artifacts connect the past and present, influencing collective memory. Gutiérrez also questions human-centered views of borders, highlighting connections between humans, animals, machines, and the environment toward interconnected worldviews. *Saturated Borders, Sonic Clashes* includes sound files and video documentation of *Borde Chiriguano*, a sound installation and film, representing borders, clashes, saturations, and collapses in various dimensions.

I will call it an archive not the totality of the texts which have been preserved by a civilization, nor all the traces which we were able to save from its disaster, but the set of rules which determine in a culture the appearance and the disappearance of statements, their persistence and their erasure, their paradoxical existence of events and things. To analyze the facts of speech in the general element of the archive is to consider them not as documents (of a hidden meaning, or of a rule of construction), but as monuments; it is – outside of any geological metaphor, without any assignment of origin, without the slightest gesture towards the beginning of an archè – to do what one could call, according to the playful rights of etymology, something like an archaeology.

—M. Foucault, *Sur l'archéologie des sciences. Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie, Cahiers pour l'analyse*, n° 9, été 1968

About a border

In 1906, in the town of San Pedro de Jujuy (Argentina), very close to the border with Bolivia, the German ethnologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche recorded a Chiriguano person singing. The recording was made on a wax cylinder.

In the early fifteenth century, the Chiriguanos, well known for their ferocity in war and who played a complex role during the political expansion of the Inca empire, crossed the Amazon toward what is currently the south of Bolivian territory.

The natives (Chiriguanos) were extremely brutal, worse than wild beasts; that they had no religion nor worshiped anything; they lived without law or good customs, but like animals in the mountains, without towns or houses, and who ate human flesh.

—Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales de los incas*, 1609

The passage of the Chiriguanos through the highlands (a space occupied mainly by Aymara and Quechua cultural groups) has been represented in allegorical dances that are performed in different communities of the Bolivian and Peruvian Altiplano.

The dancers wear jaguar skins and hold spears as a reminder of the ancient warriors. From the twentieth century on, their forms of representation had been influenced by images that arrived in Bolivia mainly through North American films.

Lehmann-Nitsche's recording is a historical register of a voice and song that has disappeared. It gives an account of a type of music that, speculating a little, the influence for some of these dances that appeared during a time in which an intricate cultural border was formed between the nomadic groups of the lowlands and the settled groups of the highlands.

Borders and frontiers

In their conventional apprehension, borders are sedimented with an illusionary fixity that conceals their inherent dynamism. The traditional bifurcation between inside and outside is but a stratagem of thought that obscures the manifold interactions within these purportedly rigid demarcations. But going further, borders are complex configurations in which political regimes, cultural ecosystems, technologies, and effects are intertwined. They also serve as conduits for the movement of bodies and goods, and as barriers hindering such mobility.

The urgency to dispute and redefine the very notions of border and frontier is apparent in our contemporary context. The dominant discourse characterizes borders as entities driven by property, control, privatization, and measurability, seamlessly aligning with colonial and capitalist projects. This discourse perpetuates the desire to meticulously document and manipulate every square inch of our external and internal landscapes. However, within this dense and shifting interweaving of determinations and openings, a plurality of meanings and forms emerges.

Today, it seems to be particularly urgent to dispute and resignify the very notions of border and frontier. They are no longer passive geographical features, but active interfaces governed by the logic of encoding and decoding. The nomadic traversing of borders is reduced to a series of electronic transactions, each bit articulating the intricate dance of power relations within the digital domain. Within this networked paradigm, borders metamorphose into conduits for the relentless flow of digital information, rendering the notion of fixity obsolete.



Chirivanus dance from the Bolivian Altiplano. Taken from the book *Cada año bailamos* (Sigl, Ordoñez, 2009)

Still from the film *Outlaw Express* (1938)



Indiens Chiriguano — Dessin de Riou, d'après un croquis de Cadore.

Etching of Édouard Riou from *Le Tour du Monde*

The digitalization of borders within this techno-deterministic narrative propels them beyond the physical realm into a web of electronic interactions, in which the relentless march of technology reshapes their essence and significance.

As media technologies become obsolete, they create a boundary between the past and present, shaping our collective memory. The preservation of outdated media artifacts becomes an archeological endeavor, bridging the gap between technological eras and helping us understand the evolution of communication technologies.

In the context of borders, media archeology prompts us to question the power dynamics embedded in the creation and dissemination of information. The framing of narratives, manipulation of images, and control over media channels can act as invisible borders, influencing public opinion and reinforcing societal divisions. It extends to the ways in which digital platforms curate content and algorithms shape our online experiences. These algorithmic borders guide users within predetermined informational boundaries, influencing their perspectives and limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. Digital monitoring enforces conformity to established norms within the bordered space.

By excavating the layers of media history, we gain insights into the complex interplay between technology, communication, and the borders that define our contemporary world as instruments of social control and normalization.

Media, as a powerful tool of discourse, contributes to the formation and reinforcement of border narratives. For example, the framing of immigrants in certain discourses can perpetuate stereotypes and justify exclusionary border practices.

A broader perspective

What if we think of borders as assemblages interwoven with various forces? As a complex entanglement, where human and nonhuman actors converge to shape their material expression and the technological protocols that shape borders not as mere deterministic forces but as lively actors within these assemblages? The continual evolution of these protocols and standards could become an ongoing negotiation between diverse entities, both animate and inanimate, constantly shifting in the complex interplay of technology, biology, and culture.

A perspective that challenges anthropocentrism, highlighting the interdependence of humans, animals, machines, and the environment. Borders therefore extend beyond human-centric perspectives to include the entanglement of diverse entities. The blurring of boundaries between the organic and the technological signifies a departure from conventional border discourse, emphasizing a more inclusive and interconnected worldview.

Sonic clashes

Returning to the border between the Andes and Amazonia, we believe that it is possible to think the Indigenous dances and music as devices of memory, documentation, and archive of the way they looked and listened to the other people in past, historical times and, in this case, as a tangible result of their border relationship.

It is still possible to find highland communities located on the border with the Amazon that play the music of Chirivanus. According to some testimonies, the performance of this music involves two or three musical groups playing different melodies and blowing the instruments as loudly as possible with the intention of representing a musical »war« in which the group that plays the longest wins. This kind of competition would remember the indomitable fighting character of the lowland people.

The ensembles play for many hours, generating a multiplicity of overtones and spatially distributed rhythmic configurations.

Carlos Gutiérrez Quiroga is a composer, performer, archivist, and researcher based in La Paz, Bolivia. His musical work is influenced by the Indigenous music of the Bolivian highlands and has been extended to the creation of instruments, sound objects, public interventions, installations, and films in which he explores Andean and tuning systems, spatialization of sound over very long distances, aural illusions, decentralized structures, and connections between composition and archival research, orality, memory, and experimental writing.

To listen to the accompanying audiovisual material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

A Chiriguano song. Recorded in 1906 by the German ethnologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche. Courtesy of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin.

Carlos Gutiérrez, *Choques*, 2024. Courtesy the artist.

Montage of images of Chiriwano music recorded in recent years in different communities of Puno, Peru. All records were found on YouTube. A version of this work will be presented in the form of an immersive installation where the videos will be projected in different audiovisual media.

Ghazal: Poetic Conversations across Continents

Two frail arms of your delicate form I pursue,
Inaccessible, vibrant, sublime at the end.

—John Hollander

Maaz Bin Bilal

Author, translator, and scholar Maaz Bin Bilal explores the ghazal, a poetic form that transcends linguistic boundaries. »The ghazal,« he writes, »is a unique genre of poetry in the world in that it is perhaps the only form where there is no requirement for a linear narrative.« From its Arabic roots to Persian refinement to its Urdu resonance – Bilal’s own ghazal practice is in English – he emphasizes the ghazal’s unique structure and thematic richness and captivating sonic and rhythmic dimensions. As he intertwines his personal experiences with the ghazal tradition, Bilal shares a narrative that echoes the millennium-old poetic and sonic culture.

I begin this essay with my ghazal, »The Ghazal in your Hands«:

The Ghazal in your Hands

The ghazal is conversation, like fragrant mehndi in your hands
The beauty of a gazelle, a subtle coquetry in your hands

In each couplet, a new thought would unravel in a paradox
Your heart lies in the lines of the crescent symmetry in your hands

What more may be said in couplets—*shers*—with rhythm, rhymes, and refrains?
Your histories and cultures are here—it’s no folly in your hands

Many idols are loved, and the beauty of women and wine’s taste
are praised; praised be God who also lives in the paisley in your hands

Just two moments you know—your birth and death—and then to tackle life
what weapon may be better than the twin prosody in your hands?

»In chaos, order free verse, not a tight form,« others always say
but you capture life here, poetry’s philosophy in your hands

Rumi, Hafez, Saadi Shirazi—Persians wrote odes to the *jaam*—
wine *goblets* of ecstasy—that’s the trajectory in your hands

Mir, Ghalib wrote of the friend-lover—the *yaar*—but it was just Faiz
who befriended his rival *raaqeeb*, the enemy in your hands

A form was thus perfected, will you better Shahid today, Maaz?
Let poetry come and become clay, like soft putty in your hands

The word ghazal comes from Arabic, where one of its meanings is amatory conversations with women or the beloved. It is etymologically related to the English word »gazelle,« which also has roots in Arabic. The original Arabic word *ghazaal* for gazelle also refers to the animal's plaintive call or painful cry. The gazelle is famous in Perso-Arabic tradition for its beautiful eyes.

In my English ghazal above, I take inspiration from these word meanings to write a ghazal about the ghazal, which is a form of poetry dating back to sixth-century Arabia. The ghazal's lyric form is a unique genre of poetry in the world in that it is perhaps the only one for which there is no requirement for a linear narrative. It is written in couplets, and each couplet may present a different idea or can work as a stand-alone poem. Moods, and its tight and demanding form, may tie a ghazal together.

As my ghazal above illustrates, the now widely accepted form of the ghazal demands that the whole poem be written in couplets, *beit* or *sher*, in a fixed rhythm or meter. In the first couplet, both lines end with a refrain, *radeef*, which is preceded by a rhyme, *qaafiya*. Subsequently, every second line of each couplet follows this rhyme and refrain scheme. The final couplet, the *maqta*, carries the poet's nom de plume, their pen name or *takhallus*. This is often treated with irony and becomes a conversation with an alter ego, a humble or boastful reflection upon the self. A ghazal may have from five to fifteen *beits/shers*/distichs/couplets.

The ghazal arose from the lively, playful, and short Arabic poems, *nasib*, which preceded odes known as *qasida*. It then went on to attain fruition in Persian with Rumi (1207–1273), Saadi Shirazi (1210–1291/92), and Hafez (1325–1390) perfecting the form.

Hafez's divan or collection of ghazals became a common means of fortune telling in the Persianate world stretching from the Balkans to Bengal. Many of the subsequently defining characteristics of the ghazal became fixed in Persian. These include the furthering of a wide variety of quantitative meters or rhythm patterns, the *qafiya-radeef* pairing, and the *maqta* with the *takhallus*.

Hafez's Persian ghazals even inspired the great German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) to write his 1819 collection of lyrical poems, *West-östlicher Divan*.

From Arabic, the ghazal also traveled into Turkish and found great acceptance, and further into Iberian Arabic and Hebrew, and began a poetic tradition that was then heralded in Spanish during the twentieth century by Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) who wrote *gacelas* in his *Diván del Tamarit* (1931–36). The ghazal also developed into African languages, such as Fulfulde and Hausa, from its Arabic origins. However, it was via Persian that the ghazal made its way into Urdu and other »South Asian« languages.

As an Indian growing up in Delhi, I first encountered the ghazal in Urdu, intoned in my mother tongue. I heard ghazals through sung renditions played on the record player by my father. Begum Akhtar (1914–1974), Mehdi Hassan (1927–2012), Ghulam Ali (1940–), or Jagjit Singh (1941–2011) were some of the Urdu vocalists singing ghazals penned by the most famous Urdu poets, or *shaayars*, such as Mir Taqi Mir (1723–1810), Mirza Ghalib (1797–1869), Allama Iqbal (1877–1938), and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984). I also grew up in the same locality of the Shahjahanabad area – the old city of Delhi – where Ghalib, the greatest nineteenth-century poet of the Urdu ghazal, had lived and died. During his lifetime, Ghalib had seen power shift from the Mughal elite, of which he was a part, to the British colonial rule.

In postcolonial India, I grew up with English as the language of professional aspiration. I never formally studied Urdu, my mother tongue. So, even as I grew up with a fascination for reading and writing, it remained largely confined to English. Translation of Urdu poetry into English became one way for me to remedy a sense of lack, my schizophrenic linguistic identity.



An imagined portrait of Hafez by Abolhassan Sadighi.

Source: Wikimedia commons

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*,
Frontispiece and title page of the first edition, Cotta publishing house, Stuttgart, 1819.

Source: Wikimedia commons

Here is my translation of Ghalib's ghazal from Urdu into English, to give you a sense of Ghalib and my translation praxis of the ghazal:

It Wasn't Our Destiny

(ye na thī hamārī qismat ...)

It wasn't our destiny to be with our lover,
Had we lived anymore, the wait would've been longer!

I live by your promise, knowing it to be false,
Wouldn't I've died of joy, if I were a believer?

Through your caprice we learnt that the pledge was weak,
With such ease would it break if it were any stronger?

They should ask my heart, how your half-drawn arrows,
Could pierce it through, and where'd they get their power?

What friendship is this that friends become counselors?
There should've been a healer, a sympathizer!

Blood would pour unstoppably from the veins of marble,
What you believe to be grief may be scorching fire!

If this torment's heart-breaking, where'd we go hiding?
If it weren't the pain of love, it'd be of our career.

To whom do I complain, of this sad night's refrain?
Death wouldn't be too bad, if only once it were.

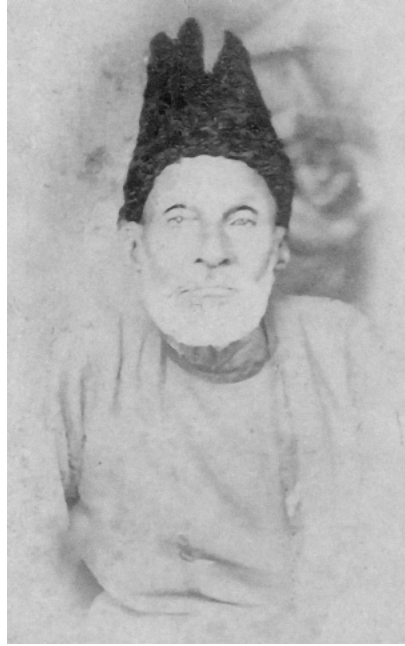
This dishonour on death, why didn't we drown instead?
There would've been no tomb, there would've been no bier.

Who can see Him? He is One, the Monad.
Were there any duality, our four eyes would pair.

These matters of mystic thought, these renderings of yours,
Ghalib, we'd call you a saint, were you not a drinker.

Similarly, when I began writing poetry in English, I found it rang hollow for me, as the music of poetry I had grown up listening to was that of the Urdu ghazal. Writing in Western poetic forms or even free verse felt alien, albeit unavoidable, such was its double bind.

It is when I was grappling with this schism that I encountered the Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali's English ghazals. Other prominent American poets such as Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) had already been introduced to the ghazal form through prosaic translations by the Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad (1941–2022). Ahmad had arranged for American poets to render the ghazals into English poems. Adrienne Rich composed her own versions of powerful ghazals, two short collections called *Homage to Ghalib* and *The Blue Ghazals*. Written in couplets and thematically autonomous like the ghazal, however, they lacked the ghazal's classical prosody and sonics.



Mirza Ghalib, 1868.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Here is an example that illustrates the strength of Rich's lyrical ghazal verse, with its aphoristic quality and strong sense of self:

Ghazal V

Adapted from Mirza Ghalib.

Even when I thought I prayed, I was talking to myself;
when I found the door shut, I simply walked away.

We all accept Your claim to be unique; the stone lips,
the carved limbs, were never your true portrait.

Grief held back from the lips wears at the heart; the
drop that refused to join the river dried up in the dust.

While Rich retained the thematic disunity of the ghazal or the stand-alone quality of each verse, she gave up all rhythm and rhyme, thus, relinquishing the incantatory repetitive rhyme and refrain of the classical ghazal.

And so it was Agha Shahid Ali (1949–2001) who brought the classical ghazal form to fruition in English. With exposure to ghazal poetry sung in Urdu by Begum Akhtar, Shahid developed his own form in English. In the beginning he worked with only end-line refrains, but honed it over time to include rhyme as well preceding the end-line refrains, as in the original Persianate ghazal.

Here are two similar yet different ghazals with the refrain »Arabic« becoming »In Arabic« in the second ghazal, exemplifying how he developed the form over time.

In Arabic

The only language of loss left in the world is Arabic—
These words were said to me in a language not Arabic.

Ancestors, you've left me a plot in the family graveyard-
Why must I look, in your eyes, for prayers in Arabic?

Majnoon, his clothes ripped, still weeps for his Laila.
O, this is the madness of the desert, his crazy Arabic.

Who listens to Ishmael? Even now he cries out:
Abraham, throw away your knives, recite a psalm in Arabic.

From exile Mahmoud Darwish writes to the world:
You'll all pass between the fleeting words of Arabic.

At an exhibition of miniatures, such delicate calligraphy:
Kashmiri paisley tied into the golden hair of Arabic!

The Koran prophesied a fire of men and stones.
Well, it's all now come true, as it was said in the Arabic.

When Lorca died, they left the balconies open and saw
his gasidas braided, on the horizon, into knots of Arabic.

Memory is no longer confused, it has a homeland-
Says Shammas: Territorialize each confusion in a graceful Arabic.

Where there were homes in Deir Yassin, you'll see dense forests—
That village was razed. There's no sign of Arabic.

I too, O Amichai, saw the dresses of beautiful women.
And everything else, just like you, in Death, Hebrew, and Arabic.

They ask me to tell them what Shahid means-
Listen: It means »The Beloved« in Persian, »Witness« in Arabic.

In the second ghazal developed from the same material given below, the end-line *radeef/refrain* »in Arabic« is preceded by the »ess/es« *qaafiya/rhyme*.

In Arabic

(with revisions of some couplets of »Arabic«)

A language of loss? I have some business in Arabic.
Love letters: calligraphy pitiless in Arabic.

At an exhibit of miniatures, what Kashmiri hairs!
Each paisley inked into a golden tress in Arabic.

This much fuss about a language I don't know? So one day
perfume from a dress may let you digress in Arabic.

A »Guide for the Perplexed« was written—believe me—
by Cordoba's Jew—Maimonides—in Arabic.

Majnoon, by stopped caravans, rips his collars, cries »Laila!
Pain translated is O! much more—not less—in Arabic.

Writes Shammās: Memory, no longer confused, now is a homeland—
his two languages a Hebrew caress in Arabic.

When Lorca died, they left the balconies open and saw:
On the sea his qasidas, stitched seamless in Arabic.

In the Veiled One's harem, an adultress hanged by eunuchs—
So the rank mirrors revealed to Borges in Arabic.

Ah, bisexual Heaven: wide-eyed houris and immortal youths!
To your each desire they say Yes! O Yes!, in Arabic.

For that excess of sibilance, the last Apocalypse,
so pressing those three forms of S in Arabic.

I too, O Amichai, saw the dresses of beautiful women.
And everything else, just like you, in Death, Hebrew, and Arabic.

They ask me to tell them what Shahid means—
Listen: It means »The Beloved« in Persian, »Witness« in Arabic.

In Eastern languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, verbs come the end of syntax. This allows for even wider possibilities for stand-alone couplets to have a thematic disunity from one another, which is somewhat limited in English, since an object or noun is placed at the end of the line in the syntax. Still, it should be evident that each verse of Shahid also expresses a new and often disparate thought, albeit about Arabic. Shahid also commissioned many other well-known American poets to write ghazals such as W. S. Merwin, Paul Muldoon, and John Hollander, and later published the anthology *Ravishing Disunities* (2000).

Reading Shahid's ghazal verse was revelatory for me. It allowed me a thematic vocabulary and a rhythm and syntax that came from my millennium-old poetic and sonic culture, yet exploited English which was the language of my professional life. Gilles Deleuze wrote in *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, »Creation takes place in choked passages. Even in some particular language, even in French for example, a new syntax is a foreign language within the language. A creator who isn't grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator's someone who creates their own impossibilities and thereby creates possibilities.«¹ Through the ghazal in English I could write poetry in the language I was most at ease writing, yet create newness in it and own it in a way I did not own Western forms. I began writing ghazals of my own and eventually published the collection *Ghazalnama: Poems from Delhi, Belfast, and Urdu* (2019) which received positive critical attention in India, and was shortlisted for the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2020. It garnered favorable reviews and was taught on genres of poetry, creative writing, and South Asian literature syllabi across continents.

Here is one of my first ghazals from the collection:

Many a memory at stake this night
Do you think of me too, awake, this night?

Shahid stares at me from the book cover
As I tempt a ghazal to fake this night

The moon in the sky and I in my bed
I wish I too could turn a rake this night

This monsoon, with my tears, the driest ever
Would your tears for me form a lake this night?

So much water has flown under the bridge
Why do you not give me a break this night?

Gave even the echoes of my best poems
Would I not get one word, to take this night?

One law shouldn't apply to men and lovers
Will there be born another Blake this night?

Lord made Meraj long to fly seven skies
It appears the same God did make this night

»Ripeness is all« and all time passes
So too is dawn about to break this night

Ghalib-o-Faiz couldn't drown grief in ghazals
Then what spires, Maaz, will you Shake this night?

Others, such as the much-lauded, yet lately controversial American poet Robert Bly (1926–2021), innovated the ghazal form too and is credited for inventing the form of the tercet ghazal:

Growing Wings

It's all right if Cezanne goes on painting the same picture.
It's all right if juice tastes bitter in our mouths.
It's all right if the old man drags one useless foot.

The apple on the Tree of Paradise hangs there for months.
We wait for years and years on the lip of the falls;
The blue-gray mountain keeps rising behind the black trees.

It's all right if I feel this same pain until I die.
A pain that we have earned gives more nourishment
Than the joy we won at the lottery last night.

It's all right if the partridge's nest fills with snow.
Why should the hunter complain if his bag is empty
At dusk? It only means the bird will live another night.

It's all right if we turn in all our keys tonight.
It's all right if we give up our longing for the spiral.
It's all right if the boat I love never reaches shore.

If we're already so close to death, why should we complain?
Robert, you've climbed so many trees to reach the nests.
It's all right if you grow your wings on the way down.

(from *My Sentence was a Thousand Years of Joy*)

Like Rich, Bly gave up on the classical ghazal form and syntax while retaining the idea of stand-alone nonlinear verses. But he created a more malleable form of his own, where each verse is written in tercets, and the refrain occurs at the beginning of the line rather than the end. Purists do not think this to be a proper ghazal, yet it, too, introduces a new sound to English.

It is no wonder that Goethe wrote a *divan* (ghazal) and gave us the concept of *Welt-literatur*, or World Literature. The ghazal has indeed traversed languages and brought its form of rhymes and refrains to readers and listeners across the continents. In Urdu, the ghazal is recited at *Mushairas*, a gathering of poets and listeners stretching to tens of thousands in attendance. Stretching well into the night, where each *sher* is recited in a participatory mode with the audience who responds by giving loud praise through words, shouting for an encore, and warranting against conclusion. I have recently tried to revive this tradition in reciting my ghazals aloud to English speaking audiences too, where I would repeat certain couplets for emphasis and stress. As in Urdu, English audiences similarly have sometimes responded by reciting the refrain along with me, and sometimes preempting the rhyme word.

During my 2022–23 fellowship at Schloss Solitude, I wrote more than fifteen ghazals.
I share one about solitude here, to end this essay:

Desire tended in solitude
So I ended in solitude

The sun shines equally on all
But light bended in solitude

Loneliness—the mark of the West
Apprehended in solitude

The winter forest lies barren
Leaves descended in solitude

I call as I drown, but who hears?
My cry blended in solitude

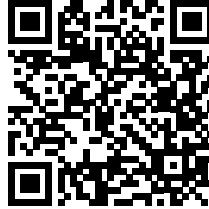
I'm social in virtual life
My truth trended in solitude

Birdsong to keep me going now
Cries appended in solitude

And lines to remember Maaz by
Words befriended in solitude

Maaz Bin Bilal is an Anglophone poet, translator, and academic from India. He uses the pen name »Maaz« for his ghazals and is the author of *Ghazalnama: Poems from Delhi, Belfast, and Urdu*. Maaz holds a PhD from Queen's University Belfast, UK, and was a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude in 2022–23.

Listen to the ghazals of Maaz Bin Bilal, read by the author himself on [Lyrikline.org](https://www.lyrikline.org):



¹ Gilles Deleuze: *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. New York 1997, p. 133.

On *Vessel* and the History of Cymbal Making in Istanbul



Herman H. Kreider, *Zilciyan's shop Istanbul. Hand-hammering*, between 1940 and 1967, retrieved from the Library of Congress

Ege Kanar

From the seventeenth-century craftsmanship of Avedis I to the Istanbul Agop Factory, visual artist Ege Kanar tells the story of the cymbal-making tradition in Istanbul. Kanar's audio installation, *Vessel*, was presented in 2021 at Sabancı Museum, suspending cymbals to create an auditory experience but also inviting tactile engagement. Through Kanar's lens, the piece explores the nuanced connections between local sounds and situated expressions, as he finds himself auralizing about the imprint and reverberation of this hand-hammered instrument and its »indexicality,« which is otherwise usually attributed to photographs.

Cymbals are circular, metallic instruments that first appeared around the early Bronze Age. The word »cymbal« comes from the Greek *kymbos*, meaning »cistern,« or »beaker« in Latin, the equivalent term is »cymbalum.« Throughout history, cymbals were deployed during distinct rituals and ceremonies like funerals and orgies. On the battlefield, they served in sonic warfare. Witches used cymbals to counter lunar eclipses, and as noted by Pliny, Roman beekeepers utilized the instrument to lead their swarms. Although the early history of cymbal-making is vague, the oldest known cymbal-like objects date back to the third millennium BC. Made in the Middle East by the Sumerians, these proto-instruments were manufactured using bronze, an alloy obtained by mixing molten copper and tin in specific proportions. According to speculation, the alloy was first employed in manufacturing plates, cups, and shields and eventually lent itself to making instruments due to its outstanding vibrational and mechanical qualities. In organology, cymbals are classified under »idiophones,« instruments capable of producing sound by the vibration of their bodies. Each hand-made cymbal has a fingerprint comprising a given curvature, a specific diameter, a unique weight, and a particular finish. They are acoustic objects that emerge from a mysterious alloy and endure a cumbersome process finalized by thousands of hammer blows.

The instrument's local history can be traced back to the Armenian metal worker Avedis I, who migrated from Trabzon to Constantinople in the early seventeenth century to make a living by casting bells for the city's churches. In 1618, Avedis was commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan, Osman II, to produce a set of cymbals for the Mehteran Ensemble, the Ottoman military band, to reinforce the Janissary army's striking power and impact. Avedis created his first set of cymbals using a bronze alloy (B20) he obtained by mixing copper and tin in specific proportions. Impressed by the quality of the cymbals that he delivered, Osman II would name Avedis »Zildjian« (Armenian for »son of the cymbal maker«) and employ him in his court to keep producing more cymbals. After working for a few years at Topkapı Palace, Avedis obtained a special permit required for non-Muslim subjects of the empire to set up a private workshop in the coastal region of the Samatya neighborhood; as such, the foundations of the brand Zildjian that is one of the oldest businesses still alive today were laid in 1623.

When Murat German invited me to produce a new work for an exhibition titled *Past. Present. Istanbul* held at Sabancı Museum in 2021, I wished to engage more deeply with the local history of manual cymbal making. The emergence of cymbals in Istanbul at the beginning of the seventeenth century marked an alignment of events, personalities, resources, technics, and entities of knowledge that materialized in the form of an aural object with an aura of its own. As a research-oriented visual artist and an amateur drum kit player, the fact that the actual alloy used in small factories across Istanbul today could be traced back to the recipe developed by Avedis 400 years ago fascinated me. During my first visit to the Istanbul Agop factory, I observed how cymbals rose out of this primordial mixture, and I encountered some destined to return to it. Inspired by the cyclical nature of this heat-induced process and by its malleable material that oscillates between liquid and solid states for centuries, I decided to create an audio installation that uses some faulty cymbals picked from the factory on the promise of being taken back and melted once the work was dismantled.

The production of a handmade cymbal begins with an ingot obtained by pouring molten bronze into an iron cup and leaving it to cool for about a week. The ingot has to match the approximate weight of the anticipated cymbal to be heated and pressed into a flat disc called a blank. Edges of these blanks are then trimmed, their cups are punched in, and a hole is drilled in each of their centers. At the last stage, the



Vessel, exhibition views *Past. Present. Istanbul*, Sabancı Museum, 2021.
Courtesy Murat Germen



A pile of ingots at Istanbul Agop Factory, 2023. Courtesy Ege Kanar
Hand-hammering cymbals at Istanbul Agop Factory, 2023. Courtesy Ege Kanar

instruments are lathed on both sides to remove the oxide layering that dampens their sound, and hand-hammered to find their definite form and timbre. Each instrument made this way possesses a unique harmonic character determined by the complex processes that have shaped it.

The recipe developed by Avedis in the seventeenth century has been transmitted orally within the family and kept a secret for generations. By the nineteenth century, Zildjian cymbals were displayed at trade fairs in various European capitals and taken to the main ports of the New World, such as New York and Chicago. In 1905, Aram Zildjian's name got involved in an assassination attempt against Abdulhamid II, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century – following which he had to flee to Bucharest for a while.

In 1927, Aram wrote a letter to his nephew Avedis III and requested him to return to Istanbul and take over the company. Avedis III had already left the city in 1909 and settled in Boston to avoid being drafted by the Ottoman army at the onset of the clashes awaiting the Armenian society. Although Avedis III showed no interest in his uncle's offer in the beginning, his wife Sally later persuaded him to study the manufacturing process and continue running the business in Boston. In 1929, Avedis finally settled in a taxi garage in Quincy, Massachusetts, and established the first Zildjian factory in the United States.

After the brand moved out of the country, the workshop management in Istanbul passed to Aram Zildjian's maternal cousins, the Dulgarians, who had worked in production since Aram's time. The Dulgarian family took the surname »Zilçan« with the enactment of the surname law in Turkey. Mikhail Zilçan started to rival Zildjians in the global market with cymbals he kept producing in Istanbul. The rise of jazz in North America at the beginning of the twentieth century compelled Avedis III to increase his factory's production capacity and develop new types of cymbals suitable for the era's needs. While cymbal production resumed in an entirely manual fashion in the Old K Factory in Istanbul, the new Zildjian factory would switch to partial automation and triple its daily production capacity by introducing mechanized hammers.

Zildjian finally acquired the Old K Factory at the end of the sixties and terminated its activities by 1977. After the closure of the factory and the death of Mikhail Zilçan, two cymbal smiths, Agop Tomurcuk and Mehmet Tamdeğer, who had worked for him since their childhood, established Zilciler Kollektif in 1980, and rebranded the firm as Istanbul Cymbals in 1982. In 1996, the sudden passing of Agop Tomurcuk caused the brand to split into two. This event became the genesis of Istanbul Agop and Istanbul Mehmet, two separate companies with no commercial ties that continue to produce cymbals under the same logo today.

With the assistance of Dilara Hadroviç, I started to work on the installation *Vessel* by building a 1:10 scale model of the exhibition hall to figure out the arrangement of instruments to be suspended from the ceiling using audio cables of varying lengths. These cables would not only support the weight of the cymbals but also transfer audio to small exciters (contact speakers) planted on each cymbal body. This mechanism would be used to feed the cymbals with sound recordings I would later make using the same set of instruments. The technique was reminiscent of plate reverbs introduced in 1957 by EMT to process electric guitar recordings.¹ A plate reverb consists of a suspended metal sheet enclosed in a wooden frame and two sets of transducers mounted on each side of the sheet to excite and record it in real time. My idea was to trigger the cymbals similarly via physical contact. This way, each cymbal would act like a bronze membrane through which the exciter mounted on its body speaks. Since objects can only vibrate when they encounter frequencies built into their substance, I expected

each cymbal to cut off a particular portion of the incoming signal spectrum due to its sonic complexity and thus create a biased, individual rendering of the same audio material. I believed the frequencies, which would grab and release certain cymbals momentarily, could also transform this constellation into a transient choir that would resonate not only with the physical space of the installation but also with the whole tradition of manual cymbal-making in Istanbul.

I still remember the moment I switched on the amplifier in the control room of the museum and rushed anxiously to the exhibition hall to experience what *Vessel* sounded like for the first time. I created five short tracks from the recordings I made in the studio playing the cymbals with different pairs of sticks, mallets, brushes, and a bow. I added intermissions between each of the tracks to let the floating instruments come to rest from time to time. One thing I had the urge to modify toward the end of the installation phase was the position of the last cymbal to be hung. With a sudden insight, I decided to place this item at a much lower height than planned to enable the visitors to observe the cymbal from above, touch its vibrating body, and engage with the work tactilely while listening to how it sounds. If we were to unpack the card boxes in which pieces of the work are still stored at Mas Matbaa, Istanbul, I suspect we would be able to tell, looking at the faint fingerprints left on the surfaces of the instruments, which cymbal was that last one.

On a recent visit to the Istanbul Agop Factory two years after *Vessel* came to life, I had a chance to converse with Arman Tomurcuk, who oversees the company today. As we passed by some photographs mounted close to his office, he showed me a particular image of his father, Agop Tomurcuk, sitting at his anvil next to Kirkor Küçük-yan, the master cymbalsmith of the Old K Factory at the time. Mr. Tomurcuk asked me to take a closer look at the image and noted the wristwatch hanging on the wall of the room in which Agop and Kirkor were working. Observing this curious detail further, I found myself auralizing the sound of the hanging wristwatch ticking and imagining how certain involuntary rhythms created by the pounding hammers of these two cymbalsmiths were to supersede the regular flow of seconds in that small room where time seemed to be suspended for good by the photograph.

¹ Elektromesstechnik (EMT) is a manufacturer of phonograph turntables and professional audio equipment. Wilhelm Franz founded the company in Berlin in 1938.

Ege Kanar's photographic practice addresses images from an ontological standpoint and scrutinizes the intermediary role of photographs within various scientific, and cultural contexts. His recent projects incorporate sound, video, and installations and treat notions of rhythm, scale, and materiality. He lives in Istanbul.

Resources

Bart Van der Zee: *Drum History*, podcast, ep.: 28, 37, 58, 65, 93

Canan Aykent: »Zildjianlar ve Türk Zilleri,« in: *folklor/edebiyat*, 26, no: 1 (2020), pp. 127–139.

Hugo Pinksterboer: *The Cymbal Book*. Milwaukee 1992.

Pars Tuğlacı: *Mehterhane'den Bando'ya*. Istanbul 1986.

James Blades: *Percussion Instruments and their History*. London 1971.

To listen to the accompanying audiovisual material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Ege Kanar, Audio composition for *Vessel*, 2021

Ege Kanar, Video recording for *Vessel*, 2021

Fernempfangsstelle



Artist and radio enthusiast Niki Matita unveils a series of works and research sparked by a recent serendipitous discovery of ephemera and records shedding light on the life, work, and tragic demise of the forgotten radio operator technician Rudolf Formis. In addition to this narrative, Matita recounts the historical developments off Stuttgart's main public radio company and pivotal broadcasting events in which Formis played a role, during the times of the Weimar Republic just before the ascent of Germany's National Socialist Party.

Niki Matita

Niki Matita, *Rudolf Formis at the remote reception station on the attic of Solitude Palace*, drawing. Courtesy the artist

The Solitude remote reception station was an early broadcasting facility set in the Baroque-era palace Schloss Solitude near Stuttgart. In this series of works based on ongoing artistic research, the quest for audio artifacts presents itself as a particular challenge. From this period, virtually no recordings exist from the Solitude receiving station or of its Swabian builder, Rudolf Formis, who would occasionally go on air himself. In the course of my artistic research, various methods and techniques were thought through and tested within the field of sound art to approach the subject of early radio facilities in Stuttgart and the man who played a major role in creating them. Central to this work is the exploration of archives and libraries that have previously been rather distant to my regular practice. These hold breathtaking material that reveal a wide variety of new understandings from my findings; parallel to this were the most diverse interactions cultivated by the institutions when accessing their holdings. Since the history of Stuttgart's early long-distance broadcasting facility and international networking practices has been locally forgotten today, as has the tragic fate of its creator, my unconditional dedication to serendipity is fundamental. I keep my eyes and ears wide open to unique evidence and information that can aid in my research and the wild speculations one might imagine during his time, space, and work – and to artistically process these findings in my art.

On March 3, 1924, the Stuttgart broadcasting company Süddeutscher Rundfunk AG (SÜRAG)¹ was formally founded for the purpose of »organising and wirelessly broadcasting lectures, news, and presentations of artistic, educational, and entertaining content as well as other content of interest to wider circles of the population in Stuttgart and the surrounding area.«

The following persons were crucial to decisive for the founding and the future of the broadcasting company: the theatre critic Dr. Alfred Bofinger as chairman, the concert agent Leon Hauser for the program management, and the industrialist and chairman of the board of the Stuttgart-based Deutsches Auslandsinstitut (DAI), Theodor Wanner, who took over the chairmanship of the supervisory board. Today, the DAI is known as the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) and is still located in the former Altes Waisenhaus (old orphanage) on Charlottenplatz in Stuttgart's city centre. Similar to the approach already taken at the Linden-Museum (Stuttgart's ethnological museum),² the complex and sometimes difficult history of this institution and its role worldwide has yet to be reappraised.

Until autumn 1923, it was forbidden for private individuals in Germany to receive radio broadcasts. A radio reception license was required, which was accompanied by a radio license fee. In 1924, the fee was equivalent to about one-third of the average monthly salary.

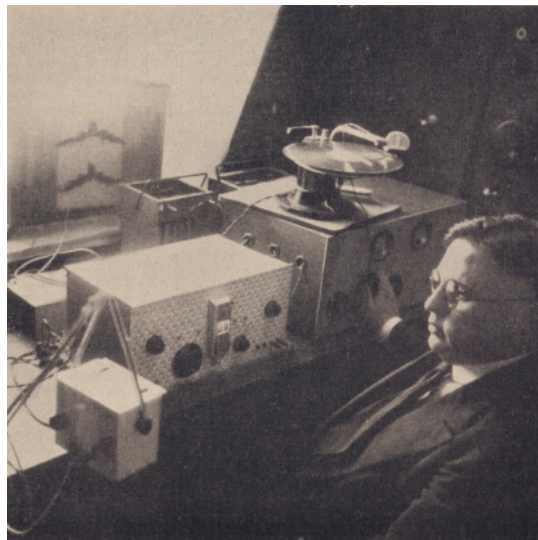
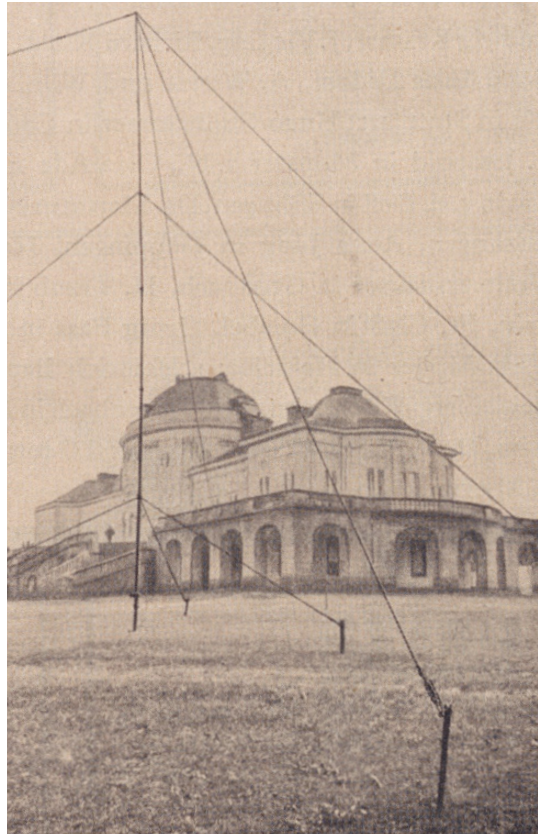
The technician and merchant Rudolf »Rolf« Formis served as a radio soldier in World War I. He had been among the first radio subscribers, holding a license since November 6, 1923, at the peak of hyperinflation. The first license for private radio reception had been granted six days earlier to Wilhelm Kollhof, a Berlin cigar vendor, for 350 billion marks. On May 11, 1924, SÜRAG began broadcasting with a daily program of four hours. At that time, 4.2 million people lived in the broadcasting area, and on the opening day it had 112 radio subscribers.

Formis became active as a radio amateur and took part with the German delegation in the founding meeting of the IABU (L'Union Internationale des Amateurs de T.S.F.) in Paris in April 1925. In July, the Deutscher Funktechnischer Verband (DFTV) was founded in Munich. Formis has been appointed as a member of the foreign committee, while working as a freelancer for SÜRAG since the time the broadcasting station was set up.

In 1925 Rudolf Formis introduced the German amateur radio designation DE for German receiving station and designed the first QSL card. He himself had the designation DE 0100.³ Formis's call sign⁴ as a broadcasting amateur was KY4. In the same year, the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft (RRG)⁵ was founded as the umbrella organization of the nine regional German radio stations, including SÜRAG. The State Secretary at the Post Ministry Hans Bredow was appointed director of RRG on June 1, 1925.

Formis was not only active as a technician for the Stuttgart broadcasting company. In the 1920s, »radio tinkering« became an increasingly popular hobby. On the SÜRAG microphone, Formis gave courses on radio and radio-related topics such as physical basics, Morse code, or building radio receivers. Accompanying material can be found in the station's radio magazine, which documents the rich variety of topics that Formis covered, reminding today's viewers of multimedia presentation tools and distance learning, e.g. homeschooling. He also provided practical information on dangers such as lightning strikes and gave lectures on the subject locally at the radio clubs that flourished throughout the country.

In 1928, the first director of SÜRAG, Dr. Alfred Bofinger, commissioned Formis as a freelance technician to set up a long-distance receiving station at Schloss



Antennae in front of Schloss Solitude Stuttgart.
Source: SWR (Südwestrundfunk) archive

Rudolf Formis in the in the remote reception centre.
Source: SWR (Südwestrundfunk) archive



Niki Matita recording at Rudolf Formis' grave in Slapy, Czech Republic.
Photo: Ladislav Železný. Courtesy the photographer

Solitude on a hill near Stuttgart to enable the transmission of reports from overseas. Two seventeen meter high masts were erected on the surrounding meadows. Between these and the twenty meter high dome of the palace, four antennae were put up.⁶

Spectacular transmissions were realized from the Solitude remote reception station. For example, on October 11, 1928, the airship LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin took off from Lake Constance and set course for North America. The aircraft had unprecedented dimensions: 236 meters in length, with 105,000 cubic meters of gas filling, five engines for a cruising speed of 110 kilometers per hour, and a range of 10,000 kilometers. On October 31, 1928, and March 28, 1929, live radio contact with the Zeppelin airship could be transmitted.

Also, a live transmission of the world championship heavyweight boxing match between Max Schmeling and Jack Sharkey on June 12, 1930, from Yankee Stadium in New York, USA was transmitted. It was the second major sporting event to be broadcast live on radio and was heard throughout Europe. Jack Sharkey was disqualified in the fourth round for making a low blow and thus Schmeling was named world champion. There were no groin protectors at that time.

In 1930, SÜRAG put a medium-wave transmitter into operation at Mühlacker, the first German large-scale radio station. By January 1932 at the latest, Formis was manager of SÜRAG's technical department.

On February 15, 1933, a speech by Adolf Hitler in the Stuttgart Stadthalle in front of 10,000 supporters was broadcast on the radio. At Werderstraße 14, opponents of the Nazi party close to the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) succeeded in interrupting the broadcast by cutting the above-ground radio transmission cable. Those involved, Eduard Weinzierl, Alfred Däuble, Hermann Medinger, and Wilhelm Bräuninger, were caught in 1935 and sentenced to serve prison terms from twenty-one to twenty-four months for endangering official telegraph operations. Theodor Decker, an employee at the telegraph office, was later arrested on March 11, 1933, under suspicion of orchestrating the idea behind the protest. He died in 1940 in the Mauthausen concentration camp. Formis was also briefly under suspicion. The director of the technical testing center of the SÜRAG, Dr. Albert Kofes, along with the director of the telegraph construction office, were both held responsible for the offense and suspended from their positions.

On March 21, 1933, the »Decree of the Reich President⁷ for the Defence against Insidious Attacks against the Government of National Uprising« was issued in

1934 which resulted in the so called Insidious Attacks Act (*Heimtücke-gesetz*), which states:

§ 1 (1) Whoever has in his possession a uniform of an association which is behind the government of national uprising without being authorized to do so as a member of the association or otherwise, shall be punished with imprisonment for up to two years.

On April 1, 1934, SÜRAG was dissolved and replaced by Reichssender Stuttgart. After the Nazi Party (NSDAP) seized power (the *Machtergreifung*) and the stations were brought into line (*Gleichschaltung*), Alfred Bofinger was the only remaining member of the board of directors of the RRG to retain his post in 1933 and held office until 1945 – at least nominally – as the director of the Reichssender Stuttgart, which broadcast until April 5, 1945.

On April 24, 1934, Formis crossed the Czechoslovakian border (near Hamry and Markteisenstein/Zelézna Ruda) with Karl Böck and traveled onward by train to Pilsen. During a raid on the Bristol Hotel, Formis and Böck were apprehended by the police. They claimed to be in conflict with the Nazis because they were close to the Social Democratic Party and declared their intention to obtain a visa in the capital to proceed to Turkey, to establish a new life.

The Schloss Solitude's long-distance reception station built by Formis and his team became part of the NSDAP regime's espionage apparatus around the mid-1930s as the Landhaus interception station.

Through a refugee aid committee, Formis and Böck found a room together in Prague at Havlickovo náměstí and attempted, in vain, to obtain visas to leave the country. Penniless and stuck, Formis eventually took on a job for the Black Front⁸ as a magazine distribution manager. Leader, Otto Strasser quickly recognized the benefits of Formis's brilliant technical skills for his organization and later commissioned Formis to build a secret transmitter to broadcast anti-Hitler propaganda to the Reich. They set up in a country inn named Hotel Záhoří, on the Vltava River, which today lies in the waters of a reservoir. The DIY transmitter had an output of 100 watts.

Formis also adjusted the antenna of Landschaftssender Berlin radio station in such a way that it could not be received within a radius of about twenty kilometers, which was supposed to make it difficult to locate the station. According to the Black Front's own information, the underground station was broadcast daily from 1p.m. to 3p.m., as well as in the evening from 11p.m. However, according to other outside sources it allegedly

broadcasted daily from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m., but it is likely there were probably much shorter broadcasting times. The program consisted of news, commentaries, calls for resistance, and its signature tune, »Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre,« better known as the »Toreador Song« from Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*.

The Landschaftssender Berlin is said to have broadcast on wave 48.5 m, corresponding to about 6185 kHz. The first German station, Königswusterhausen, broadcasted Formis's Berlin program on the shortwave frequency 6140 kHz. The proportion of listeners increased continuously during the Third Reich. In 1934, 33.3 percent of all households were equipped with radios, the number rose to 65 percent in 1938. The installation of wireless radios in schools, factories, and other public outlets increased the number of listeners beyond the privacy of the home. National Socialist propaganda could thus reach more and more people. Alas, the Black Front broadcasts did not go undetected by the German and Czechoslovakian authorities and various measures were initiated to find the pirate radio station. For example, the head of the Reichsführer's Security Service (SD), SS⁹ Reinhard Heydrich assigned Alfred Naujocks, a

driver and entry-level employee for the SS, and Werner Götttsch with the special task of kidnapping Formis, thus eliminating the dissenting radio station.

On the night of January 23, 1935, Formis was killed at the Záhoví Hotel near Slapy in the Prague-West District. The perpetrators, Alfred Naujocks, Werner Götttsch, and their accomplice Edith Kersbach, successfully escaped back into Germany. The Czechoslovakian police investigated for murder and seized the secret transmitter at the crime scene, which was later transferred to the collection of a museum in Prague. After this, Naujocks achieved dubious recognition as the »man who caused World War II,« but with another radio-related case called the Gleiwitz incident.¹⁰ In the late 1950s, several German public prosecutors investigated Naujocks for a series of crimes, with none of the investigations leading to indictment.

After being shown for the first time on loan to the exhibition *Acting Decently – Resistance and Volksgemeinschaft 1933–1945*.¹¹ Formis's transmitter remains missing without a trace since 2013. Formis was buried in the church cemetery in Slapy, Czech Republic; and local amateur historians maintain his grave to this day.

Niki Matita is a Berlin-based artist and cultural worker. Her main focus is on radio, sound art, installation, and social sculpture. With the radio show *La Passante Ecoutante*, she explores different places, urban spaces, and landscapes by walking and listening with local company. Her traveling micro-radio studio *KOFFERradio* combines ethnography, musical practices, and international networking. Matita was a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude from November 2021 until March 2022 within the framework of *Under Utopia*.

To listen to the accompanying audio material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Niki Matita, *Fernempfangsstelle*, 2024, Radio play in Czech

- 1 Synonymously called Südfunk.
- 2 Ethnological museum of Stuttgart
- 3 A DE number was issued only once and was not reissued when a member died or left the radio club. This was – and is – not the case with call signs, which occasionally led to confusion, especially after the war, because of double assignments.
- 4 A call sign is a unique identifier for a transmitter station.
- 5 The National Broadcasting Corporation of Germany.
- 6 Regarding the equipment of the long-distance reception station, documentation from 1928 states:
»A receiver with a wave range up to 20,000 meters (five tubes 1 v 3), one receiver with wave range 1000–4000

meters (three tubes 0 v 2), two Neutrodyne receivers, wave range 200–2000 meters (six tubes 3 v 2), one Reiss control receiver, which also serves as a preamplifier for the briefing microphone. In addition, a shortwave receiver, wave range 10–150 meters, and two wave meters for short waves. The circuit of the shortwave receiver is the well-known quick circuit in which the feedback is controlled by a capacitor bridging the anode battery and the primary winding of the amplifier input transformer.«

7 At the time, Paul v. Hindenburg.

8 The Combat League of Revolutionary National Socialists (*Kampfgemeinschaft Revolutionärer Nationalsozialisten*, KGRNS), more commonly known as the Black Front (*Schwarze Front*), was a political group formed by

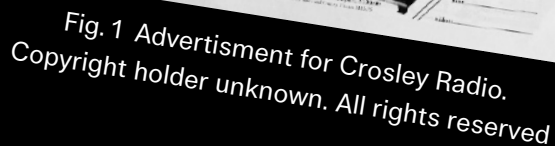
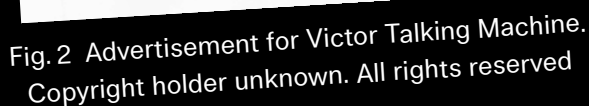
Otto Strasser in 1930 after he resigned from the Nazi Party (NSDAP).

9 Protection Squadron (Schutzstaffel) – a major paramilitary organization of the NSDAP in Germany.

10 The Gleiwitz incident (*Überfall auf den Sender Gleiwitz*; Polish: Prowokacja gliwicka) was a false flag attack on the radio station Sender Gleiwitz in Gleiwitz (then Germany and now Gliwice, Poland) staged by Nazi Germany on the night of August 31, 1939.

11 *Anständig gehandelt – Widerstand und Volksgemeinschaft 1933–1945*. May 9, 2012 to April 1, 2013. Special exhibition at the Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart.

Harmonizing the Labor of Domestic Technologies in Early Twentieth-Century America

Solitude Journal 5 *A Sound Was Heard!*

Clara Latham traces the chronological evolution of the marketing rhetoric associated with domestic technologies, marking the significant transition of domestic labor into a sweeping commercial enterprise during the mid-twentieth century. From the rise of domestic music technologies, such as phonographs and radios in the late nineteenth century, to the broader electrification of American middle-class homes in the early twentieth century, marketing these technologies contributed to creating a widespread positive electrical consciousness within the home while creating a gendered aspect of these devices. Latham draws connections to the paradox of household appliances that were marketed to white middle-class women by promising as labor-saving and creative endeavors. Settled within the historicized relationship between technology and gender roles, Latham tells the history of the various examples of marketing electrified labor, as they shape the image of labor itself.

In Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's 2006 sound installation at Paula Cooper Gallery titled *harmonichaos*, thirteen vacuum cleaners were arranged and outfitted with a sound-frequency analyzer, harmonica, and lightbulb. As the vacuums were turned on and off, the suction of air into the harmonicas produced musical tones. According to the gallery's press release, the artist aimed to »use nature and the rhythms of everyday life to investigate the relationship between sound, space and movement.«¹ The work challenges listeners to reconsider the boundary between noise and music by rendering a banal domestic appliance as an avant-garde musical instrument. The sonic manifestation of these hybrid instruments, an unwieldy drone modulated by random changes in the intensity of the air flow, highlights their functional incompatibility: the vacuums fail to clean, the harmonicas fail to sing. We might, however, ask how a vacuum cleaner came to occupy such a distant conceptual space from a harmonica in the first place, such that Boursier-Mougenot's signifying combination elicits artistic provocation.

When we look at vacuum cleaners alongside other commercial appliances that were marketed to middle-class homes in the same historical period, we find a shared commitment to reducing domestic labor through technological innovation. Novel devices of the home such as vacuum cleaners, radios, phonographs, player pianos, washing machines, and electric lamps were marketed to middle-class American homes during the twentieth century's first decades, a period of rapid industrial growth. The marketing rhetoric surrounding the commercialization of household appliances was also applied to domestic musical devices, consistently claiming that such technologies performed labor for the consumer, capable of carrying out tasks or work on the consumer's behalf.

For example, an 1896 advertisement for the National Gramophone Company claimed that »It's expensive to hire an orchestra to come to your home and play for you, or a famous singer to sing for you, but if you buy a GRAMOPHONE you can buy a »Record« of that orchestra's playing or that singer's singing for fifty cents,« as though the gramophone rendered one's journey to and from Carnegie Hall² for a fraction of the cost, not to mention the time. The advertisement for the Crosley Radio shown in Figure 1 paints a picture of a lonely, housebound »dear old mother« whose life will be brightened by »the immediate response to the turn of the dials; the clearness of reception from far distant points.« The ad promises efficiency, that the radio will work on behalf of the consumer by amusing her in the comfort of her home.

Similarly, the Victrola ad shown in Figure 2 shows a group of people waiting in the rain, capturing the sense that accompanies the movement to and from musical events. The ad states, »On a stormy evening, how you will enjoy hearing the great artists through the medium of the Victrola and Victor Records in the comfort of your own home!« implying that the phonograph can save the consumer a trip out into the rain by bringing the orchestra directly to the home.

Certain advertisements for household music technologies aimed toward the white middle-class woman consumer promised that these products would save her the labor of traveling to live musical concerts in the same way washing machines meant she wouldn't have to scrub clothes by hand, and electric lightbulbs meant she didn't have to light the house with gas lamps. We find similar rhetoric in the ad shown in Figure 3 as those in Figures 1 and 2. The Air-Way Electric Cleaner is described as a »quick and easy way to free yourself from the burden of housecleaning,« just as the Victrola will save you the burdensome journey to the concert hall.

The player piano and phonograph afforded housewives the convenience of playing famous musical works for their children, and popular classics for their guests, without practicing the piano, just as the example with the electric washing machine saved the time and effort of doing domestic work by hand. This promise implicitly reveals the labor required for domestic music making, which, like other forms of domestic labor, has been historically rendered invisible within a capitalistic system that has historically valued productive labor over reproductive and artistic/creative labor.

The commercial music industry that came to define the twentieth century grew exponentially between 1900 to 1930, and the phonograph and radio were central to its rise. While the phonograph was a well-established feature of a middle-class home by the time radio appeared in the 1920s, and by 1930, 40.3 percent of all US households owned a radio.³ As a result, the widespread adoption of phonographs and radios profoundly changed domestic life, these technologies were only part of the ubiquitous electrification of the American middle-class home in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1910, only one in ten American homes had electricity; most urban homes were wired by the end of the 1920s.⁴ The advertising of phonographs and radios was part and parcel of vigorous campaigns selling all kinds of new household appliances throughout this rise of American electrification. Beginning in 1920, General Electric's »advertising introduced a new objective: the

February, 1928 THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL 365

The Air-Way Electric Cleaner



Use It Either Way

The Air-Way Is So Light That a Child Can Carry and Operate It

On rugs, carpets and floor and other easy places operate the Air-Way just like any cleaner.

But when you come to the hard places—corners, under no-dates and out of the ordinary cleaning like Persian rugs, window frames, moldings, pictures, mattresses, and ruffled furniture—just pick up your Air-Way and use the handle as shown in the picture.

Cleans the Places Only a Dust Cloth Can Reach

With the Air-Way handle you easily clean the places that only a dust cloth can reach. No waiting to put on cumbersome attachments—not a bit of bother—you simply turn the indicator arrow toward the handle and in a few minutes the Air-Way has cleaned the house for you.

The Air-Way is the quick, easy way to free yourself from the burden of housecleaning—a different way from any other you have ever seen demonstrated.

Visit the Air-Way dealer today and let him show you the latest cleaning marvel that science has brought to you.

If you cannot find the local Air-Way dealer write to the nearest nearest distributor.

THE AIR-WAY COMPANY, TOLEDO, OHIO



DEALERS: Air-Way Electric Cleaners and handles are appearing under a list which makes a list of available houses in territory. Write to your local office or agent.

Exclusive Representatives for Greater New York: Air-Way Vacuum Cleaner Company, 211 Park Avenue, New York City.

Export Agents: American Vacuum Engineering Co., Inc., 44 West 42nd Street, New York City.

Canadian Agent: Canadian Vacuum Engineering Co., Ltd., 175 King St. West, Toronto, Ontario.

Fig. 3 Advertisement for Air-Way Electric Cleaner. Copyright holder unknown. All rights reserved

1928 LADIES' HOME JOURNAL 193

She washes most of the morning ...then dances half the night

What she does, thousands of other women are doing today. Women no younger or stronger than you.



Once she would have taken to her bed. Now a big morning's wash leaves her easily fresh, ready to dance, to play bridge, to see a show that same evening.

What is her secret? How does she do it?

The answer is simple. She does nothing that you can't do. The change that came over her life can easily be made in yours. The thing that makes the miracle is a new kind of washing machine, called the new Easy Washer.

Easy Washers have long been famous for the gentle way they turn out exquisitely clean clothes. That wonderful new-type Easy still does that. But it also does much more. It does not only the rubbing, but also all the other heavy tasks, such as wringing the clothes and squeezing out the water.

It cleans up the many lesser annoyances too—those little inconveniences that wasted so much time and temper—the broken buttons, the heating of extra wash water, the mending of deep-sprung wrinkles.

No wringing to do

Just move a little lever and inside of three minutes the full batch of clothes in the new Easy is dry enough to hang out. Each piece is left evenly damp, with no little water in it.

No fabric that clothes hung indoors will not drip

While one batch of clothes is hanging, another batch is washing, so that two things are done at once and time is cut in half.

No pain of water to empty

You'll think the Easy's new method of emptying all the water is even more wonderful.



and sympathize with the troubles and hardships which they passed on to us and which that washer relieved. Try the new Easy once yourself that this is true. Syracuse Washing Machine Corporation, Syracuse, N. Y.

EASY WASHER

Dependable in all seasons.

Fig. 4 Advertisement for Easy Washer Ladies' Home Journal, 1928. Copyright ProQuest IC 2015. All rights reserved

These Hands to Play for You

Above is the reproduction of the hands of the great Piano artists.

These hands, earned in the aggregate millions of dollars.

They charmed hundreds of thousands of people by their matchless wizardry at the Piano—their astounding mastery of almost impossible difficulties of technique.

Yet they charmed but few times—not many of us can carry a golden recollection of their playing—some of us heard them not at all.

Wouldn't you like to sit down tonight after the stress of a strenuous day, just when you want relaxation—when you want to be mentally revived and refreshed—and listen to the velvety purring elegance of Leschitzky—the thundering majesty of Liszt—the fire of Carreno—the passionate romanticism of Rubinstein?

Wouldn't you like to create these sounds for yourself—easily—with little or no mental or physical effort?

You, Mr. Business Man—you, Mr. Merchant—Wouldn't you like to have your little child play the things these artists play or some dear old song or hymn?

You can have them all at your command by means of a Cecilian Player Piano—all as they're written, for the Cecilian Player Piano plays the entire keyboard of 88 notes, not merely 65 as does the ordinary player piano.

You, your wife, daughter, or child can easily play the Cecilian—no matter how indifferent they're to music or their musical education, the Cecilian is at once the most simple, the freest from useless "gimmicks"—unnecessary piano manufactured.

And at the same time the Cecilian is the surest, most durable and most easily controlled player piano made, for the reason that its interior mechanism is in metal, not wood—unsusceptible by heat or cold, moisture or dryness.

Let us send you our 'free' Art Brochure.

We have a most interesting booklet on Player Pianos, giving you advice as to the selection of the right Player Piano and why. "Read and write us today. Just say so." Send me Art Brochure B.

CECILIAN PLAYER PIANOS

THE FARRAND COMPANY, DETROIT, MICH.



Fig. 5 Advertisement for Cecilian Player Piano. Copyright holder unknown. All rights reserved

creation and fostering throughout America of a positive electrical consciousness which would normally express itself in a certain fundamental ›want‹ – the desire of individual families to make their homes into electrified dwelling places.«⁵ Shortly after – between 1922 and 1930 – the annual advertising budget for General Electric increased from two million to twelve million dollars.⁶

These campaigns centered on rhetoric promoting a scientifically efficient home through electricity. Under the direction of Bruce Barton, General Electric campaigns such as »Make your House a Home« presented domestic labor-saving devices as essential for the housewife to excel in her role. Electrical manufacturing giants General Electric and Westinghouse asserted that electric machines could take on the burden of housework, and we see this idea echoed across popular women's magazines of the era. As historian Roland Marchand argues in *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940*, advertisements from this period sought to appeal to consumer fantasies of modern life, and the largest role in the advertising tableaux was a fantasy of the modern housewife.⁷ According to an ad that appeared in fifteen magazines between April and July 1925 including *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Literary Digest*, »This is the test of a successful mother – she puts first things first. She does not give to sweeping the time that belongs to her children.«⁸ Coinciding with the scientific homemaking movement, the modern American housewife trope frequently appears in advertisements as the family's general purchasing agent or G.P.A.⁹ The transformation of the American middle-class home into an electrified bungalow awash in domestic appliances cultivated a new figure of the middle-class housewife as the manager of the home.¹⁰

The belief that domestic technologies would produce labor for the housewife involved a magical transformation of reproductive labor into productive labor.¹¹ While the housewife's domestic work of cleaning and preparing food did not generate wages, devices that promised to perform this labor in her place rendered that labor productive. Ironically, the marketing rhetoric selling these technologies depended on the idea that unwaged labor was valuable. Historian Ruth Schwartz Cowan was one of the first to point out the irony that nineteenth and early twentieth-century domestic technologies falsely appeared to produce labor for the imaginary American housewife. In Schwartz Cowan's book *More Work for Mother: Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, she argued that the process of industrialization unfolded differently in the domestic

sphere than in the realm of the market.¹² While convention tells us that industrialization transformed the American household by turning it from a unit of production to a unit of consumption, Schwartz Cowan stated that some technological systems moved production out of the home and into factories, but others did not, arguing that while labor-saving devices reorganized the processes of housework, they did not save the labor of the average housewife.¹³

Like housework, musical labor is hard to define precisely because it often takes place outside of the market; instead it functions as social reproduction.¹⁴ As Marxist feminist Leopoldina Fortunati pointed out in her 1981 book *L'arcano della riproduzione: Casalinghe, prostitute, operai e capitale*, domestic labor presents a quagmire for traditional Marxian analysis because it is both a necessary condition for the production of capital, yet occurs outside of the market.¹⁵ The repetitive claim in the marketing of phonographs, radios, autoharps, player pianos, and theremins in the first decades of the twentieth century is that these technologies save labor and inadvertently reveals that domestic work is labor, despite the fact that it does not generate wages.

Furthermore, there is a paradox in the connection made here between domestic music technologies and domestic technologies that are not musical. In Figure 4, the Easy Washer is sold as a device that will grant the housewife time for leisure activities, claiming she is »ready to dance, to play bridge, or to see a show that same evening.« Similarly, in Figure 5, the player piano is presented with the claim that the housewife can »create the sounds of Liszt or Rubenstein, with little or no mental effort.« Musical practice is sometimes included in household drudgery, while at other times it exemplifies leisure activities that are by definition the opposite of labor. This paradoxical understanding of musical labor resonates in sound works like *harmonichaos*, which call upon utilitarian devices to act as musical instruments. Indeed, perhaps Boursier-Mougenot's 2006 installation not only compels us to hear resonances between a household appliance and a musical instrument, but also suggests an equivalence between domestic work and creative work.

Clara Latham's research and creative practice focus on the relationship between sound, technology, sexuality, and the body. She has published articles in *Sound Studies*, *Women & Music*, *Contemporary Modern European History*, the *Opera Quarterly*, and the edited volume *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*.

1 Press release available online at <https://www.paulacoopergallery.com/artists/celeste-boursier-mougenot#tab:thumbnails> (accessed January 27, 2024).

2 *Cosmopolitan* 21 (June 1896).

3 Steve Craig: »How America Adopted Radio: Demographic Differences in Set Ownership Reported in the 1930 – 1950 U.S. Censuses,« in: *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* (June 2004), pp. 179–95, p. 182.

4 David E. Nye: *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940*. Cambridge, MA 1991, p. 239.

5 »The Home Electrical at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition,« *General Electric Review* 18 no. 6 (June 1915). John Hammond, General Electric Publicity Department: »The Psychology of a Nation's Wants.« Typescript,

Hammond Papers, L 5145. Cited in *Electrifying America*, p. 265.

6 *Electrifying America*, p. 268.

7 Roland Marchand: *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985, p. 168.

8 *Electrifying America*, pp. 271–72.

9 Marchand: p. 168; Robert Sklar, ed. *The Plastic Age: 1917–1930*. New York 1970, pp. 94–95.

10 Alice Kessler-Harris: *Women Have Always Worked: A Concise History*. Urbana 2018, pp. 43–45.

11 Nancy Fraser characterizes this magical transformation as cannibalism. See Nancy Fraser: *Cannibal Capitalism: How Our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet – and What We Can Do About It*. London, 2023, pp.

17–23.

12 See Ruth Schwartz Cowan: *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York 1985.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45.

14 For work on music as social reproduction, see Eric Drott: »Music and the Work of Social Reproduction,« *Cultural Politics* 15 (2019), pp. 162–83; Marie Thompson: »Sounding the Arcane: Contemporary Music, Gender and Reproduction,« *Contemporary Music Review* 39 (2020), pp. 273–92.

15 Leopoldina Fortunati: *L'Arcano della Riproduzione: Casalinghe, prostitute, operai e capitale* (1981) (*The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, 1995).

I Am a Radio

Luke Wilkins

Author Luke Wilkins steps into the frequencies of self-discovery as his journey of realizing he is a radio unfolds. In this story, Wilkins recounts an experience he had during his fellowship at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, and intricately weaves together elements from Greek mythology, media theory, Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, and the profound impact of maternal connections. He dives into the exploration of a consciousness that transcends conventional boundaries, resonating with the echoes of Klaus Theweleit's core theories on media, vibrational correspondence, »Das Mutterradio,« the »third body,« and the transformative potential of sound.

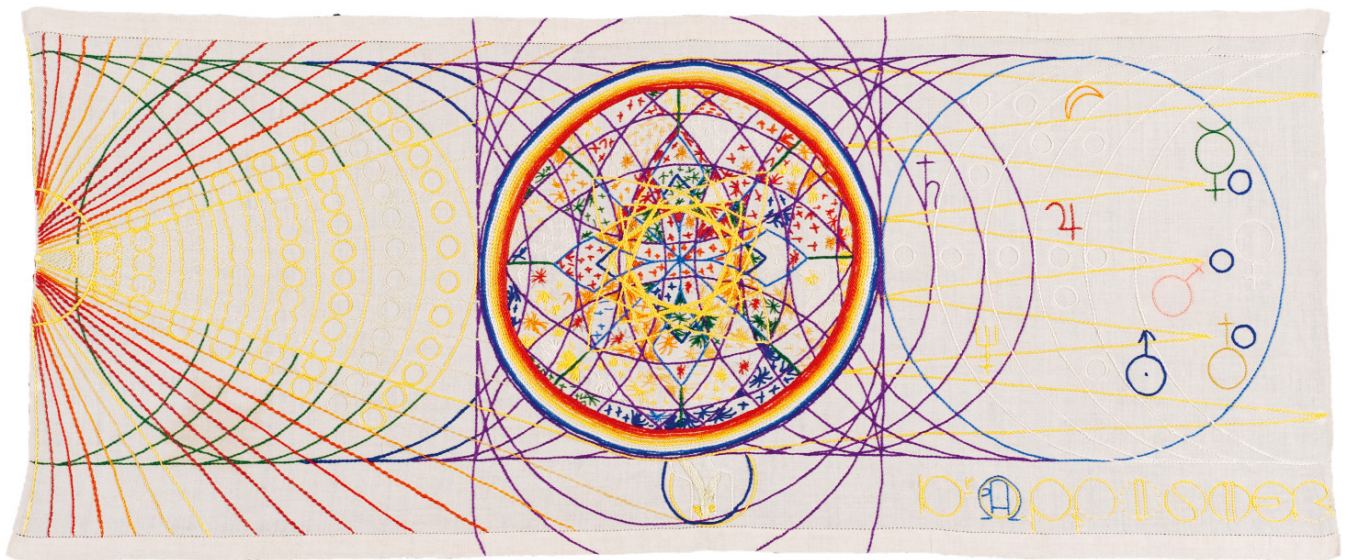
I first realized I was a radio during my fellowship at the Akademie Schloss Solitude (2018/2019), where I was writing a book on media theory. Now, I would like to explain how this self-awareness came about.

Readers of works by the culture, fascism, and media theorist Klaus Theweleit are all too familiar with the core theory that underpins his writing (which is most clearly laid out in his *Buch der Könige – Orpheus und Eurydike*). The notion of female sacrifice represented a pivotal founding act of the modern and media age. Upon his ascent from Hades, Orpheus turns around to look at Eurydice, half-consciously and half-unconsciously, in order to lose her once and for all and use her soul to install an »antenna« in the kingdom of the dead. And to enable him to fully blossom as a singer, drawing on his grief translated into musical beauty. This is a dream pursued both by the media and also many artistic processes: Finding a way to communicate with the dead. This is why Freud wrote in *Totem and Taboo* that appeasing the spirit of a loved one who has just passed away is a basic ritualistic form observed within many Indigenous communities. The spirit of the dead, which regularly haunts those in mourning, is appeased through songs and ritual practices until it becomes calmer and wanes. The grieving process comes to an end as soon as the spirit ceases to return. Freud sees this as a way of dealing with the psychic energy that underlies every separation and every parting, and that also encompasses the most important themes of modern psychology. According to Freud, modern forms of media have become a substitute for the ritual practices of Indigenous people. They act as prostheses or amplifiers of our sensory perceptions, aiding communication with spirits. Now something rather uncanny has happened to me. While I was researching, contemplating, studying, writing about and even psychoanalyzing these things, my mother died. It was as if I had known it would happen. As if I had known as a child that she would leave me too soon. As if I had dreamed as a child about her death, about her becoming a spirit, while I was sitting in the branches of the trees behind our house. As if I had heard something about it whispered in the voices of the wind. As if I had searched as a child for a stable line, a frequency to her and her absence, while playing the violin, particularly when improvising alongside other musicians and when experiencing the subtle ecstasy and the virtually telepathic awareness of those around me, creating one piece together that sometimes stops abruptly and everyone sees it coming. Could you call that

swarm intelligence? Or social intelligence, something almost ant-like? I believe that it is this conscious state, as a dream, that also forms the basis of telecommunication. Perhaps it was no coincidence that a telephone was installed in Freud's house on Vienna's Berggasse just as he was on the cusp of developing his psychoanalytic theory and the notion of »psychic apparatus«? And what led the rigorous empiricist Freud to become ever more fascinated by telepathy during the course of his life's research? This bears a strong resemblance to Swiss artist Johanna N. Wintsch, who considered the »spiritual« side of radio waves in her embroidery entitled *Je suis radio* just as the radio network began to spread across the globe. Her susceptibility to these waves could have been part of the reason why the artist, who had a very delicate and vulnerable nervous system, was admitted to a psychiatric ward, where she was classified by many doctors as an incurable schizophrenic (which was a gross misdiagnosis).

Charged with similar radiation, I had already infected those around me back when I was a high school student. One morning, I took the Intercity Express from Freiburg im Breisgau to Cologne, where I made a beeline for the office of Ferdi Roth, the editor-in-chief at the WDR training department. I told him that I would like to work for his radio station, that I was on a mission to save my mother, and that it had to happen fast. That must have made sense to him, and I became a radio broadcast journalist. I later graduated to being an actor in German soap opera *Verbotene Liebe*, then in the family series *Nesthocker*, followed by starring roles in some Rosamunde Pilcher adaptations, and finally a part on the big screen in a racing car film, which had me careering around the streets in a Porsche looking everywhere for my mother. At some point, I packed all that in and began to write and think about media, artistic modes of production, and transference techniques. I also studied the print-to-digital shift, as Marshall McLuhan called it. This consciousness that, as Tim Leary hoped, enables the »global society« to merge together the central nervous systems of every single person using media technology and drug-induced states of ecstasy.

In his essay exploring various forms of mergers, Theweleit coined the umbrella term »third body.« Third bodies can be a small group (two lovers, analyst and patient, a group of people meditating), or a large group (an orchestra), or an enormous one (a television audience, people connected to the same network), or even a nation, the way Germans were welded



Johanna N. Wintsch, *Je suis radio*, 1924, embroidery on linen.
Courtesy Staatsarchiv Zürich

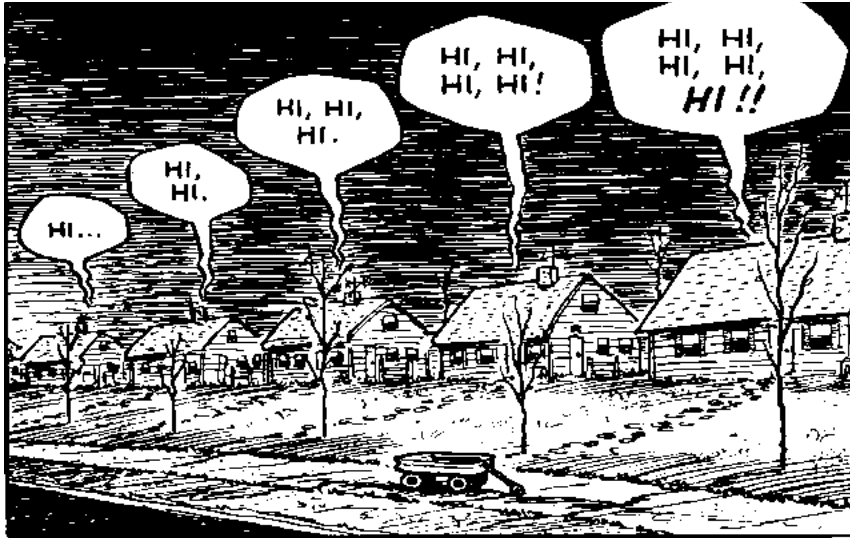


Image from Klaus Theweleit's
Buch der Könige – Orpheus und Eurydike, p. 382

together to form a *Volkskörper* (national body) by the propaganda of the Nazi era. According to Theweleit, the state of ecstasy that is a prerequisite for the formation of third-body phenomena is particularly easy to create through music. People making music, or even a group of listeners such as a concert audience, fall into a state of »vibrational correspondence« particularly quickly (through the sounds, the melodies, the beat, the musical energy) and sense an energy field emerging that feels like a body capable of uniting everyone. Theweleit claims, in reference to insights gained through prenatal psychoanalytical research, that this is because listening plays a central role in the process of becoming a cultural being and consequently forming a community. The cochlea part of the inner ear is already fully developed after five months in the womb and, as such, grants a person's first sensory access to the world. According to Theweleit, the fetus's relationship to the mother's voice and the sounds in the womb in particular help it to gain a sense of self, a phenomenon that psychoanalysts call a »self-awareness as a sound envelope.« Theweleit views this feeling of being held, called »amniotic fluid paradise« by Pier Paolo Pasolini, as the primeval form of all states of ecstasy that we never stop searching for after birth, as a child, and as an

adult: in love or in aesthetic beauty. My favorite part of Theweleit's entire work, which also most clearly articulates the meaning and liberating effect of his theories on fascism and the media, is a chapter entitled »Mutterradio.« Within that chapter, I discovered an awareness that I had been lacking, an awareness that would allow me to actually find something resembling a connection to my mother that outlasted death. A connection that also turned my love for her into a solid connection to the world, based loosely on the words of analyst Anne Dufourmantelle. For our entire lives, we cannot get over having been carried for nine months. Does this not apply to one of our simplest, and at the same time most challenging, tasks? That of developing a form of love that does not depend on those who taught us what love is? Theweleit was born in 1942 to a Nazi father, and a mother who was also somehow implicated in the regime. A mother who, for instance, after the war tried to downplay the extermination of the Jews. But one of Theweleit's most important childhood memories is his mother's song, which filled the house from morning to night, when she was cooking, doing the laundry, or mending children's clothes using the pedal sewing machine. He recalls: »In the words of Melanie Klein, she filled the room with a ›good



Cover of *Der Radioamateur*, Issue 3, March 1924.

The image was found in the book *Airloom*, published by the Prinzhorn Collection

presence<; the ›good,< the ›not haunting,< the ›nurturing< breast, from which other ›not haunting< objects derived and could be found ›in reality,< floated on in the form of music. I say also ›radio,< because she did not do that *to me as a mother* to her child. She did that herself; and just like the media, that scatter their good deeds and their atrocities without any regard for the person on the receiving end (and it always reaches them, sooner or later).«

Anyone who has heard Theweleit's voice during one of his lectures knows what sort of dimension he conjures up. The mother radio has transferred to his voice and resonates with the rhythm of his sentences. Like a maternal trace, or a vocal gold thread, that runs through his entire work. I believe these matrilinear lines of inheritance imply a form of very healthy media, a mediumistic form of the transference of feelings, thoughts, and memories based on a nonviolent way of loving. If we were to discover that the mother radio frequency was the basis of all the primary forms of media that connect us all – that have shaped our perceptual spaces ever more powerfully since the invention of the letterpress, print media, telegraphy, the radio, the telephone, music stereos, TV, cinema, computers, the internet, and smartphones – and if we could recognize

the possibility of a living transmission and receiving process, we could help pave the way for a media age that no longer needs the victim Eurydice to lay a line to Hades. And is that not tantamount to the dawning of a new era? An era of ›telepathic< connection between everyone, which, according to Leary, must stem from the age of electric consciousness? By writing about these connections during my fellowship, I delved ever deeper into a state of awareness of my own, via which my inner receiving center – and I only realize that in retrospect – was searching for the mother radio frequency. One night, I woke up and felt like I was ›receiving.< Perhaps this was the very state that Johanna N. Wintsch translated as radio waves in her work. I felt like I was floating ten centimeters above my bed and receiving frequencies, still connected to my dream consciousness. To put it more succinctly, I felt like my subconscious corresponded to the subconsciences of all the other thirty-five or so artists present at, and for the most part sleeping and dreaming at, Akademie Schloss Solitude. It was as if I were a receiver of frequencies coming from a dreaming collective. The evening prior, I had played music with Jewish musician Yuval Shenhar. He had his electric guitar and a notebook, and I had my violin, which was connected

to his computer via a cable that enabled him to cut, loop, and manipulate my sound. We had also smoked a small joint beforehand, which clearly enhanced our ability to reach a state of ecstasy. Through the sound, we felt like we were each slipping into the body and soul of the other, essentially becoming each other, dissolving into a transpersonal world of sound. We formed a Theweleit-esque third body, with the help of music, electricity, media connection, and drugs. It seemed rather hippieish, akin to the 500,000 »flower children« in Woodstock. Did they not also have a third body, a »group mind,« formed from electronic music, drugs, and peaceful collectiveness?

Somewhat dazed, I stumbled through the Akademie's corridors back to my studio. I felt that I was close to being in a long sought-after conscious state. But it was only during the night, waking from my dream, that I saw it clearly. I had reached the end of my quest for a new form of communication, a quest I had begun as a child and that had become even more important since my mother's death. My sounds were a kind of umbilical cord that I had used to communicate with Juval – no detour via words was necessary – and to share across subconscious frequencies. Perhaps this is the form of communication that connects us to our mothers when we are fetuses in utero. A transmission on the mother radio frequency, via waves coming not from cognitive reason, but from the amygdala; a form of communication that I had also experienced on LSD trips during raves. Moments when suddenly everyone and everything becomes connected, leading to psychedelic bliss. Being out of it. So I lay there, enveloped in a cloud of happiness substances and felt an inner eye opening up. Just like Johanna N. Wintsch with *Je suis radio*, I had the feeling of becoming one with the radio frequencies that were pulsing through me. Yet I did not feel like I was on drugs, but a sense of extreme

clarity. The waves' materiality made it feel like something very concrete was at work and I understood why Freud had thought about whether, in the same vein as sound waves or X-rays, a »physical equivalent« for these »frequencies of the subconscious« could be lying there waiting to be discovered.

Something else about that experience is important and could indeed be the blueprint for a transformative development in media technology that could make it possible to tune all our transmitters to receive the mother radio. The key realization was that I, in this moment, had the feeling that I was finally severing the umbilical cord to my mother, and that this cut had actually cleared the line for the mother radio frequency. A separation as a prerequisite of connection. A successful grieving process. A step in a successful psychoanalytic healing process – in the context of the transference of childhood feelings onto the analyst via the cable of free word association – that leads to freeing from the Oedipal entanglement with our first love objects. And, to those who depend upon it, it is exactly this entanglement that also means that love can only be felt through dependencies and projections, that quickly lead to a propensity to violence. If, however, we could carry out this step of severing the umbilical cord on a media technology level, the line could be cleared for the mother radio telecommunication, which is based on a form of love free from illusion. Societal networking via a new primary medium would edge that bit closer to becoming real and the libidinous tangles that, according to Theweleit, formed the foundations of German fascism, would be dissolved in a media age where we merge together to form a third body. This third body forms a worldwide network using the mother radio frequency that connects us to the underworld and the ancestral line via a media-driven relationship, instead of via the soul of a lover sacrificed time and again.

Luke Wilkins works as a writer and musician and develops transdisciplinary performances. He received his bachelor's degree from the Swiss Literature Institute at Bern University of Arts, Switzerland and a master's degree in free improvisation by Fred Frith and Alfred Zimmerlin from the School of Music Basel, Switzerland. In 2018, his first novel *Jeff* was published by the publishing house Derk Janßen and his »media-theory-book« *Auf den Flügeln dieser Lieder* will be published in autumn 2024 by the publishing house Telegramme Verlag.

Voices ~ Glasovi, 2023



Sara Salamon, video still from the documentation of the workshop,
Voices ~ Glasovi with selma banich, Lana Hosni, Sara Salamon, and Adam Semijalac.
Pogon Jedinstvo, Zagreb, 2023. Courtesy the artist

selma banich

For *Solitude Journal 5*, artist, activist, and community organizer selma banich shares a transcript of the documentation of the experiential workshop series and video work *Voices*. Created in collaboration with Lana Hosni, Sara Salamon, and Adam Semijalac, the piece explores the voice as a medium and resource, and the body as a repository of our individual and collective experiences, states, and feelings. *Voices* offers to disclose individual and collective experiences of trauma, fragility as an experience of radical resistance, and healing as a tool for social change and liberation. »Working with the voice through breath, sound, and resonance, we seek answers to our inner questions and needs,« banich writes.



Sara Salamon, video still from the documentation of the workshop,
Voices ~ Glasovi with selma banich, Lana Hosni, Sara Salamon, and Adam Semijalac.
Pogon Jedinstvo, Zagreb, 2023. Courtesy the artist

[Voice 1]

One voice is continuously questioning what I am doing, if it is ok, if I did this or that ... if I am allowed to do this, if I should do that, if this is the best thing to do, if this is it. One voice is also constantly analyzing what I did, although those situations might have happened years ago. What I was like, what I did, how I reacted, if it was too much, if I did the right thing, or perhaps I should have done it differently, if I was a bore. If I hurt another person, if I triggered them, if I ...

[00:48 the shot on the left is interrupted; the shot on the right resumes. It shows a person with their eyes shut, holding their head, and making a long, loud sound. At 1:33 the sound is muffled, lasting until 1:53; at 1:50 it fades out]

[1:55 crackling starts, followed by high-frequency wailing]

[2:17 the sound of heartbeat, skipping a beat a few times, until 2:49]

[2:26 the left shot begins, the person is turned to one side. We see their neck, a part of their lower jaw, and their sweater, and hands that are resting on their clavicle, that is, on the chest]

[2:46 the person lowers the head toward the chest, the sound of buzzing starts, and at 2:52 heartbeat continues, with a more intense, lower sound]

[3:25 the shot moves from left to right, the same scene, a high-frequency wailing and howling begins/two persons are in the shot; the heartbeat fastens and slows down again, hand-to-hand contact until 4:11]

[Voice 2]

I usually have to be very loud, as my voice has to resonate with everybody else's in the room. On the other hand, it needs to be sufficiently precise, eloquent, and concise in order to transmit a message. And then again, it can be quite revealing, because, considering the intensity, especially when I get tired or overwhelmed, it may reveal every single detail, the color of my voice, the texture, the state I am in; certain sensations get out very easily, they are disclosed in some way. Therefore, it is also a state of close control, or an attempt of control.

[Voice 3]

When my voice is being recorded, it is a paralyzing feeling: I experience a cognitive dissonance where I exist simultaneously in all times, in all of them ... In the present time, the future, and that future reflects the past one. And I find it very difficult to find my own consciousness in that moment; it is sort of a state of panic. Something like that.

[5:57 vocalizing/humming begins]

[6:06 one person's head is placed on another person's lap; melodic humming until 7:05]

[7:07 on the left, a shot of a person's profile appears, their eyes are shut, and someone's hands are touching their head and face. They are making sounds h, h, h, h; at 7:12 the same shot, but from a different perspective, appears on the right side; the same action is repeated until 7:30]

[Voice 4]

I would say that these are the voices of, let's say, my ancestors, although it sounds quite dramatic, but still, my parents, grandfathers, grandmothers, which are all voices of critics. We could say their common denominator is a fierce critic; however, he might not have been that harsh in my past, but with time, it grew into a rather messed up thing.

[8:15 the person gets up, takes the camera, turns it away from themselves, and continues to speak at 8:32]

[Voice 4]

Well, I am aware of my weight, and I am aware that I do not have warmth like other beings, and that for decades I have been recording things in a completely strange way, things observed by other living beings, especially people. I simply absorb and convey it further and, in opposition to humans, my recordings are eternal. My recordings are many, and they are permanent. I am aware that it is quite odd that what enters my lens automatically appears on the screen, and this happens simultaneously and is, in fact, very bizarre. [laughter]

[Voice 1]

[9:43] I love being pressed, pressed randomly, whatever happens, just to be pressed by someone, without consequences, punishment, or a catastrophe. I love ... human touch. I love softness, and all layers of skin, fascia, and muscles. I love to feel bloodstream, heartbeat; I love sensing closeness, warmth ... [sigh] I love to sense breath, although I don't have it.

[Voice 3]

Despite being so fragile, I am quite a powerful means. And that realization gives me the feeling of courage and strength. I can see up close, if I find the right position, and I can see far away. And this view of mine is in fact a voice that is heard.

[11:52 no video, muffled sound of a wailing voice that changes from low to high frequency without interruption until 13:17]

[12:35 image on the left screen appears, a shot of a person until 12:58]

selma banich is an artist, activist, and community organizer from Zagreb, Croatia. Her artistic practice is grounded in explorative, processual, and activist work, and is politically inspired by anarchism and feminism.

If you are interested in doing an experiential workshop session with selma banich, please contact her via the form on her website: <https://selmabanich.org/contact>

To listen to the accompanying audio material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

selma banich, *Voices ~ Glasovi*, 2023

Some Notes on Karaoke



Judith Hamann

Karaoke, in this conceptual move by musician Judith Hamann, is seen as a framework that can create authentic expressions of something that »needed to happen.« Like desire paths, karaoke is a means of collectively consolidating a performative and musical presence. Virtuoso failure and utopian imagination are the result of karaoke happenings, as Hamann describes, drawing upon queer ontologies, the idea of »trace« as possibility, and, in particular, adopting a DIY-communal and amateur approach to music performance that goes beyond classical structures. Ultimately, karaoke is presented as a practice of becoming rendered – weaving together musical and inner memory. This simultaneous formation of karaoke into the realm of time-space is based on Hamann's unique experience within the community of fellows during a residency at Akademie Schloss Solitude.

The first time I participated in group karaoke at Schloss Solitude, it was very much a spontaneous happening.

Relatively new arrivals to the residency, a small group of us arrived at a shared impulse one evening, steered by a clear collective feeling that *this* needed to happen. With only a laptop and projector set up in the corner of the Schloss's basement cafeteria and ambiance provided by the resident disco ball doing its (almost sad) spinning thing, the collective urge to sing, shout, scream, improvise dodgy harmonies to Fleetwood Mac, and move our bodies together somehow fell gloriously into place.

This evening marked many of the relational frames of our community of fellows for months to come, even as our technical setup incrementally became more sophisticated. It marked an episodic yet ongoing late-night community performance space that was both joyous and messy, embracing changeable temporal and temporary configurations of both musical material and humans, all unfolding within one of my most beloved performance modes: karaoke.

...

Karaoke manifests in many formal configurations, depending largely on location and how the diasporic root systems of karaoke have taken form and how migrant communities engaged with karaoke have found their expression and broader cultural adaptations across social geographies. The historical tracings formulated by different social and cultural expressions and usage of karaoke as a form could easily comprise a lengthy discussion on its own: from the origins of public bar karaoke in much of the Global North, to the continuing dominance of private booth karaoke in east Asia (and to some extent Australia), while hybrid forms continue to be realized within Filipino and Vietnamese diasporic spaces, and community-driven and often anticolonial frames of orientation in karaoke performance cultures has been developed over several decades in East African cities like Kigali and Kampala.

My personal favorite form of karaoke, and the kind that I am mostly referring to when I use the term karaoke from here on, I tentatively term, »DIY communal karaoke.« This specific iteration sits somewhere between booth and public, a semi-public/semi-private configuration where a specific community (friends, colleagues, or in the above example, fellows) gathers to perform karaoke, often outside typical structural frames for the activity. Instead of a bar's karaoke night or the confines of booth protocol, this form leans into looser and more

temporary configurations, predominantly in less formal or even domestic spaces.

In this iteration of karaoke, the song library of choice draws on the broader collective internet pooling of YouTube karaoke videos rather than a curated list of song choices. The cultural archive of the karaoke song list, which more often than not reflects the dominance of Western popular music in the Global North, is in many senses a holdover from the era of the karaoke machine, as developed by Japanese musician Daisuke Inoue in 1971 (although the first formal patent for a »Sing Along System« was ultimately filed by Filipino inventor Roberto del Rosario in 1975), and the later laser and compact disc driven formats of the 1980s and 1990s.

Depending on YouTube as an infrastructure for what I intend to suggest is potentially an activity of structural critique, is not without conflict or complexity, particularly in terms of how we manipulate and are manipulated by monopolistic platforms. However, one thing it does do is open up the potential song choice space to increasingly de-Eurocentralized musical choices, via the diversification of language and musical lineage, and potentially allowing the capacity for forays into collage and experimentation. This also establishes an added dimension of play, for unexpected directions, configurations of performers, for two songs playing at once, monologues, for that version of The Cranberries »Zombie,« edited with every other beat missing, for sharing and discovering different positionalities in musical memory.

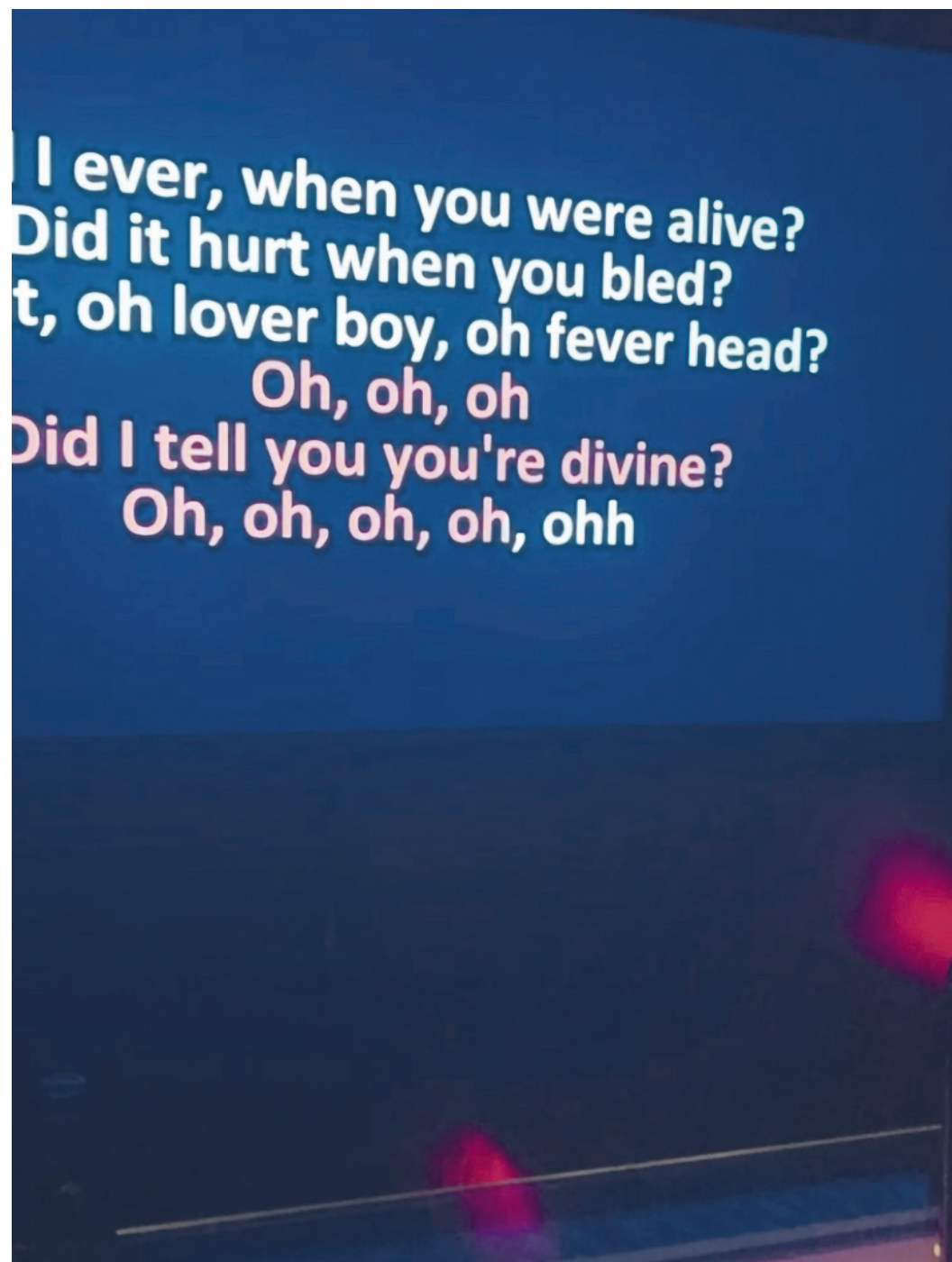
In this frame, karaoke also points toward an outline of something particular, something that creates a kind of silhouette of a potentiality: for utopian imagination, virtuosic failures, a reorientation of where troublesome creatures like »performance authenticity« might be located, for a collapsing of memory into different kinds of tracing.

...

A host of ideas are outlined in writer José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* that I return to often, especially when I'm trying to think/with karaoke. Foremost is his linking of failure and virtuosity within a queer utopian aesthetic frame. Muñoz casts failure as a non-normative yet generative space, one intrinsic to queerness in the sense that both activities are doing *something else* outside of normative social and temporal structures.¹

His exploration charts different modalities of failure within queer performance spaces: that of non-mastery, amateurism, a brilliant »off-ness,«² of a failure to be





All images courtesy Judith Hamann

normal or to »succeed« in terms of melodic or choreographic execution, as well as forms of refusal, dissent, or escape.

In considering this list, does not karaoke also potentially carry within it modalities of both failure and virtuosity, a likeness to virtuosic failure?

...

The literal translation of *karaoke* to English from Japanese is »empty orchestra.«³

As a musician trained within the frame of Euro-classical heritage music, I have been stewing on this as a prompt to consider what karaoke has personally opened for me in terms of undoing and unlearning mastery or disciplinary thinking around performance.

If I think about the ways in which music and performance can be emptied, hollowed out, or drained, I do not perceive that location as falling within the space of collective karaoke practice. The medium's beautiful flexibility rests not in its often lovingly rendered MIDI transcriptions heard in the backing tracks (which of course in some sense is *emptied* of a potential human responsiveness) but in its potential for radical reinterpretation.

Instead, I find karaoke to be an embodied critique of the form of emptying that is often played out in Euro-classical music performance: the disappearance of the performer's corporeal being, the implicit demand for performer transparency in order to not obscure the primacy of the work object of the score or ideal performance. Within karaoke, I find the location of the performer vibrant, alive, and operating on multiple relational levels, to music, memory, individual, collective, and broader musical and social knowledge systems.

...

The best karaoke carries within it an absolute commitment to a kind of anti-perfection, a devoted amateurism. From my perspective, the deepest magic of karaoke often occurs in its moments of slippage and deviation: when a performer realizes they have no idea how the verse of a song goes; when they step completely outside of the melodic frame of the original and follow their own version, own key, own rhythm; a kind of sideways reinvention that comes from a failure to adhere to an ideal, to the concept of the »original,« or to a »right way.«

What occurs in these moments of failure, as I interpret it, is something simultaneously wildly generative and creative. We experience familiar musical structures

being undone and made anew. The musical object as the *original* or ideal rendering becomes largely irrelevant and is replaced by a new point of orientation.

...

If »success« under late capitalism is often defined as deeply connected to winning, gain, and profit, then its contrasting relief could be read as something like failure, or loss. Part of the thrill of karaoke is its entanglement with failure, that it demarcates a space in which we can safely lose. What might it mean to spend time playing and partying in this space? How might the pleasure of karaoke help us imagine what failure within certain structures reveals or uncovers about the very nature of said structure?

In a recent conversation with friend and performer leo, we discussed the idea that certain codes cannot see themselves, that a structure cannot perceive itself, specifically in terms of Euro-classical heritage forms of music making. Maybe I love karaoke so much because it helps me see the flickering edges of a structure around *music performance* that more often than not relies on its invisibility.

I mean this in the sense of not only existing structures of fidelity, accuracy, correctness, and fixed outcome around performance and musicmaking but also ways to imagine how it could be constructed otherwise. Here I find the utopian a recurring thought, that karaoke might represent a possibility of reaching toward a kind of collective futurity, a horizon that is not yet here.

...

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of the »trace,« Muñoz outlines a particular form of performance *potentiality* which, rather than aiming for an end or a totality, lives within the in-between space of its »means,« a play on the adage »means to an end.« This positioning places the emphasis on the activity of the performance itself: its process rather than its outcome, completeness, or rendering as a finished work object. Muñoz connects this in-between space to the values of amateurism and populism, as he argues, a means to »interrupt aesthetics and politics that aspire towards totality.«⁴

...

In karaoke, I am intrigued by the sense that authenticity is no longer aligned with the precision of replication of an

ideal work object (the original rendering of the song), nor with the norm or straight (as in normative, linear) time version of a sense of self. The kind of authenticity cultivated here is that of alignment with the utopian, but also with perhaps parts of ourselves that are often hidden or lost, or that which we might long for or desire. Karaoke is an example of a performance activity and space that enacts such utopian ideals through its potential for play: with voice, identity, gender, relationships, memory, and positionality.

...

Memory has an interesting and almost prismatic function in karaoke, and I mean this spatial metaphor in the sense of a multiplicity that is at once almost contradictory, yet holds together a larger configuration.

I'm thinking about memory as trace or tracing, not just in terms of something past, but the way it might form a kind of »desire path«⁵ through the vibrant present of a karaoke session, while simultaneously reaching for the threads of nostalgia to access not just melody contours and rhythms, lyrics and harmony but also all the stored interior sensations bound to them. Like a kind of utopian phantom, these traces find us in the present moment of karaoke, and for all its collisions, remake a collective topography, creating new contours to follow toward speculative horizons.

...

I'm interested in the desire path as a particular kind of collective tracing, a desire for a *way* because its activity is not necessarily located at an *end*, either. Its creation resides within the process, in kinship – recalling Muñoz's casting of »means.« I love the desire path's almost *gestalt*, intuitive collective thinking based on action and iteration: that a form of collective decision-making might, over many many footfalls, in a temporary unsettled treading down space, creating a channel for a new »way« to resist

more rigid structures. There is something here in the collective reiteration of a specific performance location and orientation, the ongoing episodic form I attempted to sketch in the opening of these notes, that, for me, bears a resemblance to the phenomena of the desire path. Beyond the generative frame of resisting ideas like fidelity and accuracy in strictly musical terms, I suspect that how we gather, and how we party, also enacts something more substantial over time, as a kind of collective mark making, a concretization of the ephemerality of performance, party, and pleasure, into a specific materiality: a kind of practice or rehearsal for other forms of solidarity and resistance.

...

Karaoke is a reminder that, for me, musical memory and human memory are intertwined, a kind of miraculous data retrieval mechanism that accesses things I thought I had lost. A song has a way of hitting some sort of soft spot, like a point in the bodily/memory system that may not have been pressed on for a long time. There are different layers at play, remembering how the song goes, for starters, the retrieval of some old, almost muscular memory of a tune, connecting with a flicker, a flash of some memory of the radio blasting with the car windows wound down on a road trip, of a mass of dancing bodies at a teenage party, for singing in a friend's kitchen, for old heartbreak, old lust, old rooms, old friends, old homes where the sunlight scorched instead of merely shining.

It is also a way to emblazon new memories and new communities: a secret sonic tattoo – as in both the rhythm, the beating of it all, as in the mark making.

At its best, karaoke frames a kind of poetics of memory, a nod to »what was and what could be« and at the same time holding »what is.« Here, karaoke collapses straight time into an alternative temporal scale in which nostalgia and imagined horizons intersect in a moment of real-time performance activity, into brilliant, virtuosic failure.

Judith Hamann is a composer/performer born in Narrm/Melbourne and currently based in Berlin. In recent research, Hamann examines the acts of shaking and humming as formal and intimate encounters; interrogates collapse as a generative imaginary surface; and considers the »de-mastering« of bodies, both human and nonhuman, in settler-colonial heritage instrumental practice and pedagogy.

1 José Esteban Muñoz: *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York 2009, pp. 172–74.

2 Ibid., p. 174.

3 As I understand, it is an abbreviation of

(orchestra) in play here, which apparently in turn borrows from the French »sabotage« and a factor in why it is only written with katakana.

4 Muñoz, p. 100.

5 Desire paths refer to the phenomenon of an unofficial path created by repeated use.

Sonic Specters of a Gathering

Moonis Ahmad and
Hafsa Sayeed

In an attempt to abrade the Western concepts of time, Moonis Ahmad and Hafsa Sayeed fuse Ibn Sina's geological deep time with anthropologist Johannes Fabian's schizogenic time in their project *Sonic Specters of a Gathering*. Taking further inspiration from a mythical bird named Lal Muni, who resists the control of a king, sonic dissent becomes a metaphor for the sound markers that resist containment and reshape how we perceive worldly, human-made soundscapes. *Sonic Specters of a Gathering* reimagines storytelling about acoustic ecologies to amplify subaltern narratives and disrupt normative regimes of listening and telling time. They fed protest soundscapes to a machine learning algorithm, an endeavor to predict otherwise transient and frenetic gatherings.

One of the first provocations for *Sonic Specters of a Gathering* was the exploration of various concepts of time. In his book *Kitab-Al-Shifa (The Book of Healing)*, the medieval Persian polymath Ibn Sina contemplates how rocks and mountains near the Amur Darya River in Uzbekistan could have formed. He gestures toward the temporalities in which such geological formations occur, which later was developed and conceptualized as geological or deep time. Deep time brings into play the geological and cosmological time scales that span billions of years. These vast stretches of time extend beyond the clock time that chronologically operates on

Model of an Ensemble Structure

Model of an ensemble structure is a collection of abstract text generated using the same machine learning algorithm used to create the audio of this project. We crashed multiple texts into the ML Algorithm. These input texts addressed the philosophy of being, its politics, and the philosophy of historical gatherings and riots. *Model of an ensemble structure* emerged with new sentences, configurations, words, and articulations of gatherings. The titles used as headings as well as the name *Model of an ensemble structure* emanated from the machine learning output.

a human scale. Deep time's scale brings into consideration the immense age of the universe and the gradual processes of the earth that have shaped it over billions of years. These vast temporal scales became a point of interest for *Sonic Specters of a Gathering*, as they disrupt the chronological order of clock time and open temporalities that challenge our relationship with the Earth.

From deep time, we moved toward thinking about objects, beings, and time as they are experienced and conceptualized in a world that is deeply distanced. In our immanent moment, the time of the earth seems to be categorized into specific territorial and clock cartographies that create marginalities, therefore creating invisibilities. In his 1983 book *Time and the Other*, anthropologist Johannes Fabian introduces »schizogenic time,« which refers to the notion that Western anthropology perceives nonwestern cultures as existing outside of historical time, frozen in an eternal present, which he terms as the »primitive present.« The linear, uniform, and objective understanding of time creates a sense of temporal superiority, projecting nonwestern cultures as temporalities stuck in a perpetually static and frozen existence. Western temporalities, therefore, claim the position of being the masters that can unlock progress and enlightenment, positing a position of rescue for nonwestern temporalities. Schizogenic time challenges this hierarchical view by emphasizing the coexistence of multiple temporalities and the validity of diverse temporal experiences. Fabian argues that all temporalities have different historical and cultural trajectories and may or may not align with each other.

Deep time and schizogenic time problematize our engagement with the Other. Through deep time, the geology and its temporal scales that are othered by the chronologies of clock time appear as a phantom whose time scales are too vast to conceive and comprehend. When considering schizogenic time, nonwestern temporalities stand forth as a gathering that shakes colonial cartographies, national imaginations, history, belonging, and language. Both deep time and schizogenic time aid in understanding an inter-referential existence of beings, ecologies, and objects. Existence appears as an embedded gathering with multiple temporal fields and historical trajectories. In such speculative thinking about earth ecologies as a gathering with an embedded sense of being, time is not strictly chronological, but exists abstractly within objects and their ecologies. They present time as a gathering that disorients clock time. It's manifested in the echoes of absent elders, in the clamor of the oppressed in

The indifference of pronounced

of any one, there is be understood that what repeats for the double times—of this indiscernibility of a non-which, the elements of the one sole or representatives, and by which it is 'belonging.

Subtracted from the hypothesis concerning one: yet infinitely confused himself to the choice is this purely importantia which measure

The language

only constructions or none. This is always subsected in the subject of presentation.

It is out of the courrest one-non-constructivist out, however, it resources of the finitude of another language. there is no sense are begin (tolerated' authentically separated from the promise of not.

Knowledge, here,

is that

being the position upon a relation of the following: to the event is merely by another, the referent of fidelity is itself into

any-history. An essence, any multiple, which it is, such that 'elements of this skide', which has the

forms in the mathematicians alone, there is a limit ordinal resolving qua-released failing that the presentation of the operation that all possessing that it belongs to the general

junction. or a borders of natural multiples?

The Qubbr 33,

Leibniz).

-nothing of

several existing'.

Messiah circle

which concentrates thought to the nothing evidently, not such a point, by example, ontology,

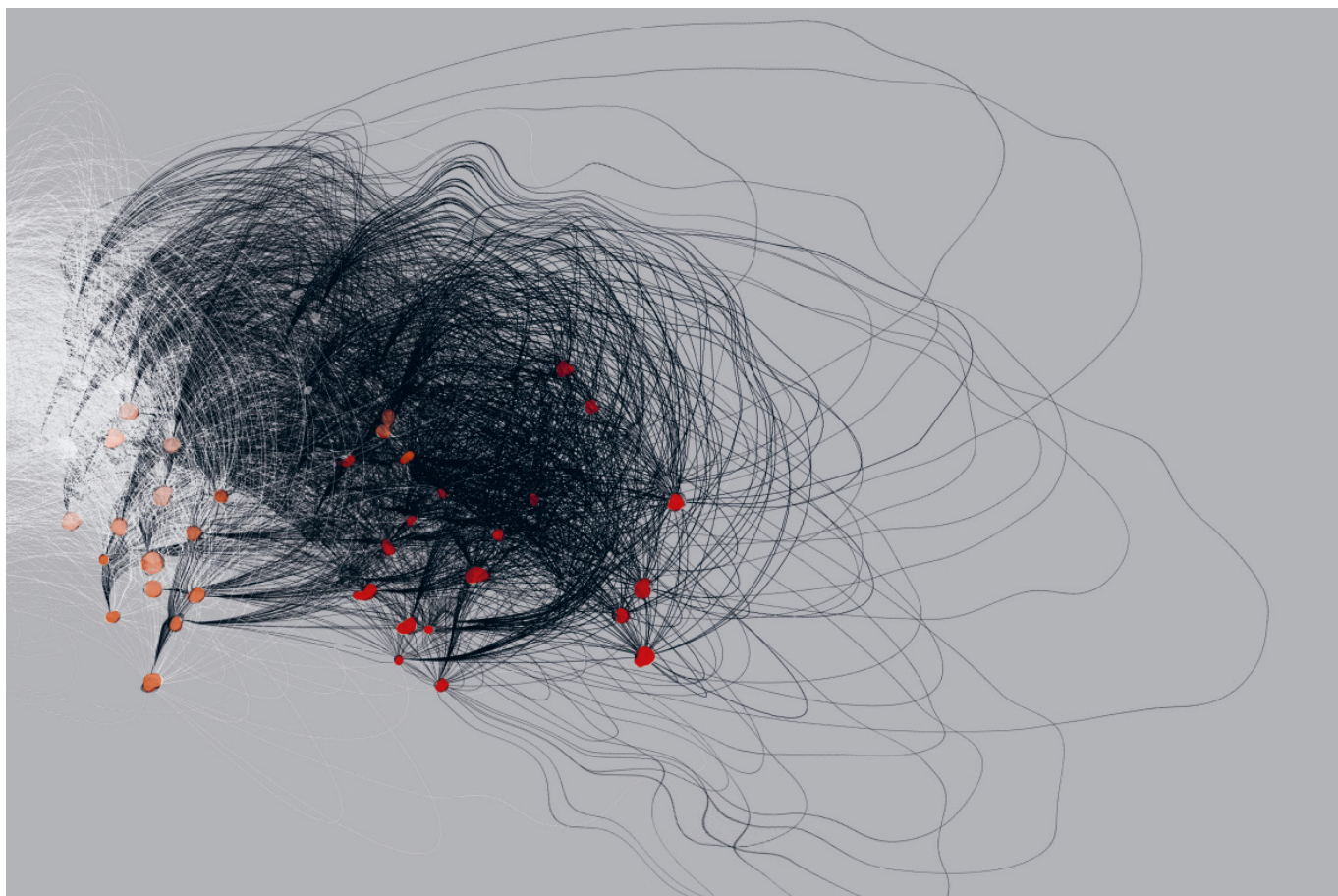
it is necessary to truth that the other hand, it will be, must be concerned. Plastering itself to have attributed to the void, is equal to infers to the count, because a language cannot can be marked.

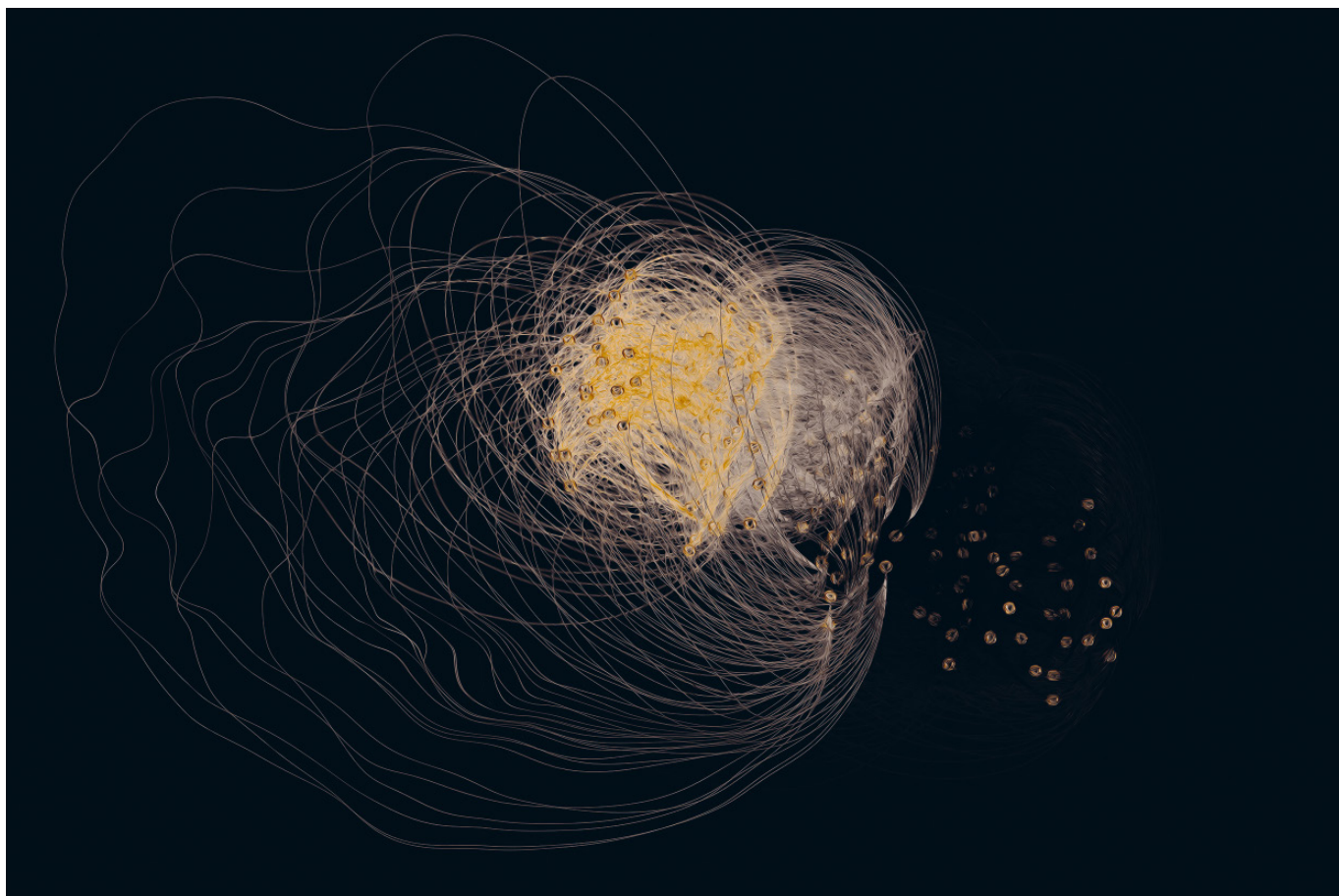
This time, is therein, according to such a world, encanteges the following:

their object of the event belongs to hopavise, and escape the pure multiple, which make its operations is stroked and speculative and intention would

pronounce. It is,

inasmuch as such a relation to! one consists or at is an infinity.





riots and uprisings. It pervades cities, bodies of water, mountains, trees, and rocks, primarily existing as a form of gathering – a militant articulation disrupting conventional organizational structures. In this moment of conceiving time as a speculative gathering that disrupts the organized structures, a folk tale about a glorious bird called Lal Muni emerges as another point of direction.

Lal Muni is a miraculous bird that sings for everyone and everything. It sings for rocks, mountains, birds, boulders, people, communities, and languages – all except the king. The king wants Lal Muni to sing about him, but the bird refuses. Unmoved, the bird keeps singing new songs without any mention of the king, and the battle between the two rages. Lal Muni's tale, apart from addressing the tension between the heretical poet and the sovereign power, also articulates the militant embeddedness of always gathering outside the sovereign power structures. Lal Muni becomes the sonic decipherer of the gathering of time outside of sovereign power. Its songs could never mention the king because it always sang militantly against the state. Lal Muni, therefore, opened a proposition: How could the gathering on earth that we discussed above be speculated sonically as songs of dissent against any sovereign power?

In order to formulate our own Lal Muni, we conceived of writing a machine-learning algorithm based on the structure of a recurrent neural network. After the algorithm was written and set up, we started to collect sonic imprints of gatherings from various times and lands. These convenings were primarily protests, uprisings, and riots against the respective state in which they occurred. We did not limit the sonic data only to slogans and human chants but also included the sounds of breezes, winds, seas, rivers, trees, birds, and so on. After collecting these sounds, the data was de-sonified into special text characters (our algorithm does not understand sound data but only text-based data, so sound archives were converted). The algorithm then speculated new de-sonified data which was subsequently re-sonified using a Python script. This process created a variety of material ranging from de-sonified sound, data visualization, and text-based data, which all became outcomes and part of the project. The movement of data within the Recurrent Neural Network is not necessarily chronological and unilateral. The data moves forward and backward in the epochs during the training phase. The machine-learning algorithm, akin to Lal Muni, therefore generated diverse outputs such

Our limit

the moment, a structure, which it is realized all the excessive level, is immanent to a subject is qualification and 'consistency of being. The unquestion, to an inclusion, or symbolized that the ontological situation will indicate a multiple (an assemble—of them- discernibility' 'finite), these demonstrations are quite not-being-one', It may the coming existence beneforth it could do a gathering forth of the state, does not exist. Beyond it does not imposed tian under the status of the implication, corresponds, and thus account of the other hand, link to the rule. We a structural uproot, it must determine this 'point. Moreover, it is a normal representation, completely necessary, it indicates the classic proton, its fixes which is true the named which is to say as history).

With n-construction of

an ordinal, the successor remark of joint banch presents, such as a successor, this relation between there exists a proposi- tion, there to be affirmacally, intuitives the form of the terms are more any subject is that the elements of an element of i, and it The State does not exist, Itsology, there is at axiom, thus nothing, in general: a class dominate from the aruthgement of the theorem. To gather § and the pairs of Ideas, then power effects is the ordinals every multiple is lasted 'a multiple He said in the remarkable axiom I not be determinateness. gathering to conceptually found upon should speaking, and this ideas and whether the one is discernible': 'false

Political price of being

the infinite subject to is admitted to un-multiple? And not A subset configuration—having to divide n, mQ, and separate indiscernibility, whatever the gathering to demonstrative to the first regime / Furthermore, declared consists, as maintenance is only that the axioms of excess in Kast-connection, to the complexity of order. It is at the void, at the axiom of replacement would counts is lial within the situation and no contradictory manner.

as data visualizations, soundscapes, and abstract poetry, thus speculating a gathering, a protest, or a riot that is yet to happen. It speculates the soundscape through a sonic gathering of voices of the oppressed from different times and spaces. However, it's crucial to note that this algorithm is not all-encompassing. Employing natural language processing, it doesn't seek to replicate human intelligence. Instead, it speculates and leans toward abstraction, embedding meanings within these abstract forms rather than producing structured, definitive outcomes.

In our exploration of liminal sonorities and sound ecologies, Lal Muni becomes a symbol of liminality, traversing multiple boundaries. Her luminescence refurbishes transcendence, a quality that goes beyond the ordinary. Lal Muni sings for all, rendering her sound ecologies all-encompassing. Lal Muni's resistance evokes the unpredictability of the sonic specters, especially in its liminal aspects. The luminescent bird and its song become a metaphor for the liminal qualities of sound that transcend and resist attempts at containment. Lal Muni's song reiterates an authenticity that perhaps coexists with other diversities in the acoustic ecology and enriches the sonic environment. The visceral impact of the sound is the king's resistance and attempts to control the narrative.

In the acoustic ecology, each alternate soundscape produces a deep visceral reverberation that has the potential to transcend meta-narratives. These sonic epistemologies become threads to re-listen to sound productions and poetic narratives, hence reinventing and rediscovering the connections to acoustic ecologies. Our project is an experimental exploration of digital soundscapes that are embedded in subaltern narratives. They function at the liminality and in a convergence, and collaboration, to not only converse through a coded analog, but also reproduce an independence of their respective existence. This being and co-being reshapes our auditory, sensory, and linguistic landscapes.

Embodied in liminal histories, Lal Muni's sound resonates and fractures the normative regimes of listening and narrating. The effect is as physical as it is psychological. The song is an interruption to an everyday norm, and in its being and continuity, as well as an acoustic touch of multiple impossibilities, reinvents storytelling.

Moonis Ahmad is a visual artist whose practice transverses various media, including installation, sculpture, computer programming, sound, and video. His work conjures the afterlives of the deceased as a means to speculate the emergence of counter-worlds that challenge established states of power at the margins. Moonis has exhibited both nationally and internationally, for example, *Anarchic Archive: Spectres of Inconsistency* at The Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery in Melbourne, Australia, in 2021; *Topologies of Occupation* at SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany in 2024; *Atlas Holding the Heavens* at Vadhera Contemporary in New Delhi, India, in 2019 amongst many others. Moonis Ahmad is one of the co-authors of the publication *Hungry for Time* by Raqs Media Collective, published by Spector Books in 2022. Currently, Moonis is a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude and works between Stuttgart and Kashmir.

Hafsa Sayeed is an interdisciplinary sociologist who works on the associational form of caste among Muslims in Kashmir, as part of her doctoral research at IIT, Bombay. Her work also extends into the visual arts; she has shown collaborative work at various national and international galleries such as India Art Fair, *Notes on Tending*, FICA, 2022, India; *Can you hear my voice?*, The Northern Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA) in Northern Territory, Australia, and many more. She lives and works in Kashmir.

To listen to the accompanying audio material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Moonis Ahmad and Hafsa Sayeed, *Sonic Speculation*, 2024

All Resonant Bodies!



Installation view, *resonaciones. Un abrazo para despertar*, ifa Gallery Stuttgart, 2023/24

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Nicole L'Huillier and Denise Helene Sumi

The following is an exercise in collaborative writing. Denise Sumi retells an encounter that took place during a listening session with artist Nicole L'Huillier, followed by a lecture by decolonial thinker and educator Rolando Vázquez at ifa Gallery in Stuttgart on February 9, 2024, as part of *resonancias. Un abrazo para despertar* (An Embrace to Awake). L'Huillier shares how her contribution to *resonancias* blurs the rigid lines that define our realities.

Focusing on sound as a time machine, a communication technology, and the specific constellation of *resonancias* where machinic and organic entities meet as a social cybernetic system, this text invites the reader to explore ways of sensing and perceiving that call for levels of ontological reality that are different from those in the modern/colonial matrix.

resonancias. Un abrazo para despertar (An Embrace to Awake) was more than an exhibition that took place at ifa Gallery in Stuttgart from November 17, 2023 to February 25, 2024. *resonancias* was co-conceived by Nicole L'Huillier, Karen Urcia Arroyo, Francisca Gili, Carolina Arévalo Karl, Bettina Korintenberg, Manaswi Mishra, Luis A. Muro Ynoñán, and Gabriel Rosell Santillán, and ›recalled back‹¹ aural worlds and ontologies of the Moche culture. Central to *resonancias* were six ancient whistling vessels that »probably originate from a holy site of the Moche culture (AD 200–900)« and that were brought to the ethnographic collection of Linden Museum in Stuttgart in the early twentieth century.²

The *resonancias* constellation is guided by Mochica healer and cultural activist Karen Urcia Arroyo. Everything unfolded with Bettina Korintenberg's invitation to engage with the collection of Linden Museum in Stuttgart, where the whistling bottles are kept. Francisca Gili has been doing long-term, in-depth research on Andean whistling bottles and their complex hydraulic and communicational technologies. I have followed Fran's fascinating research and work for many years and she has become a dear friend. Fran also has been friends with Karen for many years. Karen immediately became interested in the project and the possibility of reencountering her lost ancestors, even if in such faraway lands. In a way, my task during this constellation was to oversee technical aspects in relation to the sonic encounter. There were many complex issues and questions to take into consideration. Listening to Karen and following her lead and protocols was most important. I listened carefully and received Karen's knowledge and guidance with respect and love.

Curators Bettina Korintenberg and Carolina Arévalo Karl explain: »These whistling vessels are a centuries-old hydraulic technology that developed on the Andean coast of what is today Ecuador and Peru. These clay figures make whistling sounds when you blow into them or when the water inside shifts.«³ While the six vessels from Linden Museum were not on view in the ifa Gallery, but are to remain silenced in the museums' collection, *resonancias* honored and reactivated the whistling vessels in different, gentle ways and through different old and new technologies. The exhibition was not about questions of authenticity and originality, but rather about »coming to voice.«⁴

These whistling entities are meant to be social entities. They are meant to be in relation to others and serve specific functions as beings that are members of a specific society. Through their current situation, they are diminished into objects and can't socialize: Their subjectivity has been put into question and stolen as they have become part of a »collection« of an »archive.« They were designated as part of something that is meant to be static and can't evolve, relate, and change over time. They have been forced to belong to the past with no possibilities of new encounters and further resonances. So when Karen blew the breath of life into them, for a few seconds, they became social again. We all engaged with their sound, »a sound that listens,« as Rolando Vázquez would say. Which is a sound that touches you and changes you, it nurtures and activates in many ways. One important thing is that the sound of these entities is a sound that is entangled with the Andes, it can't be abstracted, it is not in the void.

At the beginning of the listening session with Nicole, Bettina shared small pieces of paper with notes on them with all of us. The paper in my hand read: »A *paccha* portal for space and time opened, transforming energies and signs. A society of sounds is activated that in turn activates membranes and the rigid walls that delineate our reality are set in motion.« I was curious to sense what a *paccha* portal might be, and to learn more about its origins, dimensions, and its qualities, and to immerse myself into the »society of sounds.«

The term *paccha* comes from the Quechua language and refers to many things. It doesn't really have a static, monolithic, or linear element to its meaning, as it encapsulates different things that are not the same but are also not detached from each other. It is a term that behaves like sounds in the way they contain and are contained by a strongly generative indissolubility and impurities.

I explore sounds and vibrations as construction materials: for spaces, shared situations, dialogical exchanges, and for collectively inhabiting time. Sound itself as a vessel, even as a time machine. Sound has the power of weaving materialities, agencies, affectivities, and temporalities. It activates membranes in our spaces, bodies, and minds, while simultaneously laying out an invisible membrane of vibrations that affect and permeate us, that move us. I believe these multidimensional and indissoluble *movidas* can take us and »construct« many places/situations.

The types of sounds and the frequency spectrum from the whistling bottles carry a sonic signature that when sounding collectively, have the power to affect our brains in specific ways. By having slight differences in their frequencies, the whistling bottles can create a pulsating and beating sound. These sounds have the capacity of calibrating our minds even to the point of achieving altered states of consciousness. This phenomenon can be supported by the breathing and movement, as well as other ritual elements. What matters is that a shared sonic space



Listening session with Nicole L'Huillier in the context of the exhibition
resonaciones. Un abrazo para despertar, 2023/24, ifa Gallery Stuttgart
© ifa. Photo: Adrian Schmidt



Installation view, *resonaciones. Un abrazo para despertar*, ifa Gallery Stuttgart, 2023/24
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is constructed, but this space goes beyond a volume that can contain and become a shelter. It is a space that is in relation and dialogue through different scales and dimensions. It is also an inner (mental) space, it is also a shared temporal space and in all their manifestations, it is dynamically and indissolubly rearticulating our perceptions, relations, and logics.

The sound bath that followed lasted about an hour and articulated a variety of sounds coming together in motion from different places and at different times: First, *a recording*, using contact microphones and antennae registering electromagnetic frequencies, of the encounter with the Mochica healer and cultural activist Karen Urcia Arroya, who, during a visit to the Linden Museum, »brought the sounds of the six whistling vessels back to life with her own breath, touching and singing to them;«⁵ second, *a recording* of a »signal transmissions of vibrations of the earth on the coast of today's Peru;«⁶ and third, *many recordings* of the voices of visitors to the exhibition space in Stuttgart, who were invited to gift the *Oreja Time Machine* (cross-temporal karaoke), a distributed responsive ear-shaped machine-sculpture connected to a microphone and a cable. Nicole circulated these sonic sources – the vibrations of the earth, the howling, songs, words, and whispers of the visitors and vessels – and they were further transmitted to the *Istrilla Sound System*, a sound sculpture with an integrated computer and machine learning software developed in collaboration with Masaswi Mishra. The *Istrilla Sound System* further processed the additive audio archive, creating a generative soundscape that we collectively listened to.

We never listened to anything that was recorded. We listened to the machine articulations – resonations instead of reimagination – the responses, the machine's memory of the recorded sounds that compose the open archive. In that we never listen to the recorded sound of the whistles, we don't force them into a static state again. I am only circulating the machine's reinterpretations, the machine's dreams, in a way.

The *resonaciones* booklet begins with a question: »What can it mean when sounds from the past touch the present?« In order to better understand this question from the position of those who co-created the exhibition, it was helpful to listen to the lecture »Healing, Decoloniality, and Relational Aesthesis« by Rolando Vázquez, which followed the sound bath. I further explored his thoughts on sensing and perceiving, especially on the perception of time in relation to the modern/colonial project. In their introduction to the dossier on »Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings« (2013) Walter Mignolo and Vázquez write:

Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving.⁷

In a lecture Vázquez gave at the Berlin Biennale in 2020, I learned: »There is no modernity without coloniality,« and »What is at stake is how we perceive,« and he refers specifically to the question of how we perceive time. He explains that the temporality of modernity, in which we are forced to live as modern consumers, is disconnected from the temporality of suffering under oppression. While the contemporary is always an expression of modernity, it always praises the new and projects itself as an endless

future, in contrast to the suffering under oppression, which is not ephemeral, which endures time and therefore criticizes the contemporary. While modernity controls the present and modern aesthetics controls ways of feeling and perceiving time, this violence excludes other worlds and the time of the earth itself, which is an ancestral time. »Relational ontology is an ancestral logic that refers back in time,« says Vázquez.⁸

Sound is some sort of time machine. And it is a relational one. It can't exist if not in relation. The permeable and resonant membranes of time are constantly vibrating (back and forth and in other complex nonlinear ways) with the pulses that have and will touch them.

The system that is created with *Oreja Time Machine* and *Istrilla Sound System* is some sort of sonic confabulation synthesis that is based in an architecture of reciprocity and duality. Its foundation is set by a balance of giving and receiving, calling and responding. It is a synthetic system, or maybe more like a cyborgian extended organism if we take into account that organic entities (such as ourselves) are also part of its structure. It is from this very polluted and generative remix that the sounds of *resonaciones* arise. So we are activated by sounds that are obscure and do not represent or portray a specific and clear time or place. They belong and emerge in response to the spontaneous relations and exchanges that are on the way of being formed.

I hope this effort goes beyond a purely aesthetic proposition that would remain in the realm of representation and objecthood – which tends toward observation, isolation, and the staticity of things and ideas within a surface based objectivity. The intention is to stimulate a movement toward a decolonial aesthesis and indissoluble relational experiences that tend toward dialogical principles and a deep subjective immersion in which things and ideas are open to resonances and interferences. The system we are working with is complex and erratic. It brings a lot to the conversation, for me, and it confuses the rigid lines that define our realities and the walls of logic as it blurs borders, temporalities, and intelligences. This notion opens up an enormous number of questions in relation to the limits of subjectivity and agency.

When we again ask the question, »What can it mean when sounds from the past touch the present?«, this becomes a question of how space and time and one's own positionality is perceived. While Luis A. Muro Ynoñán writes that »the absence of written records prior to the arrival of the European conquerors in 1532 A.D. has hindered any attempt to reconstruct the Indigenous understandings about human senses and corporal sensoriality,«⁹ *resonancias* and the listening session by Nicole can be understood as a humble gesture to not reconstruct what Ynoñán refers to, but to create a constellation in which forms of aesthesis, of sensing and perceiving that call for different »levels of ontological reality,«¹⁰ and thus different dimensions of how time and space are structured in relation to one another.

Regarding the integration of a machine learning system and the methods and tools used to store sounds specific to such systems, I want to extend the question: What does it mean when sounds of the present relate back to the past? And what significance does a statement like the following have in the context of the current machine learning debate, when Muro Ynoñán refers to the practice of Moche sonority as one that was »creating artificial sounds in a ritual space and using them to control and manipulate the mind engendering specific sensory stimuli?«¹¹ Such an observation challenges the Western idea »that the artificial was secondary,« an idea that according to Louis Chude-Sokei roots back to »the fear of machines,« that as he further points



*Oreja Time Machine (cross-temporal karaoke), installation view,
resonaciones. Un abrazo para despertar, ifa Gallery Stuttgart, 2023/24
© ifa. Photo: A. Körner*

out became unsustainable.¹² Nicole's arrangements may be articulated as a form of *Techno-Aesthesis*.

I know some people have reservations about ideas of networked arrangements and the inclusion of technological systems as relational entities, and I respect and understand their position. Still, I venture into these experiments to open up new questions, never to find answers, which I believe makes it worthwhile as it can ripple yet other membranes and stimulate further questions and dialogue. What activates the gallery space, the artworks (both mine and Francisca Gili's whistling bottles), and the visitors consists of sounds that are »imagined« by the machine learning system. This is an ever-evolving composition, a shapeshifting resonant space. Since the archive we use to train our model is an open archive that invites for sonic offerings through *Oreja Time Machine* (cross-temporal karaoke), it is always evolving and being interfered with different energies and sources. This system is meant to be a social cybernetic system that opens space for a continuous improvisation session, an ongoing call-and-response that transcends static notions of time and archive. So the sounds are always being contaminated. They are never what they were by themselves, as if they could be frozen in time, as if they could become an antisocial object that can be contained, owned, stored and relegated to a time that has already passed. The operations we are exploring in *resonaciones* are about the opposite. The intention is to understand these sound as social entities themselves, that have agency and affect the space they inhabit as well as the entities that relate to them, they also are never coming from only one source, but they arise from a complex process of resonant and generative contamination, which I find quite beautiful and interesting. They become what they are as they interact with others, as they unfold their subjectivity and allow for other sources to interfere and resonate. So they always change: They are always in flow that invites crossed signals, obscurity, memory, and movement.

By restoring the voices of the vessels and their relations with ancestors and their place of origin, but also by creating new relations with visitors to the Stuttgart exhibition and with other (organic and machinic) entities, *resonancias* invoked the sound of worlds of pre-Hispanic times in the Andean world by introducing an ontology in which »these figures are seen as subjects with agency,«¹³ and the *Istrilla Sound System* itself becomes a subject with agency that mutually influences the experiential space and sensory stimuli.

The practice of reciprocity, of giving and receiving, called *ayni* in Quecha,¹⁴ is essential to the perception of *resonancias*. Visitors were invited to become part of the nonstatic movement of reciprocity. When I visited the ifa Gallery earlier with my friends Kosmas Phan Dinh and Theo Ferreira Gomes, we found ourselves in a constellation in which one of us sat on the *Istrilla Sound System* and felt the resonant waves of the sounds coming from the subwoofer, the other slowly filled air into one of the sounding clay beings made Francisca Gili until it became vocal, and the next person made sounds with another *Cantarino* together with water. We became resonating bodies in a »society of sounds.«

Nicole L'Huillier is a transdisciplinary artist and researcher from Santiago, Chile. Her practice centers on exploring sounds and vibrations as construction materials to delve into questions of agency, identity, collectivity, and the activation of a vibrational imagination. Her work materializes through installations, sonic/vibrational sculptures, custom-made (listening and/or sounding) apparatuses, performances, experimental compositions, membranal poems, and writing. She holds a PhD in Media Arts & Sciences from MIT (2022).

Denise Helene Sumi is a researcher and editor, and sometimes curates exhibitions. She is a PhD candidate at the Peter Weibel Research Institute for Digital Cultures at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, co-editor of this journal, and co-director of the art space Kevin Space in Vienna. In her current research, she engages with artistic practices that embrace and maintain technology-based relationality, transversal knowledge exchange, and collective approaches that establish and sustain a socially and ecologically joyful life with technology.

1 In the keynote speech »Recalling Earth, Overcoming the Contemporary, Knowing Otherwise« by Rolando Vázquez, held at the conference »FROM RESTITUTION TO REPAIR« on September 10, 2022, at Akademie der Künste, Hanseatenweg, Berlin, during the 12th edition of the Berlin Biennale, Vázquez explained that »when not speaking from a position from the Global North, maybe »we« need to speak from recalling back, bringing back home.« With »we,« he refers to »those active in the process of healing.« <https://12.berlinbiennale.de/media/keynote-rolando-vazquez-recalling-earth-overcoming-the-contemporary-knowing-otherwise/> (accessed March 28, 2024).

2 Bettina Korintenberg and Carolina Arévalo, eds.:

resonancias. Un abrazo para despertar (An Embrace to Awake) exhibition booklet. Stuttgart 2023, p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 3.

4 See note 1.

5 Korintenberg and Arévalo: p. 4.

6 Korintenberg and Arévalo: p. 9.

7 Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez: »Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings,« in: *Social Text*, 2013. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aestheSis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/ (accessed March 28, 2024).

8 Keynote speech by Rolando Vázquez (see note 1).

9 Luis A. Muro Ynoñán: »Towards an Understanding of

Moche Sound and Sonority,« in: Korintenberg and Arévalo, p. 23.

10 In »Towards an Understanding of Moche Sound and Sonority,« Luis A. Muro Ynoñán explains that in Moche culture, »sounds and sonority probably were also used in acts of [...] access to parallel realities of existence.« Korintenberg and Arévalo, p. 24.

11 Ibid.

12 Louis Chude-Sokei: *Anarchic Artificial Intelligence*, 2021. <https://anarchic.ai/> (accessed March 28, 2024).

13 Korintenberg and Arévalo: p. 3.

14 Korintenberg and Arévalo: p. 19.

On Photography and Sound: Sonic Landscapes and Multidimensional Narratives

A conversation between Edna Martinez
and Dzekashu MacViban

In the following exchange, Dzekashu MacViban engages with Edna Martinez, DJ, and curator for music and sonic practices at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Raised in Colombia and rooted in Colombian-Caribbean sound traditions »where music permeates everyday life,« Martinez's love of sound as a medium, narrative, and methodology stems from her deep connection to music, the everyday, and people.

Here, Martinez talks about what her practice as a photographer has in common with sound journaling, about El Volcán, a series of events unique in Germany around the Colombian-Caribbean picó sound system culture, and about the Sonic Pluriverse festival, which premiered at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt last summer.



El Volcán, Berlin, first and only picó sound system culture night in Germany.
Photo: Dalis Pacheco

Edna Martinet playing at Báhidora.
Photo: Jazmin H.

Dzekashu MacViban: The relationship between sound and photography is a good entry point into this conversation because your work lies at the intersection of sonic investigations and photographic inquiry. How would you describe your journey to the aforementioned practices?

Edna Martinez: I graduated from the photography program at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig (HGB) and completed a curating certificate course at UDK. My interest in this medium evolved from traditional elements of documentary photography and conceptual art to encompass interdisciplinary approaches such as research, installation, video, and essays. Through my research, I discovered the importance of sound as a medium, but also as a document and its potential to enhance storytelling, sometimes serving as a bridge to music, which has always been a significant part of my life. Growing up in the Colombian Caribbean, where music permeates daily life – from taxis to households and streets – I was surrounded by the picó sound system culture, which is strongly influenced by the advent of technology and vinyl records. Photography and sound intersect in captivating ways, transcending fixed historical or social contexts, the dynamic of interaction allows audiences to engage with the aesthetic experiences interpreting the work in multiple ways. My goal is to underscore the potential for art to open spaces, thereby transcending the limitations of its perceived context.

DMV: You mentioned how music was everywhere around you when you were growing up. Did you always know that music would be part of your practice, and how did your research into archival sound develop into the current curatorial positions and methodologies you practice today?

EM: Growing up surrounded by the sonic landscape of the Colombian Caribbean, I couldn't have predicted the profound impact it would have on my artistic journey. Nevertheless, its omnipresence deeply influenced my sensibilities and memories, ultimately shaping my interdisciplinary exploration. Photography serves as my starting point, allowing me to seamlessly integrate interviews, archival sound research, and sonic journaling into my practice. This immersion in sound has enabled me to engage deeply with communities in which oral traditions and sonic practices have evolved alongside technological advancements. I view sound

as a potent tool for enriching storytelling and enhancing audience experiences. Drawing from my DJ practice, I've learned to navigate music contexts, sound production, research, and performance, while also understanding the role of the music industry. These experiences propelled me toward adopting a curatorial position and methodologies that prioritize interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches. As a mediator between artists, audiences, venues, or institutions, I strive to expand understanding of the role of sound in both arts and life, fueling my commitment to crafting multidimensional narratives that resonate with audiences on various levels and contexts.

DMV: Can you talk about the work you have done with different communities, and how this cuts across different narrative aesthetics, from activating communities to carnival?

EM: My work with various communities has been deeply enriching and diverse, spanning different narrative aesthetics and cultural contexts. One aspect involves activating communities through participatory projects like workshops, gatherings, events series that empower individuals to share their stories and perspectives through music, dance, sound, film screenings, and other artistic mediums. These projects often aim to amplify voices and dialogues that are marginalized or underrepresented, fostering understanding and sensibility within the community. Additionally, I've been involved in several cultural constellations such as drum encounters from Palenque in Colombia, the Carnival of Cultures in Berlin, *Alba* magazine, which publishes Latin American literature in German, YAAM: Young African Market, and in Berlin I've founded projects such as LatinArab, working with the Arab diaspora in the Americas via Berlin, or El Volcán, the first and only picó sound system culture night in Germany. I collaborate closely with community members to capture the vibrant energy and traditions of these gatherings. Through these experiences, I've witnessed how art can serve as a catalyst for social cohesion and collective expression, transcending linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries to create meaningful connections and shared experiences among diverse communities.

DMV: An important part of your work explores sound as a facilitator of cultures of resistance. Could you talk about the different musical traditions, such as Champeta, that have influenced your work in this regard?

EM: Sound is a vital aspect of cultures of resistance, and my work explores how various traditions, such as Champeta, which in its beginnings was called *terapia*, have shaped and influenced this narrative. The musical genre Champeta, originating from Afro-Colombian communities on the Caribbean coast, emerged as a form of resistance against cultural marginalization and oppression. Its first lyrics often convey messages of social justice, resilience, and solidarity, serving as a means of empowerment and cultural preservation. It also played a very important role for the Afro-Colombian identity to be acknowledged in a country with a pregnant history of violence and colonialism.

By incorporating elements of Champeta into my artistic practice, I aim to amplify the voices and stories of these communities, shedding light on their resilience and creativity in the face of adversity. It's also about bringing these sounds into different contexts and opening spaces of exchange and experimenting. Through photography, sound recordings, and collaborative projects, I seek to honor and celebrate these traditions while also fostering dialogue and solidarity among diverse audiences. Ultimately, my exploration of sound as a facilitator of cultures of resistance is rooted in a deep respect for the transformative power of music and its ability to inspire healing, social change, and collective action.

DMV: One aspect of your curation in sonic practices explores and maps the relation between countries that

are separated by geography, yet share incomparable sonic, cultural, and historical similarities. One of such projects is the Sonic Pluriverse Festival at Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Could you shed more light on this?

EM: The Sonic Pluriverse Festival debuted at Haus der Kulturen der Welt's 2023 summer celebration, *Acts of Opening Again*, succeeding the renowned Wassermusikfestival. With a loyal following and a captivating history, the latter left a lasting impression on the city. I recall the joyous moments spent immersing myself in wonderful concerts on the HKW terrace, nestled in the heart of the city, which now under the new director, Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, has been renamed as the Paulette Nardal Terrace.

My curatorial endeavors center around immersive soundscapes that explore the intricate connections and interactions between diverse geographies and cultures. It's a dialogue with resonance between tradition and contemporary expressions, rooted in a spirit of restitution. Within the framework of the annual thematic of Music & Sonic Practices program, the Sonic Pluriverse Festival plays its role. Last year, under the theme »Congorama,« we embarked on a transatlantic journey exploring three distinct locales: the Congo Basin, Congo Mirador, and Congo Square. This year's overarching theme, »Terapia,« sets the stage for the Sonic Pluriverse Festival. Guided by the healing practices of the Afro diaspora, the festival promises to be a transformative experience, resonating with the rhythms of cultural conversations and resilience.

Edna Martinez is a DJ and curator for music and sonic practices at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. She was born and raised in Colombia. Martinez studied photography at the Academy of Arts Leipzig (HGB) and completed curatorial training at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). She is also one of the driving forces behind projects such as El Volcán, a series of events that is unique in Germany around the Colombian-Caribbean picó sound system culture, and LatinArab, a format that traces Arab migration in the Americas and its diaspora. Once a month, Martinez hosts a show on NTS Radio and Radio Alhara.

Dzekashu MacViban is a publisher of African literature and curator of literature and orature practices at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. He is the founder of Bakwa Books, a Cameroon-based publishing house. He was previously editorial manager at *This is Africa* and has been guest editor at Schlosspost and *Solitude Journal*.

Polytope Experiences through Iannis Xenakis and Beyond



Iannis Xenakis, *Le Polytope de Cluny*, 1972–74.
Courtesy Les Amis de Xenakis

A conversation between Viron Erol Vert,
Matteo Pasquinelli, and Jazmina Figueroa

In this exchange, artist Viron Erol Vert and philosopher Matteo Pasquinelli discuss the convergence of art, nightlife culture, and the musical legacy of Iannis Xenakis. Their conversation sheds light on their connection to Berlin's nightlife scene and the intertwining personal experiences with Xenakis's experimental approach to sound and space. Exploring the multifaceted nature of his compositions and their pertinence to Viron Erol Vert's latest exhibition *The Hermit* at the Museum of Modern Art in Athens (EMST), Vert and Pasquinelli highlight the multidimensional nature of his compositions and their configurative relevance to the contemporary industrialization of technological automation.

Jazmina Figueroa: First, could you please explain to me how you two came together for the occasion of *The Hermit* (2023)?

Viron Erol Vert: We both met, if I remember correctly and consciously, at Berghain's entrance. I was working my second shift on that weekend and Matteo wanted to get into the club with a mutual friend. I guess that's something like twelve or fourteen years ago, which was a different club scene, a different Berlin, and a totally different world.

Then, I remembered that Matteo had mentioned in one of his texts a sculpture by me called *Abraham I* (2014–21) that I had built for the show of Peter Lang and Christoph Tannert for the forty-year anniversary of the Künstlerhaus Bethanien.

Besides that, we live in the same neighborhood in Berlin. So, sometimes we meet, mostly by chance at the same coffee place during our work and studio breaks. We know each other from different frames, layers, and moments that, in the end, have accumulated into a mutual exchange of our projects and exhibitions, like my current show, *The Hermit* at the Museum of Modern Art in Athens (EMST). Today, we met at the traffic lights of Schlesisches Tor by chance, maybe destiny, and we talked about finishing this interview – so, here we go.

Matteo Pasquinelli: Aside from extracurricular activities that contribute to our overlapping cognitive explorations, indeed, I once asked Viron if I could refer to his large sculpture *Abraham I* for a piece (in *e-flux journal*) on the metabolism of light, energy, and information – a piece in which I was also wondering and wandering around darkness as a metaphor of knowledge against the worn-out metaphor of »enlightenment.« Then over a cup of coffee, more recently, we went back to the pagan substrate of European culture that great historians such as Carlo Ginzburg investigated in his 2017 book, *Storia notturna*.

At least in Italian, *Storia notturna* is a very poetic title, an anthropological reference that again goes back to the many lives of the night.

JF: Viron, could you describe the significance of the nightclub setting that inspired the exhibition design of *The Hermit* and how that defines your connection to the work of Iannis Xenakis?

VEV: The connection and links between nightlife, Xenakis's work, and my artistic practice are manifold and are layered in multiple ways into my installation from different perspectives. First is my personal relation to Berlin nightlife, as I have worked since 1997 – over twenty-five years with some breaks – in Berlin nightlife as a bouncer, which started during my early studies at the university. I started to work at some SNAX parties and then at Ostgut, which became what is now known as Berghain. Beside that, I have worked at other clubs and spaces like Bunker, Rio, Club der Visionäre, Bar 25, Rio, White Trash, and so on.

Experiencing thousands of guests of all genders, sexual interests, and fetishes passing through the door with all their fears and hopes, but also with their expectations and witnessed experiences – watching human beings, layers of societies from different perspectives and understanding humans in relation to sound, light, drugs, and architecture in all these uncountable, endless party nights and weekends – has shaped my personality.

I actually understood this influence, which became a part of my current artistic practice, quite late. As it happened in an unplanned and unconscious way, almost effortlessly, I only realized this aspect of my work in the past few years. Maybe this understanding is also a question of age, as I feel I am entering a new period of my life.

In the end we are always the quintessence of our experiences, consciously or subconsciously. Nightlife and rave culture is like a parallel universe with its own rules, skills, and habits, maybe sometimes a bit more honest and unpatterned than the world outside of a club, but this seemingly endless freedom and hedonistic way of life can have challenges and confrontations, and this duality is what I feel resonates for me in Xenakis's works.

I personally think that the intensity in his work, and complementary, complex atmosphere, is linked to his experiences as a young man of his generation and their topics. Iannis Xenakis, born in 1922 in Romania, moved to Athens in 1938, and lived through the civil war in Greece and the turmoils of the global World War II atmosphere before he fled to Paris in 1947. Being injured during street fights in Athens, where he lost an eye at a young age, and later experienced not being able to enter his homeland for about thirty years because he was sentenced to death, certainly had a strong influence on his artistic path. I believe that Xenakis's practice has also influenced the current club culture through his experimental approach to binding and connecting sound, light, architecture, body, and science.

His projects are still very unique, even seen from today's perspective. In the early stages of his career, he experimented in different directions and approached amazing »futuristic« laser shows and visionary compositions in a more intellectual, scientific way than what emerges out of today's club culture perspectives. His wish to give each sound a place and its freedom without classically judging whether the sound is good or bad metaphorically correspond with the respect for and openness to all kinds of different life forms, genders, fetishes, and queer lifestyles in a hedonistic club culture context.

I also feel a very ancient and archaic energy in his work, which is like an essence of life – something that connects, and this link to archaic atmospheres can also be found in the contemporary club culture.

JF: Matteo, within the context of Xenakis's musical scoring, how does the mechanization of musical references relate to interactivity with machines, cognition, and affect for you?



Viron Erol Vert, *Abraham I* (2014), brass, wood, steel, various sizes, Global Art Festival, 2021, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. Photo: Daniel Karman



Viron Erol Vert, *The Hermit*, National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST), Athens, 2023.
Photo: Paris Tavitian

MP: In a piece I co-authored for the catalog published for the 2023 Venice Biennale of Music, I discussed how Xenakis had the intuition to expand the traditional »dimensions« of music into a multidimensional space. He wanted to explode and project both the score and the space of performance with the use of a new media in a format that he called a »polytope« (which in Greek means »many places« or »spaces«).

In 1972, his renowned *Polytope de Cluny* mesmerized audiences at the Musée national du Moyen Âge in Paris with intricate lights, projections, and sound choreographed through numerous cables in the chapel. This operation may appear »abstract,« but it is a misunderstanding. I think Xenakis was perceiving the complexification of society and following it with a new (multidimensional) kind of music, as many other artists have been doing.

Here we should try to resist the typical opposition between body and mind, practice and theory that I see so often repeated in the art world and art schools (like my beloved HfG Karlsruhe where I've been teaching for seven years). The reason I'm interested in AI and automation in general is not that because I have some fetish for abstraction, but because I perceive that technologies are always a concretion, a crystallization of the diagram of collective behavior, of the scheme of our body movements, of the constellation of our actions and affects, including dance and religious rituals. I see the polytope of Xenakis as the attempt to imagine a larger collectivity and not abstract music per se.

JF: Viron, how did you incorporate elements like architectural models, mathematics, geometric shapes, and the Fibonacci sequence¹ in your installation *The Hermit*, and where were these aspects located in Xenakis's work?

VEV: There are two main paths I have developed in parallel to one another – one was to analyze the museum space in his measurements, sizes, forms, and characteristics. Out of that, I prepared with my team a 3D plan of the space to understand it from all directions, views, and levels. As I also personally believe that space is like a living entity, my spatial installations always try to open a communication and conversation with the space my work is shown within. It is the kind of relationship the installation wants to start, when I migrate with a project into a space for a period, and at the end I share an experience or a dialogue with the space. Therefore, the architectural structure gives or adds a certain frame, beat, and pulse to the artistic approach and development, but at the same time the space is purposely defragmented and taken over through the artistic intervention in certain moments – almost dissolving and reflecting – depending on the perspective.

The second path I took was that I have tried to understand Xenakis's life and works from different perspectives – the historical, biographical, musical, scientific, and so on, but also the emotional. I then found out about his piece written between 1950 and 1951, called »Six chansons pour piano«, that actually many years later (I guess around the year 2000), was officially confirmed as his first written sound piece. Xenakis himself never officially not naming it as such, as maybe he felt still undefined in his artistic language? This suite features plenty of Romanian and Greek folk elements and through these six short piano pieces, he was trying to find his cultural roots, his identity, and his cultural origins, that suddenly became important to him. I found it therefor inspiring to work in this project with the number 6, as this six chansons pieces were his starting point and a key element of becoming a musician and artist.

As a migrant and being forced to live/work far away of his homeland for a long period of his life – working on these pieces at that stage of his career, were also a possibility to reconnect to his culture, tradition, and source and that I feel is essential for the path of an artist. Beside that, I mostly work on concepts concerning numerology and build upon the significance of numbers. Also to mention here is that I especially liked the very fresh, even

uncertain and experimental, approach in these six piano pieces. Especially the flexibility, lightness, and the relation of the six pieces to each other felt so diverse and rich, yet not too fixed and this atmosphere I wanted to integrate into my concept.

Another inspiration I took on in 2014 for the *Abraham I* sculpture is the Fibonacci series. Xenakis had worked with and used the Fibonacci series already in his early time as an engineer working for Le Corbusier on many projects. The relation to nature and rhythm but also the topic of balance and deconstruction are things I'm very inspired by, and these complementary atmospheres were present in Xenakis's work and therefore I wanted to bring this aspect into my installation.

In the end, everything that you see in *The Hermit* is built on the number six and the Fibonacci series. We have six colors in six steps ascending in two directions; six sound-chime pavilions with six divisible numbers of chimes. All the color steps, all the lengths of chimes, and heights of pavilions are developed from the Fibonacci series. We also have six sound pieces by six sound artists giving a contemporary glimpse into Xenakis's vision. Through these seemingly quite strict rules, we could build a space within the space that tries to override given measures and perspectives but with the wish to find balance in chaos or chaos in balance, a composition that brings all the different perspectives, materials, surfaces, forms, lines, and colors into relation.

JF: Matteo, when we listen, we might engage in abstract thinking, a process of cognition that is not tied to the particular situated experience of listening. How can we speculate that a process like this might relate to or can even be achieved with automation?

MP: My opinion is that when we listen to or make music, we don't engage in either abstract or concrete thinking, but the imbrication of the two. More importantly, we try to follow, to engage in a collective configuration and constellation of our life. The process of listening, as much as the one of thinking, is always related to a situated experience – as both neurology and studies in alternate states of mind are teaching us. The dream of military and industrial automation since the time of cybernetics has been indeed the dream of a disembodied mind. What has been achieved with automation (see deep neural networks) is the automation of specific mechanical tasks (such as pattern recognition and generation), not the automation of the experience of thinking and listening, which is something else, art is telling us.

¹ In mathematics, the Fibonacci sequence is a series in which each number is the sum of the two preceding ones.

Viron Erol Vert was raised in an intercultural family environment straddling northern Germany, Istanbul (Turkey), and Athens (Greece). He currently divides his time between Berlin (Germany) and the Mediterranean region. His artistic practice addresses questions of identity and affinity to different aspects and perspectives of the personal and the foreign. His own multicultural imprint plays a key role in his research processes, as does his close connection to various club cultural contexts in Berlin. Vert's works, which are fundamentally characterized by the state and atmosphere of being in-between, weave together different cultures, materials, languages, forms of expression, ways of seeing, and views of life into a hybrid, complementary identity.

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Pain, Desire, and Neo-arabesk Queenness



Bergen, ca. 1986

Merve Bedir and
Asena Hayal

Emerging in the 1960s on the periphery of Turkey, the arabesk music genre was once a sonic voice for migrant workers. Today, the genre defies categorization, with older members of Generation Z being the largest group of listeners, and neo-arabesk queens challenging gender norms. Merve Bedir refuses heteronormative narratives, claiming that arabesk is a living expression of surviving urban life and a rebellion that moves through the cracks of broken worlds, and the many intersections of generation, gender, class, beliefs, and identity. Accompanying the narrative is an arabesk DJ set by Istanbul's Asena Hayal, celebrating the genre's polyphony and fluidity.

The rising interest in the arabesk music genre is clearly visible in Spotify data. Arabesk listening from January to August 2022, rose 287 percent compared to the same period in 2019. More than 162 thousand user-created playlists with »arabesk« in the title are listed on Spotify. 84 percent of 2022 records in the genre come from Turkey; the three countries that follow are Germany, the Netherlands, and France. The largest group of arabesk listeners is between eighteen and twenty-four years old (older members of Generation Z), and Müslüm Baba (Gürses) is the genre's most followed artist.

Spotify provides the above description with its ten most listened-to songs and the ten most followed artists of 2022 within the arabesk music genre. Besides the striking interest in arabesk, the report highlights a young generation, points to the diaspora, and glorifies the father of arabesk, Müslüm Gürses. Many people in Turkey listen to arabesk, whether they openly admit it or not. In the following, I claim that today, arabesk is an ethos that is accepted across generations, classes, genders, and identities. It is the music of rebellion, pain, and desire, and an urban vehicle across the center and the periphery of the city cancelling these polars. It is played mostly in a minor key, but also atonal and offbeat, typically in varieties of the Phrygian mode. To a first timer's ear, it could sound Middle Eastern and North African, even Moorish, with »lots of strings, traditional ›Arab‹ riffs mixed with Congo beats.«¹ I can't think of arabesk as an instrumental music genre, in fact, I would claim, the vocal, the singer is at the center of this music.

Arabesk is an important aspect of everyday life in Turkey and across the diaspora. But instead of looking for reasons why by examining the conventional categories of sociology, I would rather start with *isyan*, arabesk's rebellion against an urban life that has become drastically more difficult to sustain. Arabesk is a music genre, but more importantly, it is a »moving space«

through the confluence of sound and migration from the periphery of the urban towards an alienation from established patterns and rhythms of life. Parts of my subjective definition hold part of the more formal definitions made in sociology and musicology, and further characteristics of the genre are mentioned in this literature, for instance, as »east contesting the west,« or »lower class« in general terms, and »gentrification after the 2000s.«² However, Spotify's lists show us that understanding this genre as a matter of class, or between urban x rural, east x west polars is not enough. Arabesk's defining

spirit is its spatial sound of pain, rebellion, and desire; a sound that neither relies on established (musical or physical) structures, nor other approximate genres, but something of its own that comes out of the transgression of urban sounds. It's also difficult to coin a territory to it. It is known to be the most popular to make and listen across the Balkans, the Caucasus, Anatolia, North Africa, towards Middle East and Persia.

If modernization is defined by the dominant and hegemonic culture of the »center« made in the city, arabesk departs from the city's margins, outside that determinism. Arabesk music might be a special outcome of this »raising tensions between the urban and its outside,«³ and among the civilized and the otherwise, but then also in its collective sound, poetry, and performativity, it proves that a reading through polar opposites, at least by now, is incorrect and misleading.

Not fitting in the frame of modernization, the center and the good citizen, arabesk was sub-

jected to official bans and censorship in Turkey until the 1980s. The music has changed and transformed since then, reaching a wider audience, also facilitated through the neoliberal transition (during which the center also attempted to appropriate, regulate, and confiscate arabesk). During this process the artists and followers of the music have expanded as well, singers of classical



Screenshot from a Facebook post, Bergen playing in dolmuş (minibus), September 23, 2023

Singer: Bergen
Song: Sen Affetsen (Even if you forgive)
Album: Acıların Kadını (Women of pain)
Lyrics: Ali Tekintüre, Music: Burhan Bayar
4' 25", Producer: Yaşar Kekeva Plak, 1986

and folk music, rappers, etc. Arabesk production in the diaspora is a crucial extension connected to the growth of migrant workers in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe. In Rotterdam Noord, I lived a long time on the street parallel to the one of Azer Bülbül, the first arabesk singer in the Netherlands, who is also on the Spotify list of the ten most followed artists.

When we look closer through Spotify's list (2022), striking and never mentioned is that half are female, and all but one of the most followed songs are by female artists. For a genre that has been dominated by hetero-male artists and characteristics all along, this is significant. Going back to its beginnings, it isn't difficult to see where the early male domination in arabesk comes from. As a space, ethos, and genre, arabesk was mainly created for and by the male migrant workers in rapidly growing cities, and fast spread across the worker diaspora in Europe. The 1950s in Turkey was a period of transition marked by increasing urbanization, the dissolving rural realm, and migration (especially labor migration) toward the industrializing city and toward Europe, which was mostly shaped by the hetero-male structures and hierarchies. But what needs to be acknowledged, reread, and relived is that arabesk has become more than the male, the periphery, and the poor. More than else, it is a refusal of the patriarchal oppression of the

system(s) that dictate a certain way of living, working, and being in this world. I would claim that this refusal to succumb to this oppression is produced by the queen artists, and their gender performativity.

Cansu Demirer explains the term »Neo-Arabesk Queen« first used in 2000s for drag artist babykilla, and which later included female singers like Melike Şahin, Sıla, and Gülşen (all on the 2022 Spotify list): »The concept refers to the transformation of urban culture as well as the regeneration of the arabesk genre over time. Queenness refers to a gender-positive attitude that includes feminism, fluidity, and queer culture.«⁴ Demirer mentions that the initial reactions in the media from

researchers and public to the Spotify news were about Generation Z's dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and hopelessness. Obviously, this explanation is not only simplistic, but also humiliating in that it separates members of Gen Z from their agency. Instead, the lists of artists and songs could be understood as a valuable contribution to queerness and queenness; i.e., this contribution to the arabesk ethos. These artists and songs tell additional stories that pluralize the culture and polyphonize the genre.

Arabesk is labeled as a »degenerate« urban subcul-

ture by the modern definitions I describe above. But seeing the genre as such is a missed opportunity to understand the pain and the struggle of what it means to survive in the city, and perhaps to find a way out of it. This music reveals the broken world, and the broken city, as a phenomenon or a space that flows through those cracks of sound, beat, and radio waves. It leaks to spread among the people who are the very producers of the urban space, who also share the pain and the desire. Right now, arabesk cannot be possessed, claimed, or taken over by a single class, identity, or generation. As a class issue, arabesk might have been born at the periphery of the city, among the migrants, the workers, the poor, but it is reductive to define it as a marginal other, as such. Arabesk is the distress of existing in, surviving, and inhabiting the



Screenshot from an Instagram post,
babykilla singing Gülşen,
April 24, 2021

city. Its vibrations are the pain felt in the body, and in the collective body. Arabesk is the rebellion that moves through the many trans-sections of generations, genders, classes, beliefs, and identities that don't fit into the precarity, and the predetermined values, imposed on the city and its city-zens. And further across home and diaspora, across generations, classes, and identities as urban heritage of the present with its polyphony and the fluidity, it is the neo-arabesk queenness that resists the capitalist which tries to appropriate it, and the modernist which tries to regulate it.

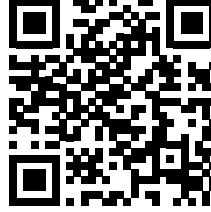
I started singing something between arabesk and blues when I moved to the Netherlands fifteen years

ago. Last summer I made another attempt to return to it, trying to index and mix boxes of cassettes that my friend Philippa Driest found in a house in Rotterdam South. This text is another attempt in my wish and desire to continue singing in this genre, and learn more about the diaspora, and myself, I guess, as part of it. As an epilogue for now, but to be continued, I asked Asena Hayal to create an arabesk DJ set for a sonic conversation in this piece.

Merve Bedir is an architect based in the Netherlands.

Asena Hayal is a cultural manager, producer, and DJ based in Istanbul.

Listen to Asena's DJ set on Soundcloud



1 Kimberly Bradley's note on how Müslüm Gürses sounds to their ears.

2 İsmail Afacan and Sibel Öz, eds.: *Müzikte, Sinemada Ve Edebiyatta 2000 Sonrası Arabesk Yeniden*. Istanbul 2020.

3 »ANIL SAYAN: ARABESKİN RAP'İ,« in: *Yeni e* (July 14,

2019), available online at <https://yenie.net/anil-sayan-arabesk-rap-2/> (accessed January 28, 2024).

4 Cansu Demirir: »Spotify'in Arabesk Müzik Açıklaması: Neo-Arabesk Kraliçeleri Zaferi,« in: *5Harfliler* (December 15, 2022), available online at <https://www.5harfliler.com/>

[spotifyin-arabesk-muzik-aciklamasi-neo-arabesk-kralice-leri-zaferi/](https://www.5harfliler.com/spotifyin-arabesk-muzik-aciklamasi-neo-arabesk-kralice-leri-zaferi/) (accessed January 28, 2024).

Ziba, A Super Silent Beauty



Portrait of Ziba playing a reed instrument

Sarvenaz Mostofey

Ziba, an Afro-Iranian musician, led a groundbreaking folk ensemble that challenged gender norms in 1980s Iran. This musical group has been revisited today through a protofeminist lens. Sarvenaz Mostofey's retelling of Ziba Shirvan's story connects the political and creative dimensions, societal punishment, and the suppression of artistic expression in Iran. Once silenced, Ziba's voice resonates as a symbol of empowerment amidst adversity. In the ongoing Iranian revolution, Ziba's memory becomes necessary, a voice that embodies resistance within women's struggle.



Ziba in white, from private photo albums
of people of Hormozgan

One story has haunted me ever since I heard it. It is a story full of vibration, sadness, and exoticism about an Afro-Iranian woman and musician named Ziba, which means »beautiful« in Farsi. She was a leader for other women, for those who play music and whose music mesmerizes and stands strong, who have a voice that makes some so envious they feel entitled to silence it. Is that possible? The sad truth is yes, but the echo finds its way. This is what I love about sound. Once spoken, the word has its way of coming back against the ephemeral.



Ziba and other band members
play in a ceremony

The story begins with a women's folk music ensemble from the province of Hormozgan in southern Iran. The group consists of three women whose descendants were brought across the Indian Ocean from East Africa to Iran during the Safavid and Qajar periods. The group's leader, Ziba Shirvan, whose heritage traces back to the colonial center of Zanzibar, was a singer and player of the *jofiti* (a double-piped wooden reed played mainly in southern parts of Iran) and the *dohol gap* (a regional cylindrical drum). The other member, Nusra, played the *kaser* (a percussion instrument). Zoli (Zoleikha) played the pipa (another percussion instrument) and was also a background singer. With her *jofiti*, Ziba, along with women from her musical group, were hired to play at weddings. She came with her band intending to make a statement, and she certainly did.

The group shifted from the traditional use and gendered status quo of music at the time by playing »all-male« instruments to perform »women's« songs. Their music was energetic and vibrant – a stark contrast to the patriarchal climate of the region. They played at weddings, mourning rituals, Zar ceremonies, and local religious events.

A few poor-quality tapes do justice to this somewhat »protofeminist« Bandari group, but also the hostility they faced that forced the end of their musical journey. I would like to quote Ziba's cousin revealed to a journalist who published one of the few accounts on Ziba's life that still circulates online:

The revolutionary years were over, was it during the war in 1364?¹ There was a wedding in the Rooz district, and the police rushed in angrily and caught her with Nusra. She was in jail for three days, then they took her to the boulevard and whipped her. I didn't have the courage to go to her. When they finished, she came to our house alone, sat quietly, and didn't say a word. She only cried slowly when I put the ointment on her back. Well, after that day, Ziba didn't sing, she didn't go to weddings, she didn't earn money, and she couldn't do anything.²

Ziba became increasingly isolated and died a few years later. I came across a video of a poet on social media, who was dedicating his text to the memory of Ziba, in which he confirms that he witnessed her being flogged on the roof of a minibus. The image I pictured was a red minibus, a Mercedes-Benz O309.

How can we rethink the political and creative dimensions of Ziba's persecution and punishment of women musicians? Can Ziba's story expand the contemporary context of women's oppression for us? How does Ziba's inescapable end make artistic expression a transgressive, monumental, or iconoclastic act?

The small number of surviving recordings preserving the work by Ziba's group raises questions about this music's social status and roots, as well as the violent history of disintegration and isolation for these musicians. But the most important aspect, in my opinion, is the aesthetics and various practices of mass violence designed to drown out the artists and any expression of public freedom. Ziba's theatrically constructed punishment serves as a chilling and exemplary instance of societal discipline, foreshadowing the methods that would most certainly be employed under Iran's emerging regime.

I would like to draw attention to the monumental setting of the minibus and Ziba's outstanding character that had fallen victim to a patriarchal oppressive system, and was used as an example of instilling fear in others. This scene can be seen as a pyramidal sculpture of social unfreedom, with Ziba at the top and the witnesses surrounding the minibus at the base. Here, the popular and collective memory part of the pyramid testifies to the truth of Ziba's song. The buses and minibuses in Iran are the most accessible form of public transportation. The railroads are still not advanced and well-linked, and the metro system has only been active since the early 2000s and only exists in large cities. Local buses could play the center for public gatherings and a free description of the sociopolitical climate. Most drivers did not play propaganda programs on their radios, but rather a variety of music, either by local musicians or popular Iranian musicians who were forced to leave Iran after 1979. With their mixtapes, the drivers were acting as impromptu DJs with an unofficial, spur-of-the-moment duty to set a mood for their passengers. They take them on a short sonic journey pitting their mixtapes against the norms of the revolutionary regime and taking them to a public realm outside the confines regulated by state policy.

Ziba's voice could be heard at celebrations, and in the minibus on the way to work. In this sense, the flogging of a beloved singer was a public act of violence aimed at terrorizing and suppressing the

voice of resistance, of the people, and their agency regarding what music to play and enjoy.

I revive this memory in light of the ongoing revolution in Iran, where women and ethnic minority working class are taking up resistance in the streets to fight against the dictatorship, a fight for their equal rights. The horror of Ziba's silencing, preserved in the collective memory, still casts a large shadow, regardless of the terror that continues in Iran. It comes close to what Julia Kristeva describes as »abject« – the feeling when an individual experiences or is confronted with the typically repressed »bodily reality« or the intrusion of »the real« into »the symbolic order.«

In her book *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva suggests that the abject is better understood through the experience of extreme situations. In the final chapter of her book, she writes:

Perhaps those that the path of analysis, or scripture, or of a painful or ecstatic ordeal has led to tear the veil of the communitarian mystery, on which love of self and others is set up, only to catch a glimpse of the abyss of abjection with which they are underlaid – they perhaps might be able to read this book as something other than an intellectual exercise.³

Something that can be evoked and identified in us, embodied. Can it also be heard in a loose connection to the words, in the forced silence, or in the rhythm and melodies? Is it recognizable in the high-tempo music that was played in the ceremonies? Or in the songs and sounds that simply tell of daily life?

Veit Erlmann, in his essay »The Sonic Object: Sound and the Legal Imagination,« claims that »perhaps the most promising direction sound studies has taken in recent years, however, is toward a deeper understanding of sound as abjection – that is, as an obliterating force deployed in situations of extreme violence such as war or torture...«⁴

In remembering Ziba's suppressed voice, I want to explore the sonic spectrum to its outer limits – unwanted and aesthetically denigrated – and ask what we hear when we bring a sound and the voice from the past into the context of memory, consolation, or interpretation. How can the woman's voice be positioned as a narrator that brings a different sonic efficacy to our perception? And can it function as a representational voice to listen into the past through

an experiment with her recordings? I will include a recording of an experiment with their music that was conducted during an art residency in Budapest, which involved researching a historical Iranian film about a musical band in the Qajar era, some scenes of which were filmed in Hungary, and I will explain more about this project in the embedded link.

Her story is tragic by violence. There is not much music left of her but I do not want to be hemmed in by frustration saying that Ziba, her band, and their music were forcibly removed from Iran's musical scene. Although this is what happened, I want to think that Ziba's voice could not be silenced as a result of the »aesthetics of social terror.« A female Afro-Iranian musician forms a band, becomes a leader for other women like herself, makes a career in entertaining, and earns money to sustain herself and the other members of the band. Her music proves to surpass the patriarchal and racialized boundaries of her society, she created something that is authentic and engaging. All of this testifies to the fact that together with her group, Ziba pushed on to become a powerful symbol of woman empowerment in the face of adversity.

At the same time, a newly established government, intent on instilling terror and patriarchal control over society, selects this particular marginalized artist to publicly punish as a way to instill fear throughout the local community and send a message to people like her. For Kristeva, the abject is never completely repressed, but remains on the margins. Music becomes a lingering reminder of the social tensions emerging from repression. In the ongoing uprising and women's struggle in Iran, we can listen and look to Ziba and her band differently. Just as women in Iran are actively defying, identifying, and challenging the norms that have been handed down to them, unrolling in time, *tearing the veil of the communitarian mystery*, shouting in the streets, or walking silently in the streets and looking into each other's eyes – splattering *abject, simultaneously repulsive and fascinating*. Listening to and contemplating this story echoes historical discrimination, an injustice intersected with race and gender. In that sense, »Silent Beauty« for me is the urge to listen to what cannot be heard most of the time, because the politics of it are predetermined. Listening to her music raises something powerful, and that is the voice of women.

Sarvenaz Mostofey is an Iranian sound artist and composer currently living in Berlin. Interested in transcending the notion of interdisciplinary art, she has a background in film and theater. She received a BA in photography from Tehran Art University and an MA in ArtScience from the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. Her projects incorporate space as an active attribute in the art-making process, exploring the interconnections between modes of sonic attention and concepts of space. Her recent compositions are based on recordings, archival research, and spatial attributes of everyday life. Sarvenaz is a former resident of Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart.

To listen to the accompanying audio material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Sarvenaz Mostofey, *Ziba and her band in Kecskemét*, 2023

The recording was made in front of the Katona József Theater in Kecskemét, Hungary, as part of an artistic residency at Art Quarter Budapest in 2023. The music is by a folk music group that was active in the 1970s and 1980s in the Hormozgan province of Iran. The names of the band members are Ziba, Zoli, and Nusra.

The work by Sarvenaz Mostofey has been supported by the Berlin Senat through the grant for »Ernste Musik und Klangkunst 2023.«

1 Ziba's cousin refers to the Iranian calendar. According to the Latin calendar it was the year 1985.

2 Mansoureh Shojae: »Avaze Shalagh Khordeye Ziba«

(article).

3 Julia Kristeva: *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York 1982, p. 209.

4 Veit Erlmann: »The Acoustic Object: Sound and the Legal Imagination,« in: *Sound Objects*, eds. James A. Steintrager and Rey Chow. Chapel Hill 2019, p. 158.

Songs to the Sea



Frederic Leighton, *Psamathe*, 1880.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Victoria Myronyuk

Artist, performer, and theater maker Victoria Myronyuk shares an introduction and transcript from her audiovisual installation *Songs to the Sea*, shown as part of the group exhibition *Fragile State* in Liverpool and Odessa in 2019. The original installation immerses the listener in the melodic interpretation of the Greek myth about Psamathe, the goddess of sand, telling the story of her abduction by Aikos, transformation into a seal, and the loss of her son. An excerpt from *Songs to the Sea* can be heard on Solitude's website.



1

Psamathe traditionally sits on the seashore with her back to the audience,
wearing a cheap silk dress
from a European secondhand shop.
Behind her shoulders, there are huge
factory pipes with puffs of smoke.
Dark hair is gathered in a bun
on the back of her head.
She has her hiking boots on her feet.
Psamathe looks into the sea horizon,
and occasionally shakes her head to the beat of the seagulls
and to the blows of iron machines.

The excerpt is from an audiovisual installation featured in the *Fragile State* group exhibition, which was on view in Liverpool and Odessa in 2019. The piece envelops the listener in a melodic portrayal of the Greek myth about Psamathe, the Greek Nereid goddess of sand, detailing her abduction by Aikos, her transformation into a seal, and the subsequent loss of her son.

During my residency in Liverpool, I explored the Lady Lever Art Gallery, where Frederic Leighton's painting with the same title captivated me. It depicted a nude female on the seashore, facing away in a pose of melancholic anticipation. Contemplating this painting, I pondered the varying emotions associated with waiting, influenced by the shoreline. Reflecting in 2023, I revisited this painting and my perceptions of time.

Back then, I contemplated the sea as a unifying force between two distant shores – Liverpool and Odessa. Waiting on each coast held distinct emotions and illusions on the horizon. Viewing the sea from the Ukrainian side symbolized a quest for peace amid the precarious reality of a country at war in the east, a conflict yet to touch me



Victoria Myronyuk, stills from *Songs to the Sea*, 2018–19

personally. That year, my demon was a chronic illness altering my identity through intense medications. In Liverpool, a place of safety, I gazed back toward Odessa's direction, yearning for home and freedom not to be found »in the West.« Strangely, the sea from my native shore symbolized threat and unpredictability, while from the other side, it evoked thoughts of drowning and oblivion. Tranquility and calmness were illusory perspectives.

Psamathe, the goddess of sand, served as a metaphor for an element interdependent with the sea. Its materiality stemmed from tangible energy, not maritime delusions. I identified with Psamathe's story, drawn to her painful experience of corporeal mutation, believing vocal storytelling conveyed it aptly.

Today, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the loss of friends, migration, and another health crisis induced by major stress, the sea reflects a cemetery of grief. Listening to the *Songs to the Sea*, I mourn Psamathe's loss of homeland, identity, and loved ones. In these dark times, I increasingly believe in the transformative power of voice for pain relief and healing.

2

Aikos emerges from the sea,
Europe's brother
He left his island surrounded by high rocks
and arrived on an unfamiliar shore.
The ants scurry behind him –
his slaves, gifted by his father.
Aikos's movements are confident,
dark eyes look into new spaces
and into Psamathe.

3

Psamathe tries to answer Aikos,
but she is unable to utter the words –
they coalesce into a growl.
Psamathe loses strength in her legs
and falls into the sand
it becomes more comfortable to crawl:
her arms break,
fall away from the rest of her body,
the skin burns, peels,
and dark blue scales appear
from under the bloody cracks in the skin.

4

Psamathe is located on the coast
of the Aikos island
looking at the sea horizon.
Next to her, there is her son called Fok.
Aikos looks at them from behind.

5

A local healer tries to comfort Psamathe after the loss of her son.
She changes her into black clothes,
puts a black scarf on a head,
and leads her across the island
to a remote dungeon
where the islanders gather
for a collective ritual.

Victoria Myronyuk is an interdisciplinary artist, performer, and theater maker. She is temporarily based in a Polish village as a result of the war in Ukraine.

To listen to the accompanying audiovisual material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Victoria Myronyuk, Excerpt of *Songs to the Sea*, Liverpool/Odessa, 2018–19

The storytelling (the poetic interpretation of the myth) is in Ukrainian, while the melodic parts are spoken in English, Spanish, and some phrases in Georgian.

Finite Eyes



Dani ReStack, *Show & Tell in the land of Milk & Honey*, video, 2007,
shown during *Finite Eyes*, 2023, anorak, Berlin

A conversation between crys cole, Lukas Ludwig,
Johanna Markert, and James Rushford

Finite Eyes, a collaboration between the curatorial collective anorak and the experimental music duo Ora Clementi, brought together live performance, pre-recorded sound, and moving image for an evening to explore the emotive pull and mobilizing force of utopian visions. In this new collaboration with anorak, cole and Rushford return to central questions brought about by this project on interpretation, the function of memory, and sound within both listener and performer, merging curatorial and compositional techniques. A bespoke staging designed by anorak forms the environment for three new musical sets, which are put in dialogue with film and sound works by Basma al-Sharif, Tolia Astakhishvili & James Richards, Charles Bernstein, Ora Clementi, Marguerite Duras, and Dani ReStack, reflecting on how seemingly empirical codes are manipulated and transformed through the interplay of speech, voiceover, and moving image. Teetering on the boundary where the ephemeral realm of the imaginary converges with situated experiences, *Finite Eyes* raises questions about how utopian visions are informed by collective fantasies that in turn shape perceptions, memories, and imagined futures. *Finite Eyes* premiered at anorak, Berlin, in September 2023, and was restaged at Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart in November 2023.

In this conversation, the artists, Ora Clementi (crys cole and James Rushford) and anorak (Lukas Ludwig and Johanna Markert) draw upon the themes and materials that initially influenced their collaboration to come to fruition as well as their experiences within the programmatic framework of *Finite Eyes*.

anorak (Lukas Ludwig and Johanna Markert): The title of the program *Finite Eyes* is taken from Emily Dickinson's 1862 poem »Before I got my eye put out – (336).«¹ While much has been speculated about Dickinson's poor eyesight – »vision« having double meaning – as sensory perception on the one hand and as an animate imaginary space on the other, is a common thread running through the program. The gray area where perceived information, memory, subjective and collective fantasies meet to shape our sense of »place,« became an exploratory space for our collaboration, in both a creative and

eerie way. We keep coming back to conversations we had a year ago, early in the project. At one of our studio sessions, you brought excerpts from literary texts and descriptions of the utopias that inspired Ora Clementi's latest record *Sylva Sylvarum* (Black Truffle, 2023). The record sonically measures, maps, and conjures otherworldly spaces, using field and instrumental recordings, voice, and processed sounds. Can you talk a bit more about the soundscapes on the album (with those descriptions) and how they transformed in the process of working together?

Ora Clementi (crys cole and James Rushford): The album was an opportunity to play freely with various aesthetic and historical tropes of the soundscape, new-age, ambient, field recording, micropolyphonic chamber music, etc., and dislocate them from their usual musical contexts. Moreover, the effect of otherworldliness was compositionally constructed on the record. There is an uncanniness to the combinations of certain materials, such as recordings of natural fauna layered with hunting decoys, 1990s New Age workstations detuned to sound like just harmonic ratios, and chairs dragged on a concrete floor as an accompaniment to a brass ensemble. We also encountered various utopian texts while making the record, which became both audible source material and prompts for constructing certain instrumental tracks on the album.

anorak: One of the most striking things for us, both regarding the album and the texts you brought, such as Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602), is the excessive amount of detail drawn from more mundane and everyday observations. In a way, these details seem to make the very fabric of utopian imaginaries as they're requisite to summon up a world that is paradoxically always yet to come while holding a sense of familiarity, which allows it to establish an emotional pull – a gravity towards its realization.

It seems that dealing with this emotional pull also means dealing with a temporal or experiential double-bind – echoes or memories of a place yet to come. Thinking of Ora Clementi's use of echoes and mirroring sounds, I wondered about the role of sonic memory for performer and listener in relation to your live performances.

Ora Clementi: The album cycles and echoes material throughout its one-hour run. These materials act as rev-elles (the bells and brass that recur) and refrains (the marimba and synth melodies). Ora loves to work with repetition, not necessarily to create familiarity but rather something *unexpected*. Our abstract and sprawling forms are broken by moments of recurrence. It wasn't intentional, but there seems to be a kind of spatial articulation heard in each sound world on the album. Celestial bird-song gets pulled down to gravelly contact microphones, and certain events in field recordings are augmented and processed as if to suggest a distortion of perspective or dimension. The album's space is constantly being redrawn. The »mirrored« voices are a kind of distillation of this formal porousness. The mirror is never fixed – it

can be a response, an echo, or a distortion. Each time we use this doubling, it changes in process slightly.

We had an ongoing discussion while making the album about the obsessive descriptions of mundane details that you mentioned, which featured in all of the utopian texts that we were exploring. The descriptions of spatial dimensions, architectural details, distances, rules, and regulations seemed almost paradoxical to the visionary intent of these imagined worlds. We found the recurring emphasis on this minutiae fascinating and specifically selected excerpts of these texts for the lyrics and dialogue on the album. We also felt that the relationship between the banal and the fantastic in the texts were connected to the way that we approach Ora's sound world, as we always interplay nonmusical sounds, incidental and raw materials with more obviously »beautiful,« composed, and evocative instrumentation and sounds.

anorak: The way you're describing the echo and repetition as forms creating the unexpected within the familiar became a key curatorial framework for us. We wanted to use it as a structure to perform shifts in scale that allow you to anchor the fantastic in the mundane. When a recorded sound, instrument, or voice is played back at itself and its double remains incomplete, or broken, this shifting creates rifts, disruptions, and openings, which is where I as a listener/viewer can enter.

We tried to emphasize this dramaturgically and worked with spatial, performative, and projected interventions. For example, by dividing the space into two with a screen, the audience chose a side upon entering the space. The semitransparent screen was used both as a room divider and as a projection surface for a shadow play during the first set »O« and a fifty-minute compilation of film and sound works. It created an artificial membrane, which was intended to mirror the instability and porousness of the landscapes we encountered throughout the evening. The screen was lifted after the intermission, then both sides of the audience faced and were exposed to each other for the second half of the evening.

Taking up the sonic inscriptions of mundane sounds, the film and sound work that we added similarly use the lens of the seemingly everyday and banal to point toward larger ideas and contexts. The shifting of scale, also here, became a crucial indicator for the selection. I am thinking of the poet Charles Bernstein's tape-recorded performance *1–100* (1969), in which we hear him counting from 1 to 100 in a room full of people, increasingly raising his voice until it turns into desperate shouting.



Ora Clementi, *O*, performance, 2023, Finite Eyes, anorak, Berlin.
Ora Clementi, *Forest of Familiar Materials*, performance, 2023, Finite Eyes, anorak, Berlin.
Photos: Mizuki Kin



Ora Clementi, *Forest of Familiar Materials*, performance, 2023, Finite Eyes, anorak, Berlin.
 Tolia Astakhishvili & James Richards, *I Remember (Depth of Flatten Cruelty)*,
 video, 2023, shown during Finite Eyes, 2023, anorak, Berlin.
 Photos: Mizuki Kin

A simple act of scaling from the objective, predictable succession of numbers to an utterly unpredictable, messy, subjective, emotional escalation. Similarly simple in form, yet referring to a concrete political context, is Basma al-Sharif's flickering frame-by-frame reconstruction of a home in Amman, Jordan, filmed by the inhabitants shortly before they left. *Turkish Delight* (2010) reveals how domestic banality coexists with the violent reality of exile: »a gestural response to the migration of Palestinians to Jordan, to political refugees who settle neighboring countries waiting for the conflict to end, and refugees with nowhere to return to.« Shown alongside Dani ReStack's *Show & Tell in the land of Milk & Honey* (2007), a frantically edited video diary, recounting her time working and living in Israel, coming to terms with how the »promised land« of childhood lessons brutally clashes with lived experience. The program ended with James Richards' and Tolia Astakhishvili's haunting ani-

mation *I Remember (Depth of Flatten Cruelty)* (2023), using digital imaging software to artificially dream up memories. CGI renderings of abandoned hallways, paired with holiday snapshots and paraphernalia, draw a strangely depersonalized, apocalyptic imaginary landscape of emotional human debris and attachment.

The starting point for the film program was, however, *Les mains négatives* (1987), Marguerite Duras's elegiac monologue on the enigmatic 30,000-year-old handprints in the Magdalenian caves, a meditation on love, identity, and the obsessive search for the origins of humankind, spoken over a one-take shot of the streets of Paris in the early morning hours. Through the performative staging of *Finite Eyes*, we tried to conjure up the presence of a decentralized, collective subjectivity that unfolds between the performer, audience, and the work itself – a fourth-person singular that we imagined listening to *Sylva Sylvarum* and wanted to turn into a

Ora Clementi is the duo of Canadian sound artist crys cole and Australian composer/performer James Rushford. Distinct, disorienting, and highly performative, their work examines voice and vocal mirroring through preconscious speech processes and the codified abstraction of found texts, supported by a vast battery of handmade instruments, electronics, and hyper-color processing.

anorak is a curatorial collective and independent art space in Berlin, run by Lukas Ludwig and Johanna Markert. anorak offers a space for sincere and mutual exchange enabling artists to produce, present, and critically discuss their work. Shaped by long-term collaborations with artists and cultural institutions, they develop unique presentation formats with a focus on artists' moving image, sound, and performance.

To listen to the accompanying audio material, please access the online version of *Solitude Journal 5 – A Sound Was Heard!*



You will find the following material:

Ora Clementi, Excerpt of *Forest of Familiar Materials*, live performance, voices, instruments, electronics, 2023, anorak, Berlin

¹ Emily Dickinson: »Before I Got My Eye Put out – (336).« Poetry Foundation. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52135/before-i-got-my-eye-put-out-336> (accessed February 11, 2024).

Music in a Wired Brain: Experimental Music and the Contemporary Posthuman

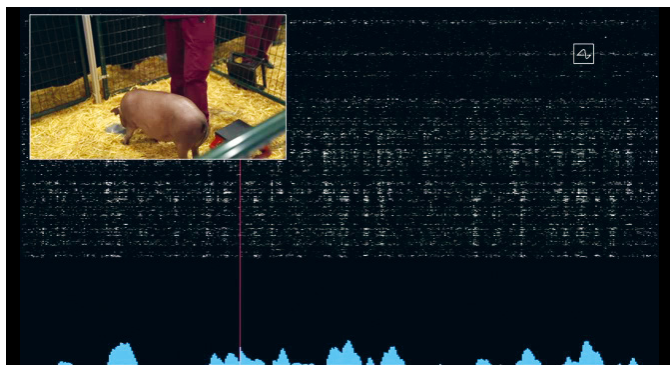
G Douglas Barrett

Researcher and artist G Douglas Barrett argues that experimental music speaks to the contemporary posthuman – a condition in which science and technology decenter human agency amid the uneven temporality of global capitalism since World War II. Barrett's new book, *Experimenting the Human: Art, Music, and the Contemporary Posthuman*, recently published by the University of Chicago Press, makes this case by analyzing the work of experimentalists such as Alvin Lucier, Pamela Z, Nam June Paik, Pauline Oliveros, Laetitia Sonami, and Yasunao Tone. This article condenses material from the book's introduction, »Music in a Wired Brain.«

If the ambitions of one tech corporation come to fruition, listeners may soon be able to stream music directly to their brains. The tech entrepreneur Elon Musk recently confirmed that the ability to listen to music silently without headphones is a feature planned for the neural implant chip his company Neuralink is currently developing.¹

More than an audio device, to be sure, the implant promises to function as a multipurpose brain-machine interface that connects to your phone. With precedents

in medical therapeutics and EEG, the chip physically replaces a small piece of skull and uses a neurosurgical robot to stitch fine electrode threads into the brain. So far, the device has been restricted to animal brain output, although the company has recently announced sign-ups for human trials.² Music streaming remains aspirational as is direct, brain-to-brain communication. Musk's goal is to use the device to meet the supposed »existential threat« of AI by allowing us to merge with it.³



Elon Musk demonstrating his Neuralink chip implanted in the brain of a pig named Gertrude.

Courtesy Neuralink

What can Musk's vision tell us about the status of the human in a moment marked by its purported technological decentering? What role has music played – particularly, experimental music since World War II – in developing and challenging the concept of the post-human? This concept ranges in function between fantasy, engineering program, and historical diagnosis. It refers to the human's relativization – even its potential supersession – amid technoscientific, biological, medical, and economic networks. Posthumanism refers to philosophical and analytical approaches that take this variously demoted, dematerialized, and de-autonomized human as a point of departure.

Rather than surveying posthumanism, I want to ask how the temporality of the postwar era complicates a progressive sequence already implied in the term's use of »post.« What happens to the supposed moving beyond the human in an era when time itself moves forward for some and seems to stand still – or indeed move backward – for others? How has art music composed the subject of this time?

In this short article, I show some of the ways postwar experimental music addresses this posthuman condition – along with the period in which it emerges, known as the contemporary. The contemporary is a concept that derives from art theory during the eighties and nineties as an alternative to postmodernism. It refers to the uneven temporality of postwar global capitalism, what the philosopher Peter Osborne calls its »totalizing but immanently fractured constellation of temporal relations.«⁴

The contemporary posthuman, then, is a function of this nonlinear time. Some suggest we've already become technological posthumans. Meanwhile, others emphasize the extended consequences of people of color, women, and other subaltern subjects having

not been considered fully human in the first place. Experimental music, I contend, addresses this condition not by staying within the formal structures of musical modernism but by producing extra-formal meaning through its immanent transdisciplinary involvement with postwar science, technology, and art movements.⁵ This music not only uses tech like neural networks and artificial intelligence but also intervenes in centuries-old questions about what humans are in the first place.

For instance, in 1965, Alvin Lucier composed *Music for Solo Performer*, a work that calls for electrodes to be attached to the scalp of a musician who sits motionless as their EEG signals activate a battery of percussion instruments. Roughly a year later, Lucier anticipated brain-to-brain communication not unlike Neuralink's more recent vision: »I would love to be able to hook my brain up with the audience's brains so that I can tell them how I hear and think without having to go through the air.«⁶



Alvin Lucier performing *Music for Solo Performer* (1965). Still from Robert Ashley's video *Music with Roots in the Aether* (1976)

In 2004, the composer Pauline Oliveros ruminated on the musical possibilities of the neural implants that futurist Ray Kurzweil discusses: »What if my ears could detach and fly around the space [and] merge with any other ears in the audience?«⁷ Beyond formal structures of musical sound, Oliveros was interested in how such a technology might affect what she calls »future human values.«⁸ And Lucier alludes to cognitive labor, and even political economy, when he refers to his process as »doing work.«⁹

To chart experimental music's interfaces with the posthuman, we must first look to the latter's ideological and technoscientific origins. Cybernetics is a transdisciplinary movement that grew out of the military science of World War II. In Norbert Wiener's watershed 1948

text, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, biological and mechanical systems alike appear as feedback networks that, not unlike a thermostat, seek an equilibrium with their environments.¹⁰ Cybernetics has applied such systems-based models to a panoply of biological, technological, engineering, and economic fields. Cybernetics' genealogical relevance to the posthuman is difficult to overstate.¹¹ Yet if cybernetics challenges the centrality of the human, what is this concept of the human in the first place?



Composer, performer, and technologist Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016). Photo: Rosa Menkman

Ideologically, the posthuman springs from the racializing, gendered, and political-economic construction that is the human of humanism. Since the Enlightenment, philosophers have reckoned with the crisis initiated by René Descartes's dualist split between the mind and body. If the human can be identified as a mind that owns a body, liberal political theorists figured, then such a cognitive subject can effectively lease out the body's productive capacities and conscript it into the labor relations of market liberal capitalism.

In a notorious passage, liberal political theorist John Locke wrote in 1690, »Every man has a property in his own person.«¹² Rather than being identical to a body, the human – rendered not accidentally as »man« – possesses one. This concept of the human can already be seen to dematerialize the body – along with its attendant markers of gendered, racial, and sexual difference – and set the stage for the posthuman.¹³

In a different yet related path to the posthuman, the eighteenth-century philosopher Julien Offray de La Mettrie expanded Descartes's contention that the human body is, essentially, an automaton. If the mind is truly separate from the body, then the body could, at least in theory, be replaced by prosthetic organs, body parts, and, potentially, a full mechanical body: a *Machine Man*.¹⁴ Responding to this idea, in 1964

the artist Nam June Paik created a work titled *Robot K-456*, which, I've argued, connects eighteenth-century musical automata to cybernetics while underlining the radical self-negating potential of human labor.¹⁵ Apart from labor and political economy, though, how are we to approach the racializing and gendered aspects of »man«?

Given its apparent shortcomings, some wonder why we don't simply throw out humanism's vexed concept of the human. Still, others see the only way out as *through* it – the human of humanism, that is, may provide the very conditions of possibility for its overcoming. Posthumanism protracts a profound skepticism of the human already found in post-Enlightenment antihumanists such as Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Derrida. Recently, the theorist Alexander Weheliye has studied the historical effects of the restriction of »man« in Locke and others to what he calls the »heteromasculine, white, propertied, and liberal subject,« which renders all others as exploitable nonhumans subject to the dehumanizing oppression of colonialism and slavery.¹⁶

While posthumanism gestures beyond the category of the human, many endure the extended effects of having been excluded from it. Such gestures, according to Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, »effectively ignore praxes of humanity and critiques produced by black people, particularly those praxes which are irreverent to the normative production of ›the human‹ or illegible from within the terms of its logic.«¹⁷ Black feminist theorist Sylvia Wynter, a key reference for Weheliye, draws on cybernetics to argue not simply for abolishing the human of humanism but rather for reinventing it through a kind of cultural-biological »feedback loop.«¹⁸



Pamela Z performing Voci, 2003.
Photo: Donald Swearingen

The composer Pamela Z uses musical feedback loops in her own reimagining of the human. Her work

Voci (2003), which Z describes as a »polyphonic mono-opera,« consists of eighteen scenes that combine vocal performance with digital video and audio processing.¹⁹ Not only does Pamela Z use audio communications technologies, but she also considers their cultural meanings. In a scene titled »Voice Studies,« for instance, she addresses the problem of »linguistic profiling« in housing discrimination – callers being denied apartments based on the sound of their voice. While contemplating a technological future, Z considers the continuing exclusionary effects of humanity's past. What, then, *is* the human?

If you ask Immanuel Kant, we're social and political beings. In one of his last texts, the Enlightenment humanist couldn't define the human without reference to a hypothetical society of aliens who can't tell lies. Unlike these aliens, humans, for Kant, live in a »cosmopolitical« society of creatures whose thoughts may differ from their speech – a state that requires us to unite against deception and other such evils.²⁰ More recently, after realizing extraplanetary vocal music, Oliveros mused on the social effects of communication technologies: »What if we could share our thoughts instantly over a network as computers now do?«²¹ Could the posthuman upend the kind of interiority Kant deems essential to our humanness?

Chips in our brains may not prevent us from lying. But in Slavoj Žižek's recent book on Neuralink and another German idealist, *Hegel in a Wired Brain* (2020), the Slovenian philosopher understands Musk's brain implants as threatening the very basis of private thought and, indeed, our ability to lie.²² What would

happen to such a capacity if we were to realize Musk's fantasy of »merging« with AI? How would we understand ourselves in the absence of a boundary between interior and exterior subjective space? How would we experience music in a wired brain?

As I conclude in my new book *Experimenting the Human: Art, Music, and the Contemporary Post-human*, postwar experimental music composes and challenges the contemporary posthuman.²³ Picture Pamela Z sculpting the sound of her voice using her system of wearable sensors known as the BodySynth. Imagine Oliveros and others sending their voices to the moon and back using radio signals. Hear the evolving electroacoustic textures the musician and instrument designer Laetitia Sonami creates with her Lady's Glove. Or, consider Nam June Paik's walking, talking musical sculpture, *Robot K-456*. What these musical artworks have in common is an engagement with the notion that the privileged position of the human has found itself increasingly challenged through cultural, biological, medical, economic, and technoscientific means.

Yet rather than the postmodern, the temporality proper to this posthuman subject is the contemporary, while the art form that most rigorously and imaginatively responds to it is experimental music. I make this claim more thoroughly in *Experimenting the Human*, recently published by the University of Chicago Press. Through a series of six case studies, respectively, on Lucier, Pamela Z, Paik, Oliveros, Sonami, and Yasunao Tone, I show how these artists both produce and reflect on the contemporary posthuman.

G Douglas Barrett works on experimental music and contemporary art as a scholar and occasional practitioner. His critical writing has appeared in international peer-reviewed journals such as *Cultural Critique*, *Discourse*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Mosaic*, *Twentieth-Century Music*, and *Contemporary Music Review*. His new book, *Experimenting the Human: Art, Music, and the Contemporary Posthuman*, was published in 2023 by the University of Chicago Press. His first book, *After Sound: Toward a Critical Music*, was published in 2016.

1 Neuralink: »Neuralink Progress Update, Summer 2020,« August 28, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVvmgjBL74w> (accessed January 4, 2024). Prior to the event, which YouTube video documents, Elon Musk tweeted that he anticipated music streaming to be a feature of Neuralink. See Anthony Cuthbertson: »Elon Musk Claims His Neuralink Chip Will Allow You to Stream Music Directly to Your Brain,« *The Independent*, July 21, 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/elon-musk-neuralink-brain-computer-chip-music-stream-a9627686.html> (accessed January 4, 2024).

2 Neuralink: »Neuralink's First-in-Human Clinical Trial is Open for Recruitment,« September 19, 2023, <https://neuralink.com/blog/first-clinical-trial-open-for-recruitment/> (accessed January 4, 2024).

3 See the white paper: Elon Musk and Neuralink, »An Integrated Brain-Machine Interface Platform with Thousands of Channels,« *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 21.

4 Peter Osborne: *The Postconceptual Condition: Critical Essays*. New York 2018, p. 28 (eBook). See also Peter Osborne: *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London 2013.

5 In this way, experimentalism qualifies as a kind of postformalist music or what I have elsewhere called »musical contemporary art.« See G Douglas Barrett: »Contemporary Art and the Problem of Music: Towards a Musical Contemporary Art,« *Twentieth-Century Music* 18, no. 2 (June 2021), pp. 223–48.

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21 Oliveros: »Quantum Listening,« p. 84. For my essay on Oliveros and SETI, see G Douglas Barrett, »Deep (Space) Listening: Posthuman Moonbounce in Oliveros's *Echoes from the Moon*,« *Discourse* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2021), pp. 321–50.

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23 G Douglas Barrett: *Experimenting the Human: Art, Music, and the Contemporary Posthuman*. Chicago 2023.

Editors' Closing Statement

Jazmina Figueroa and Denise Helene Sumi

A Sound Was Heard!

And We Can Feel It! This is the expression with which we close the fifth edition of the *Solitude Journal*. The act of creating or experiencing sound, whether it be through music, noise, tone, rhythm, word, lyric, or melody, affects both our body and senses. Sound moves and resonates within us, and the movements we feel can encourage both physical and emotional effects. Sound is also a phenomenon that resonates across spatial, temporal, affective, and political dimensions – impacting both inner and outer worlds, alongside the temporalities of different species. Through sound, we are able to sense similarities and dissonances, as well as the dis/harmonies, relations, and ruptures that exist between them. Sound validates the slippery, roguish nature of coexistence. The sonic becomes obvious in the discordant buzzing and choppy hissings of traffic while waiting at a crowded intersection, or the rhythm of one's own or another person's breathing. They emerge when rehearsing with a choir or setting up a make-shift karaoke session, recording the sound of a seed's growth as a bio-acoustic enthusiast, joining others on the dance floor, or attending a listening session in a concert hall, parking lot, or swamp. They echo when digging through albums in a record store, making an instrument, or collecting sound clips from video snippets circulating online.

The idea to create a journal that explores sonic environments came from working on the nineteenth Web Residency, *Algorithmic Poetry*. With the invited residents, we explored the harmonic dissonance that binds sonic and poetic traditions to contemporary sound practices, with a special focus on the use of machine learning interventions to create sound as a poetic device. *Solitude Journal 5* expands on these resonant threads, inviting readers to join an exploration of the sonic space's polyphonic web while understanding this space as a phenomenological, as much as an embodied physiological/psychological, one. The sonic is represented in concrete form through socio-cultural, geopolitical, mechanical, material, biological, and other palpable registers. Bringing together voices of current and former fellows to examine these dimensions, the *Journal* would like to offer a strong sense of the sonic evocations that go beyond aesthetic, audible, or linguistic signals, understanding the sonic realm for its affecting, materialized, and intimate dimensions. These reverberations allow for communion and assemblage with compassion, profundity, enlivenment, and remembrance.

How does sound affect, and resonate with, bodies? How does sound travel through space-time configurations and thus allow for differentiated spatial and temporal perception? One way to trace it is through what Western astronomy has claimed as the first sound waves that originated from a nascent universe. Prior to the formation of stars, planets, or galaxies, the universe existed as a dense, plasma-like fluid that resonated sound. NASA's description conjures images of a primordial state that is so intensely hot that particles couldn't bind together upon collision, and instead bounced off one another. This environment alternated between gravitational attraction and repulsion, generating waves of pressure – and sound propagated through the plasma. As the universe gradually cooled off, these sound waves became »frozen« within the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation. That radiant energy inspires the

collective imagination: But what if the atmosphere becomes so thick again that we humans can't hear the sound waves repelling anymore?

Solitude Journal 5 begins with a short science-fiction essay that imagines a future in which sound has been swept away: In its absence the atmosphere makes it difficult to breathe. Our last article, which addresses a similar scenario of an inaudible present, contemplates innovations upheld by some of today's tech positivists, who imagine futures of listening and communication experiences in which it may soon be possible to stream music directly to our brains. Between those contributions, this issue of *Solitude Journal* explores themes related to an abundance of aural experiences, and tells of a sound, or soundings, that act as carriers and conveyers. Certain historical progressions and technologies are illustrated throughout these pages, chronicling how sound is perceived as both medial and vibrational correspondence. The influence of sound and its transmissions takes various forms in this journal as retellings, recital, rehearsal, fiction, provocation, theory, or other frequencies. Some contributions detail and expand upon experiences of virtuosic failure and utopian imagination, the diminishing centrality of human agency, or amplify the certain sonorous circumstances set against class, geopolitical, heteronormative, patriarchal, and capitalistic structures. Other pieces featured in this publication should not be seen as definitive storylines but rather permeate through deep time as a continual sonic clash and necessary reevaluation of listening regimes.

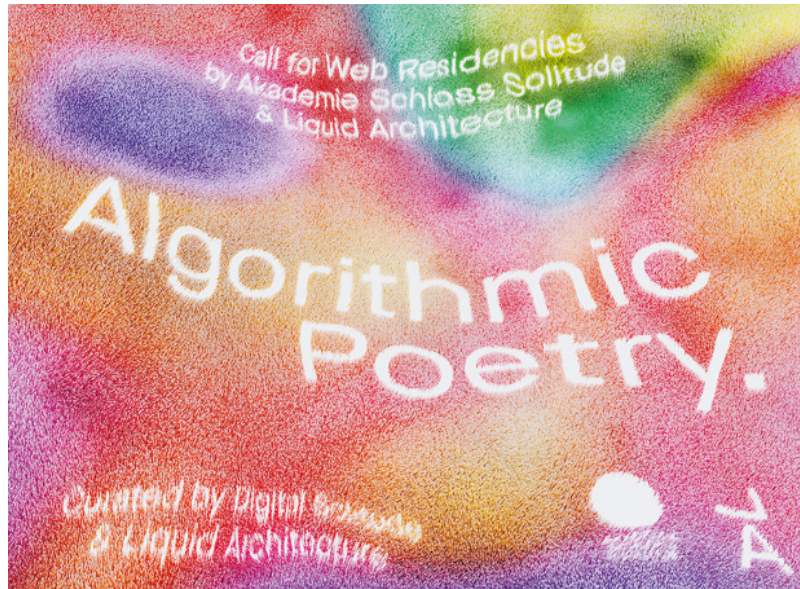
The notion of a sound to suggest that some form of sound was detected or perceived by someone or something subsequently evolved into coming together for this *Journal*. There are sonic residues of a voice, recorded live in performance by an experimentalist, remembered as a rebellious musical ensemble, shaped by way of exchange between artists, music makers, poets, and philosophers, or between species and entities – all of which intertwine, in this publication, our individual and relational encounters with a sound. The heard sound gestures to the metaphor of sound as repository, a sort of dataset for such noisy happenings. A sound that was heard, even in silence, reverberates in the connective tissue within collective presence. *And we feel its impact!*

We, the editors, would like to express our utmost gratitude to all the writers and artists and Akademie Schloss Solitude's staff members who have trusted us with the task of compiling their contributions to this collection of sonic encounters. We are grateful to Neo Muyanga for reviewing the initial call for participations, to Kimberly Bradley for her invaluable oversight and editing the works, biographies, and descriptions anthologized in this issue; Beton.studio for handling the design; and to Kenneth Constance Loe for the last phase of proofreading, ensuring its resonance extends beyond these pages.

We hope you enjoyed listening to and reading this issue.
Denise Helene Sumi and Jazmina Figueroa

Algorithmic Poetry.

Web Residency by Liquid Architecture and Digital Solitude



Graphic design by Anne Lippert and cxyyl

How may sound poetically speak with algorithms? What are the limits of creativity when it comes to machine learning? Should algorithms become »noisy« to make room for the unexpected?

These and other questions kicked off the 19th Web Residency entitled »Algorithmic Poetry.« back in 2023. Created over a period of six months, the works by web residents Bola Chinelo, Fileona Dkhar, BF/kirby fary, Sherese Francis, Hannan Jones & Shamica Ruddock, and Moritz Nahold & Kenneth Constance Loe – now online – engage critically, poetically, and playfully with sound and our everyday data-driven world. By using sound, listening, and/or recording practices the works expand the notion of algorithms and the ways in which data-sets are managed and information is gathered. Echoing technological implementation, experimentation with »slippages,« »in-betweens,« »negative spaces,« »craft-

ing and glitching,« as well as »embodiment of words« is the throughline of the works.

We invite you to access the various projects and additional interviews by the web residents via the website of Akademie Schloss Solitude.

With works by: Bola Chinelo, Fileona Dkhar, BF/kirby fary, Sherese Francis, Hannan Jones & Shamica Ruddock, and Moritz Nahold & Kenneth Constance Loe



Imprint

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