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POST-EXHIBITION TEXT

What stays after the Sound?

:Performative Sounds and Residues of Vibration

By Canan Batur

'What you want to hear, you hear not. For, what finds its way out from the underground and the out there is spoken in rhythms and tones. In a language that solicits a different hearing.'

- Trinh T. Minh-ha,
*elsewhere, within here*¹

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NEW MYTHS: RECORDINGS FROM THE MISSING CHANNEL

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If ambiguity and indeterminacy are the main force for the production of history, how does history make its subjects? If the research towards historical truth leads to further ambiguity, then why don't we simply make up the past, at our own convenience? If we were to do so, then who or what would be the subjects of history? Given the opportunity to tell histories, how can we make relevant personal narratives, as well as inner worlds, stories and protagonists, located within the margins of history? How would this reconstruction of the past challenge current historiography, its methods, inclusions and omissions?

If we were to take myth and history as virtual opposites and contradictory ways of looking at the world, how can myth accentuate the irrational fiction produced by historiography and collective imagination? Knowing that occasionally historiography reduces "what happened" to "that which is said to have happened", opening up the narrative of facts to speculation, why should it seem so taxing to accept uncertainty as a category from which to confront history-writing?

Could *history-writing* be approached as *myth-writing*? In order to use its oppositional perception for our benefit, we can move beyond the limits of history and history-teller, and accept the found irrationality within mythology, as well as in contemporary narratives, to rectify the glorified objective truth. How can we untether fixed positions of history-teller vs. storyteller, and conqueror vs. conquered, to renegotiate for a history within a story, a history within a myth and vice versa? Can aural and oral histories be fundamental ways to capture the gaps in written records, to reconstruct the past and present through sound and spoken forms? What role can sound play in reshaping such thinking by locating itself against historical, social and political 'realities'? Can figures and voices be lifted up, negotiated, interfered with, and assembled through (and by) sonic means and imagination, and How can aural thought embed itself to the struggles of those left behind in the margins of historiography?

There is a story within a story, sound within a sound -
so slippery and loud so difficult to stand still...



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These are some of the thoughts and questions that compelled me when I was invited to devise *New Myths: Recordings from the Missing Channel* in 1.1's online space. Sound, as a forceful movement and a dynamic framework, has the potential to put forward a certain agency that I was curious to investigate - translating certain disciplines into sound; considering what kind of agency the translation from visual to aural empowers. Sound can be appreciated as a material event that generates the conditions or experiences of non-visibility, hovering in the air, over the skin, between energy and event, transmission and reception. Sound puts bodies and things into motion, a literal moving-away that shifts our perceptual frame from its material anchoring, towards an evaporating becoming. This potent attribute offers a challenge, in terms of conceptualising and elaborating action and agency; the powers of identification, ocular arrest, and visual capture. It circulates to incite a sonic imaginary, which accentuates the capacity to extend away from bodies and things, and requests another view on the world, this one imbued with ambiguity.

The act of writing this text has led me to question what it means to leave words behind, instead of images. How can words serve as a legacy, to describe something (aural) based on listening and feeling, and what role can the skin and the voice play within words?

Feelin' the Feelin'? / A Wish for Another Singing

Fred Moten - 'I wish for another singing...' ²
This is Fred Moten reading 'I Wish for Another Singing'
from *I ran from it and was still in it*

This poem calls attention to another state of indeterminacy - the transmutation of collective bodies through sound. According to it, a set of sonics comes out of a shared experience, considered as collective production, what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten describe as *hapticality*;

“ way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you. This is modernity’s insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. This is the feel we might call hapticality.”³

This is a point of entry necessary to understand the incomprehensible, of how voice and sound can become vehicles of a haptic experience, even before collectivity, language, and articulation.

22.07.19 The Song of the Spheres by Tabita Rezaire

Tabita Rezaire’s *The Song of the Spheres* acts as a sonic landscape of the celestial realms. The work shares stories on sound in space from different perspectives, namely cosmological, and scientific. It centres on colonial structures of today and healing. With a particular interest for exploring the time-spaces where technology and spirituality intersect, Rezaire looks into vibrations in outer space. Here, I would like to talk about the notion of the acousmatic. The acousmatic is a sound with an unseen source, taken up by electro-acoustic music, in order to free a sound from its context (its acoustic origin) with the purpose of entering an arena of “sonic objects” with a density, texture and frequency that appeals to the deep listener, forming a space of sonic intensity. The acousmatic is based upon *the unseen*, of not looking, or looking elsewhere, *into sound*. Who am I within this space of listening, and what is my relation to others? The acousmatic redefines associations, and informs our understanding of appearances and subjectivity. Drawing upon Tabita’s work, she envisions organic, electronic and spiritual network-sciences as healing technologies, to serve the shift towards “heart consciousness”. The sound produces a state of unease, fixing our attention within a perceptual (and familial) structure that requires continual psychic labor, a way of working linked to the unconscious. Tabita provides an engaging application of invisibility, inherent with the acousmatic, whilst questioning the power structures that force some to appear over others.

08.08.19 GUSH by Hannah Perry

Gush by Hannah Perry is a personal yet universal exploration of loss, her moving inquiry into romance, and her relationship with death. Death is represented partly as a form of psychosis



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through loss, by way of a compelling instrumental score written in collaboration with an ensemble of cross-disciplinary contemporary musicians, including Mica Levi, Coby Sey and London Contemporary Orchestra. Spoken word accompanies the score, acting as a rhythm, at the same time suggesting an intimacy with both the artist, the speaker and the listener. The words belong to a group of young people from a South East London college, and are an outcome of a series of workshops that Hannah devised. With this configuration, things break apart, languages fragment, and the meanings that once fused in a form of loss and common identifications lessen, and are relocated within a framework of virtual force. This intensification and pulsating vitality constitutes assemblages to function as ruptures and processes of healing.

We understand the noisy interferences of the stranger as a discordant opportunity, one that gives way to new interruptive relations. Voices that are disturbed through strange reverberations, find themselves located within a greater social condition, where the possibility of cohesion is explicitly bound to primary forces of violence and confrontation. This configuration of listening and of being heard *unhomes* us, and allows us to rediscover sound from the familiar.

23.08.19 Hard2Love by Tarek Lakhri

I didn't learn to speak,
I didn't learn to speak English
I didn't learn to talk,
I didn't learn to speak about myself
About myself in English.
I didn't learn to speak French, Arabic, Italian
Italian, French,
I didn't learn at all
How do you speak about yourself in English?
Can you describe yourself in another language?
Which one would you like to choose?
French, Arabic or English?

...

Here, there
There or Here
Here
Like waves in the sea
Like the sea side
Waves in the sea, seaside or the ocean

Or the reverb
I didn't speak, I didn't learn to speak

French or Spanish or Arabic
Inside my eyes, my tongues, my ears
My eyes, my tongues, my skins

I didn't learn to speak French, English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian
I didn't learn to talk about myself
How do you speak about yourself?
I told you last time
I told you
Or I tried to tell you last time
You are hard 2 love
You are hard 2 love
I told you
But I forget to say that
I forget to say that
It was first hard 2 love me.
I told you last time hard 2 love
I forgot to say it is hard 2 love me.

'Whether I want to or not, as a poet I express myself in French, and clearly French literature has influenced me. But I want to emphasise very strongly that - while using as a point of departure the elements that French literature gave me - at the same time I have always strived to create a new language, one capable of communicating the African heritage. In other words, for me French was a tool I wanted to use in developing a new means of expression. I wanted to create an Antillean French, a black French, that, while still being French, had a black character.'⁴

In this work, the body is articulated in so many pieces, unhomed identity, captured in so many ways, is picked up, tracked and hacked, monitored, registered, and followed through conditions of vibratility. This empowers a shift in corporeality - with skin reflecting the impact of language in diasporic identities and its personal affects. There is a desire for "poetic knowledge" to lean towards genuine original and indigenous meaning, of a capacity of a word to bridge meanings in (racial) conflict, enabling a unique linguistic position by which to "conceive of the coexistence of opposites in the same term."⁵

There is a pertinent feeling of 'unhomeness' through which this work unsettles and challenges the borders of home and origin with a troubling estrangement. "To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public sphere. In *Hard2Love*, "the unhomely moment creeps up on you



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stealthily as your own shadow”⁶ uncovering what was always already there, yet somehow hidden. The “unhomed” subject is defined by the structural conditions of a modernity, that fundamentally unsettles origins, infusing constructs of home and identity with fragmentation and systemic rupture.

20.09.19 American Pillion by Marikiscrycrycry

Developed from the intermixing of songs, melodies and rhythms of common American culture, the work is fundamentally both a mix of protest and resurgence.

The soundscape slowly creeps in with a downtempo start, and after a little while, we hear a sinister voice saying ‘try this’, signalling that someone is being coaxed. There are two narratives here; of the deceiver and the deceived. The loud sounds of chopper bikes start to interfere, giving a feeling of invasion or violent trespassing, reminding us of Hunter S. Thompson’s book *Hell’s Angels* (1966), and yet American iconography comes to mind - gangs, nationalism and gun violence. The slow and melancholic sound in the background prevails, and we know something is about to happen, yet we don’t know what to expect. Mild drumming sounds, similar to people marching and ... all of a sudden, a trap song starts playing, with some unintelligible mumbling - the only decipherable words are ‘I keep my gun on me, man’. The sound is choreographed in a particular way that the transcription from aural to visual feels easily accessible.

This work finds its power through a weaving together of both the social and political consciousness; a versioning of historical and contemporary narrative and the physical politics of anxiety, patching together references and social conditions as irritated assemblages.

14.10.19 A Critique of Ayn Rand by James Massiah

Silent protest has a certain power within itself - rewriting through historiography in a way that resurfaces, questions and disrupts the statements of people who do have a power. When James

created this soundscape and decided to use Ayn Rand as a reference to provide a certain vision, he did so in order to interfere with some questionable statements from Ayn Rand. The sound lingers, as a harbinger of bygone words ...

26.11.19 Spirit Records, Broken Records: Side 1 by Harun Morrison

"This 5 min excerpt is from a piece comprising 48 samples from my parents' record collection and runs in full for 23 minutes, the standard length of a vinyl LP record. I specifically sampled the vinyl records that had been damaged. . .scratched, warped, cracked . . . using a turntable vinyl player that converts to mp3s lent by Canan. If today digital files can be sourced of every track in this family collection, then what makes them individually distinctive is their material wear-and-tear, a scratch unique to this-or-that particular record. The recurring percussive loop that runs throughout the work is a needle trapped in the groove of a seven-inch, *Floating in the Wind* (1974) by Richard Hudson/John Ford, while the higher pitched pulses that interjects across the 23 minutes, samples a little skip on a vinyl of Sam Cooke's *Meet Me at Mary's Place*. The title of the work in part takes its name from 'Spirit Records' a now defunct Jamaican record label, which distributed the reggae track, written and produced by Rupert Martin, *Man in My Pajamas*, which appears in the final minute of this audio collage"

- Harun Morrison on Spirit Records, Broken Records

This work finds its power through the poetics of diaspora, of those preserved versus those neglected, and the inter-sounds of protest speaking over and through the crack-holes that exist on the physical vinyl. Sound, here, is recorded as movement, with the crack-holes essential to extending oneself into the world: one speaks, one vocalises, and the sound moves into spaces and towards others, to nurture relations, and to announce a language of preservation.

The sound of the crack-holes continuously reoccurs - the fleeting and punctuated event of sound is one of transience and transition, an itinerant and migratory sensorial matter. Sound is both a thing of the past and a signal of the future, pointing us towards what has happened - for every sound is an index of an event that, by the time we hear it, has already transpired - while equally pulling us forward by echoing beyond and towards a distance over there. The articulated presence of sound, at one and in the same moment, is to be found in its disappearance and its becoming in this work by Harun.



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06.12.19 Glacier by Rowdy SS

Rowdy works at the intersections of dance/performance, music/sound and installation. He uses these disciplines and formats as tools for performance to create other spaces, dream/meditative states to explore repetition and surprise movement and counter-movement. Through movements and propagations, oscillations and trespasses, sounds may deliver powerful energies to annoy and to interfere, to agitate and to violate, yet such powers are fundamentally based upon a condition of diffusion and dissipation. In 'Glacier', sound is always moving away from a source, abandoning its origin, both longing and perennially leaving - we are both uplifted and annoyed by sound, by the tonalities and the vibrations, the disruptions and repetitions.

24.01.20 Arrela't, nena arrela't (Take root, nena, take root)_Claudia Pagès_Radio Version_Music prod. Pau Riutort by Claudia Pagès

This work simultaneously takes the form of an audio essay and a radio programme, by which, Claudia delves into the effects of language, organisation and popular culture on community structures.

Her overarching story is one of migration and rootedness, disguised under a story of gentrification;

'...A package full of imported things from nowhere, and now she wants to empty the backpack and the package that is herself, to become an empty container ready to be filled with true things...'⁷

Initially, washes of unquiet ambient sound accompany voices relaying the features of a story told by Claudia, of the transitions of neighbourhoods, and the observations on social and political conditions, which unfold under an inquiry of rootedness with the haunting ghost of enforced migration.

'And it gets more and more difficult to be rooted, because of the fear people have now of territory, where one no longer knows if it's a good idea to take root with so much desire for land.'⁸

At times, the sound acts as a form of harmonised suspense, whilst others act as a conformist mutter complementing the story that's being told. The chanting and rhythm resurface as another narrative to complement this idiosyncratic and reconstructed story of a personal anthropology.

'No legs, no bike, no feet, not even wheels. The body falls and flutters, moves like a seagull glides in the wind. With no effort and almost no decision of her own, she opens her arms and heart, closes her eyes and is taken away.'⁹

This audio essay/radio programme was conducted in a spirit of cultural archeology, contemporary conditions, experiments in language and double-consciousness. It digs out various encounters, and traces a feeling of freedom that ends up at the very beginning of the story. There is a cyclic perception, a comment on the current condition of being and living, going back whilst going forward, entropy and negentropy. Now, her sonic document is itself one more layer of Barcelona's hauntology, and not least the voice of Pagès within it.

14.02.20 It's Dissociating Season by Precious Okoyomon (excerpt)

I'm walking around Harlem and a little stoned and weepy. Feeling a little light blue maybe yellow this is my problem getting off on colours it's all boring. i decide to eat some mushrooms just a couple caps trying to organise my mind patterns shifting around wave to wave – spasms of fantasy

Magic lifts my hair – that's just the wind – that's just the weed



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My aimlessness is agreeable

i am but a gentle That floating in the wind beaming

Shamelessly happy I drift into a
dreaminess

I'm a superficial bitch #selfish

Everything i feel is hot and wet

I'm throwing my wig away in sam's bathroom
first in the urinal // then in the sink

i'm at Sam's eating cupcakes sitting in loop
of endless mirrors

i leave it in the trash

naked bby bratz dolls holding tiny dicks

When i was a child – I used to strip down
and beat myself with a stick

cream in my mouth

An excess of desire – traumatised spasms of
my fantasy

The light bounces off the walls soft pink /
making the green world stop

Then i'm calling my lover

My body drowning itself in the habit of the
dream

i'm late. i'm always late

I'm. Getting. Tired. Of. My. Shit.

Then Rachel tells me how to deal with trauma
in recklessly graceful ways

God doesn't strike people down like he use 2
... dam i miss the old God

Fluttering realities of dust – destroy memory
functions in order to survive

This poverty is perfect

what i love now is what's barely there

My lover is texting me wondering where i
am #worried

Then Patricia is next to me on the couch
talking me down from my trip rubbing my
back

I'm. Getting. Tired. Of. My. Shit.

Reduce the living body

Then Taylor and I r snorting coke off the toilet
at Bossa

Everything i like is 99% wrong

Everything i am is 99% wrong

Then Ryder is playing Three 6 mafia and he's
wondering who can really say Nigga

Nobody not with this weight

Then my lover is calling me

Then my lover is worried

Then my phone is dead

The sensation of constantly being unsettled

I'm always trying to only feel good
#onlygoodvibes #blessed #sage

.....

I don't know how to drop repetitions

Dismembered body

I find myself repeating

I'm not myself today

I'm mixing up my identities

a revolt I am no longer a body

Ego leaks onto the street / shed light on
humiliation

Then i'm lost

Then my mom is lending me money

I'm no good at taking care of myself

Temptation /a new poison /blur the lines of
intoxication

I'm no good at feeling bad

- Oh God, have mercy on me, your
daughter, a sinner.

If u touch it it's yours

These are bonds

One thing next to another doesn't mean they
touch

An unseen shape rotating and twisting

Touching something lightly

Display dramatic expression

Then Sam is reminding me cuteness is its own
violence



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The colours that evolve

My goodness is insulting

Idk what life is

I want everyone to drown in my teenage
dream

Blah blah blah

We are but young as the night

Of a bloody nose on Tuesday

....

Then we're fighting and ur walking away
from me.

Broken black bodies r really in right now

It's a bummer nobody gets crucified
anymore

I mean I'm trying

I want to care about art but I only care about
people

Then Rachel is giving me a kpin

To stop the spasms

They fall in the Uber

I lower myself to the ground brush the pills
into my hand and get high

Life is hard and I'm sorry

I'm sobbing & I can't remember why now
being an person is hard and stupid
I suffer from that

Everything is embarrassing

Ugh this is getting out of hand
I can't say no so don't ask me

Fleshy animal
nothing is pure, invert yourself ¹⁰

The Erotic and Passionate Politics: Listening as Activism

Audre Lorde, in an essay on "the erotic", suggests that it is by way of the sharing of joy that the productive conditions for mutuality and empowerment may be nurtured; "The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference."¹¹ Lorde demonstrates in redefining and reclaiming the erotic – a profound feeling of knowing, an empowering knowledge, "a lens through which we scrutinise all aspects of our existence" – that the erotic is a critical element in dismantling the social and political hierarchy situated in a white patriarchal power structure, that reproduces the erotic as pornographic.

The erotic is first and foremost a generative project, born from touching and being touched, by the depths of a sensuality that also forces us into a state of vulnerability and interdependency. It seeks to bridge life-lived, and the formations of public representation. Spaces of political visibility are greatly influenced by our own experiences and desires, from the world and others. It is not just the political - a space of relations and mutuality not just served through reasonable deliberation or strategic alliance, but one equally shaped and instituted by *what moves this body?* By the intimate relationships and emotional knowledges that often sustain communities.

Sounds may deliver powerful energies, in order to disturb and interfere, to agitate and violate, yet such powers are fundamentally based upon a condition of diffusion and dissemination. Sound is always moving away from a source; it abandons its origin, travels and migrates. As it migrates, invading any number of territories, it sweeps through past and present, contouring the rhythms of places. Sound makes us move, towards a point of exhaustion and exhilaration. To listen we must pause, and hear clearly.

Listening requires patience. Its importance is found in its capacity to potentially break up linguistic conventions, and create a public realm where a plurality of voices, faces, and languages can be heard, seen and spoken. By way of bridging the spiritual and the political through the guiding knowledge of the erotic, is it a principle of love?



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New Myths: Recordings from a Missing Channel attempted to amplify listening, catering to a multiplicity of narratives and accounts, stories and interruptions. In it, artists, performers, poets and musicians have taken the role of a history-teller, not in a way to explain how things are, but to explain how they feel. They have effectively devised the past and present according to their own convenience, creating open-ended narratives that presuppose as both individual, unique and multiple at the same time - the collective subject of history. They have proposed unconventional viewpoints from which a story may be told, whilst still incorporating and accounting collective memories, personal narratives, inner world, stories, archives and protagonists, located within the margins of history. Such interwoven rhythms are a (lively and) temporal alternative to the unified history-time-identity. It is in listening to such a cacophony of stories from many timelines, tongues, rhythms and temperatures that we might encounter our shared joy.

Canan Batur is a Turkish curator, researcher and writer based between St. Leonards (UK) and Istanbul (TR). She is the Assistant Curator at De La Warr Pavilion, working on the upcoming exhibitions by Rock Against Racism, Holly Hendry and Zineb Sedira. She is currently working on establishing a new space in Hastings with a specific focus on preservation, historical reenactments, and alternative education (to be announced soon) as well as on an upcoming project - conference and exhibition - at NTU CCA, Singapore with Museum for the Displaced.

Previously, she co-curated Give Up the Ghost, Baltic Triennial XIII (2017-2019); I was, but just awake under Art Night 2019, and It was a dream of a trip in Shanghai in collaboration with Shanghai Biennial XIII (2018). She was one of the co-founders of clearview, a project space/ residency programme in London (2016-2018); and worked with Cell Project Space, Chisenhale Gallery, and Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall (notably). She was a curatorial fellow in Shanghai Curators Lab, 2018 and RAW Material Company, Dakar; Rupert, Vilnius; Fire Station Artist Residency, Dublin and L'Opera in 2019. Her current research topics include; the objecthood in performance; and the ways to devise radical trans-locality, and to facilitate quantum thinking through oral and aural histories.

NOTES

- 1 Trinh, Thi Minh-ha. "Foreignness and the Color of Fear." *Elsewhere, within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event*, Routledge, 2011.
- 2 Transcribed from Penn Sound: Centre for Programs in Contemporary Writing https://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Moten/KWH_02-28-08/Moten-Fred_26_I-Wish_KWH-UPenn_02-28-08.mp3 (reading at Kelly Writers House Feb, 28 2008) as:

'There are two yellow rings/ the whirl and bounce / A blue fork in the tune. Up and down he reached for singing yeah, or it seems even in the no and yes every once in awhile with mi sopuestos and mis colores / But when there's another singing that I wish for that he sings / or that I wish for past the cold pragmatics. Pray for that little monking tilt you run from the edge and bolt / the way he kisses money / sing the box to curve / Contradance made the camera shake off its mulch / then lurch for another quadrant / this is a story about his music"
- 3 Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. "The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study." *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Minor Compositions, 2013, pp. 97-98.
- 4 Césaire quoted by Gregson Davis, "Forging a Caribbean Literary Style: 'Vulgar Experience' and the Languages of Césaire's *Cahier d'un detour au pays natal*." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115(3),2016: 459
- 5 Seligmann, Katerina. "Poetic Productions of Cultural Combat in Tropiques." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115(3),2016: 504
- 6 Bhabha, Homi. "The World and the Home." *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 1992, pp. 141-153., doi:10.2307/466222.
- 7 Pagés, Claudia. "TAKE ROOT NENA, TAKE ROOT." *Montez Press*, 2020, static.montezpress.com/media/interjectionPDFS/Interjection-005-05_Claudia_Pages-1.pdf.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Okoyomon, Precious. "It's Dissociating Season by Precious Okoyomon." *Lambda Literary*, 2017, www.lambdaliterary.org/2017/04/a-poem-by-precious-okoyomon/?fbclid=IwAR3dZK_21dwYwPN8skUoUJan0siDUUiOP2vgpOzA-fD1C0UywKnGatBNkaQ.
- 11 "The Uses of Erotic." *Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power*, by Audre Lorde, Kore Press, 2000, p. 89.