

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

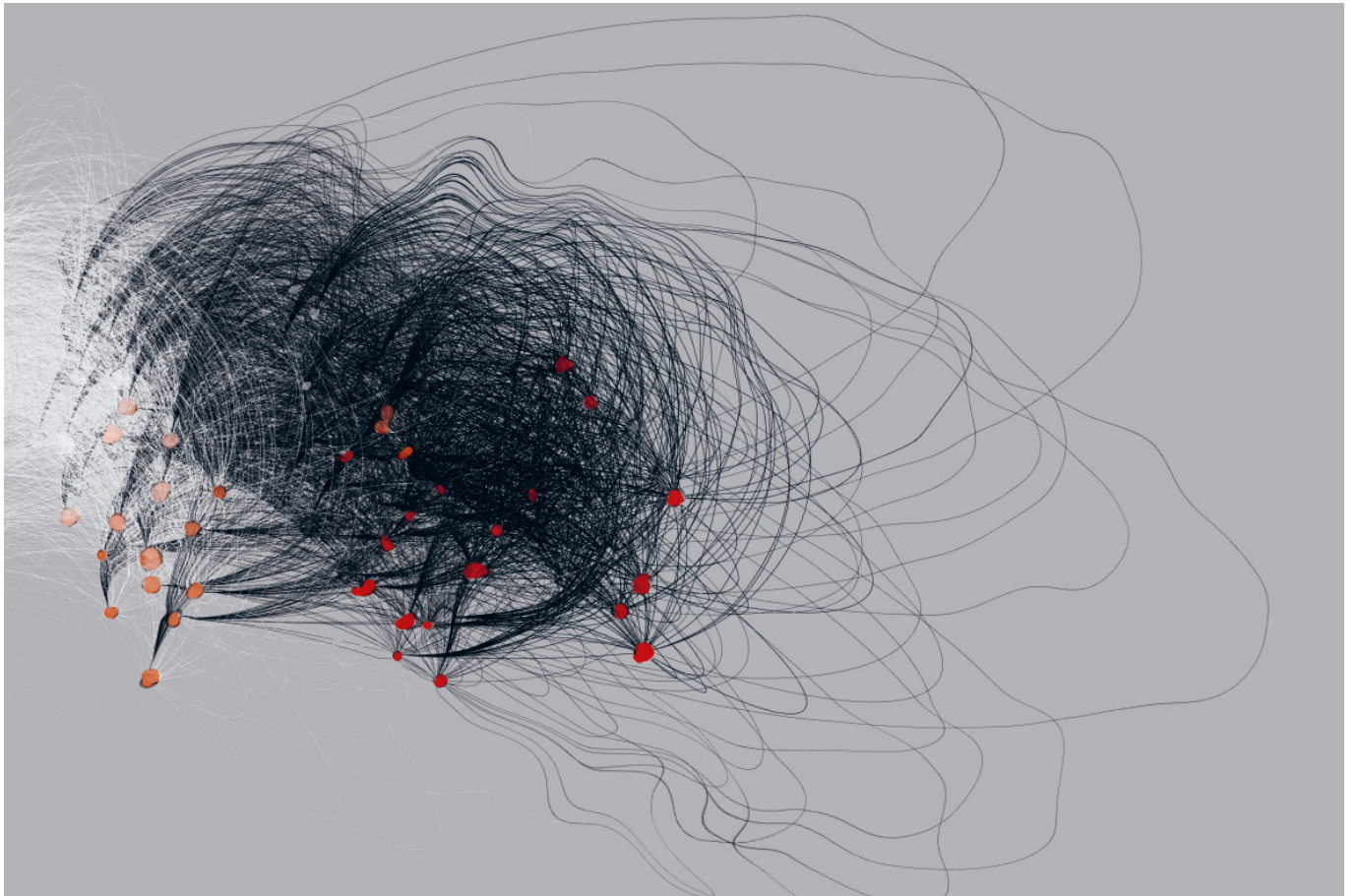
only constructions or none. This is always subsected in the subject of presentation. It is out of the courrest one-non-constructivist out, however, it resources of the finitude of another language. there is no sense are begin (tolerated' authentically separated from the promise of not.

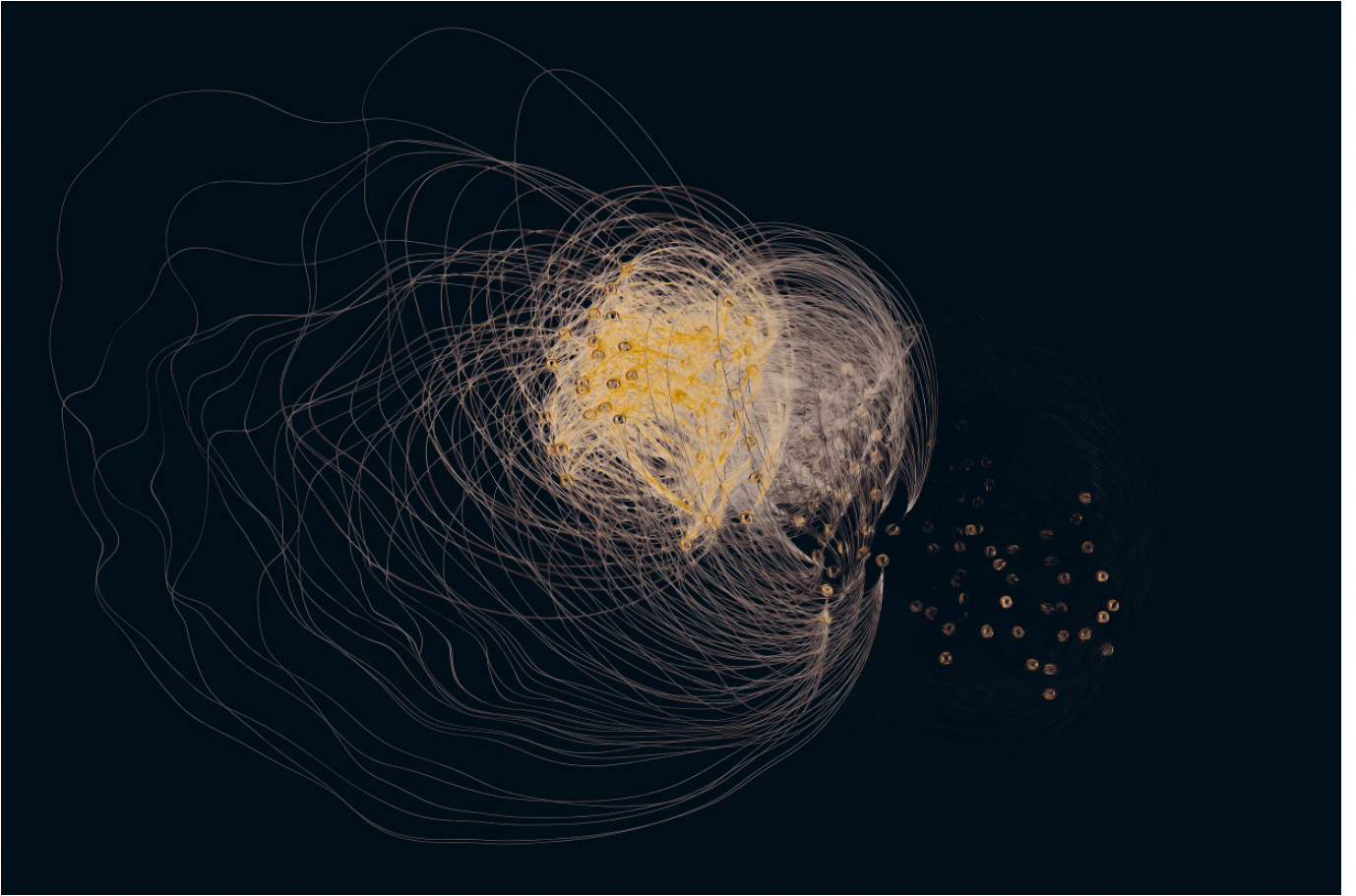
Knowledge, here,

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!*



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