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# **Composing Paradoxes**

**Feminist Process in Sound Arts and Experimental Musics**

**Holly Ingleton**

**Thesis submitted to City University in fulfilment of the  
degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Music**

**City University London  
Centre for Music Studies  
School of Arts and Social Sciences**

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*Dedicated to Jenny,  
the original Joan of Arc*





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### Interviews and Presentations:

Abbreviation	Title/source
Boyce HNS-2012	Sonia Boyce presentation <i>Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic</i> Symposium, Tate Modern 2012
Džuverovic HNI-2006	Lina Džuverović <i>Her Noise</i> Interview 2006
Gordon HNI-2005	Kim Gordon <i>Her Noise</i> Interview 2005
Grant HNS-2012	Catherine Grant presentation <i>Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic</i> Symposium, Tate Modern 2012
Hedditch HNS-2012	Emma Hedditch presentation <i>Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic</i> Symposium, Tate Modern 2012
Hedditch HNI-2006	Emma Hedditch <i>Her Noise</i> Interview 2006
Hedditch SLG-2005	Recording of <i>We're Alive. Let's Meet!</i> get-together that occurred during the <i>Her Noise</i> exhibition at the South London Gallery December 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2005.
Koether HNA-Tate-2005	Jutta Koether <i>Her Noise Archive</i> - Tate Talks with Kim Gordon, London, 2005
Neset HNI-2006	Anne Hilde Neset <i>Her Noise</i> Interview 2006
Rodgers HNS-2012	Tara Rodgers presentation <i>Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic</i> Symposium, Tate Modern 2012

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## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses the question of how socio-political differences and lived experiences of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity may be perceived to manifest in the making of sound arts and experimental musics with a specific focus upon works made by women. Drawing upon compositions, installations and artist-archives including works by Lina Džuverovic, Anne Hilde Neset, Cathy Lane, Emma Hedditch, Sonia Boyce, Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether, the research considers the different ways in which the category of “woman” has been historically silenced, erased, ignored and disqualified from and misrepresented within dominant historical sound and music histories. I then ask what representations of “woman” might have materialised within this relational paradigm that “privileges the perspective of an archetypal Western, white, and male subject” as the universal subject of sound (Rodgers 2010b: v)? In particular noise and silence are addressed as the assumed polar limits of sound arts and experimental musics combined with a reconsideration of the fundamental parameters of pitch, timbre and amplitude as sound’s dominant laws, norms and conventions. The analysis of how the artists addressed within the research have in turn used and critiqued historically dominant representations through their aesthetic practices aims to demonstrate the ways in which these artists have challenged, resisted or transformed sound art and experimental music practices in the historical present.

This research aims to contribute new insights within the emerging field of feminist sound studies by connecting social and aesthetic processes in contemporary sound arts and experimental music practices within a discourse of feminist composition. Such a discourse seeks to contribute to the materialisation of alternative sound and music economies through the subtle calibration of compositional strategies that seek to displace dominant compositional processes intent upon regulating the noise of the social as a field of normalisation for the reproduction of the individual, self-sovereign and universally masculine subject of sound. Ultimately, what this research seeks to contribute is how to experience feminist composition as a social event.



## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is situated within an emerging field of feminist research in sound studies with a focus upon sound arts and experimental musics. The research is predominantly informed by discourses of critical feminism, critical race, post-colonial and queer theory combined with feminist epistemologies in sound studies and feminist and queer musicology. Feminist sound studies as an emergent discourse that applies feminist theory as a theoretical tool through which to think about the socio-cultural and political uses of sound specifically in sound arts and experimental musics is a relatively new endeavour. Situated within this emergent discourse, this thesis addresses questions of how socio-political differences and lived experiences of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity may be perceived to manifest in the making of sound arts and experimental musics. These questions are addressed through post-structuralist theories that employ paradox, performativity and hybridity as processes that aim to destabilise and transgress assumed limits of social, political and audible intelligibility. The research seeks to measure these limits so as to perceive the ways in which they may be appreciated as having shaped auditory perception and aesthetic practice. Dominant assumptions about gender and sound are addressed. What discourses and performances those assumptions have produced and how those discourses and performances have been used to destabilise and transform sound art and experimental music practices are further considered through the analysis of specific aesthetic works. The research draws upon compositions, installations and artist-archives including works by Lina Džuverović,

Anne Hilde Neset, Cathy Lane, Emma Hedditch, Sonia Boyce, Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether. The initial research has been based primarily around two archives, one produced through the *Her Noise Project* by co-curators Lina Džuverović and Anne Hilde Neset, of which I expand more upon momentarily, and the *Devotional Archive* by the artist Sonia Boyce which is addressed in chapter three. Both of these archives have been established in response to perceptions of an historical erasure of women's voices, artworks, musics and concerns from dominant musical and sound art histories and discourses in the UK.

Feminist sound studies scholar Tara Rodgers has identified the processes by which audio-technical discourses within sound studies have been constructed to reflect biblical and historically masculine ideals of self-birth and mastery that have produced the white Western masculine ideal as the archetypal subject of sound (Rodgers 2010b). This combined with Georgina Born's recent findings of "the emergence in the present of a highly (male) gendered creative digital music scene" (Born, Devine & Taylor 2014) in the UK, presents conclusive evidence to suggest that gender manifests in the making of sound arts and experimental musics in ways that have materialised asymmetrical and hierarchical identities and experiences in sound and music, experienced particularly acutely for those who do not fit the archetypal ideal. In each of the compositional examples that make up this research, gender is perceived to have manifested initially in the making of these works as a protest against these asymmetries and hierarchies, experienced as forms of marginalisation, neglect, erasure, disqualification and misrepresentation. As *Her Noise Project* co-curator Lina Džuverović has explained this

manifests in experience as “*knowing that there is a certain inequality as a starting point*” (transcribed Džuverović HNI-2006).

This research then addresses works that have been produced from acknowledged positions of marginalisation and which take a particular socio-political problem or question as the impetus for their production, as “the means through which taken-for-granted presuppositions are contested and new ways of thinking and analysing become possible” (Butler 2011: 3). These works raise questions about experience and inequality, as social, cultural and political sites and are not focused primarily upon sound for sound’s sake as a closed and self-referential system.

As a result, the research asks of different ways in which categories of “woman” have been historically silenced, erased, ignored and disqualified from and misrepresented within dominant historical sound and music histories that “privileges the perspective of an archetypal Western, white, and male subject” as the universal ideal (Rodgers 2010b: v). If the archetype of the white Western male can be appreciated as the archetypal subject of sound, as Rodgers has suggested, then what representations of “woman” might have materialised within this relational paradigm? To answer this question the research seeks to measure the assumed limits of social and audible intelligibility by considering the laws, norms and conventions by which such limits have been produced and maintained. In particular noise and silence are addressed as the assumed polar limits of sound arts and experimental musics combined with a reconsideration of the fundamental parameters of pitch, timbre and amplitude as sound’s laws, norms and conventions. The research considers the ways in which these modes of auditory

perceptual organisation can be appreciated as having been produced through existent modes of social organisation so as to examine the correlations between hearing, listening and identity as they manifest in feminist sound arts and experimental music processes.

### **Research Criteria and Questions**

The central criteria of this research are drawn from feminist historian Joan W. Scott's practice of critical feminism and form three overarching questions; (1) What were the most immediate and local power relations at work in the period of investigation? (2) How did those power relations make possible these kinds of discourses? (3) How were these discourses used to support, challenge, resist or transform dominant power relations (Scott 1999: 26)? These three main criteria questions have been further adapted within this research so as to enable a more specific focus upon the materialisation of identity and difference in sound arts and experimental music practices. Specifically, the primary question regarding the most immediate and local power relations within a particular milieu is one that seeks to consider the ways in which gender manifests in the making of works with a focus upon work made by women. The second element of the initial criteria is mapped to a more specific consideration of the ways in which the products of aesthetic practices, the sound artworks and experimental musics themselves, may be perceived to materialise lived experiences of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Specifically, have different ideas of the category of woman, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and politics other than those that have materialised through asymmetrical power relations been produced through sound arts and experimental musics? The third and final question of the research



criteria analyses the ways in which practices and processes that have engaged feminist critique, queer critique or critical race critique or a combination thereof as the content of their aesthetic practice have challenged, resisted or transformed historically asymmetrical discourses within the field of sound arts and experimental musics. To reiterate, the original criteria is broken down into the following overarching questions:

- 1) How does gender manifest in the making of works with a focus upon work made by women?
- 2) Have different ideas of the category of woman been produced through sound-based arts and experimental musics?
- 3) How do works that examine critical differences as the medium of their creative practice in an expanded field of sound studies challenge, resist or transform dominant historical discourses of the field?

### **In the beginning was *Her Noise***

As a pivotal body of work, The *Her Noise Project* and its archive has provided an initial and invaluable space of dialogue from which this research has developed. The *Her Noise Project* was commissioned in 2005 by co-curators Lina Džuverović and Anne Hilde Neset and was intended to “investigate music and sound histories in relation to gender and to bring together a wide network of women artists who use sound as a medium”<sup>1</sup>. Džuverović, initially as Curator of New Media Art at London’s *ICA* and Neset as assistant editor of specialist music magazine *The Wire*, had been working together since the late 1990's curating new media art and experimental music programmes in London. It was during these early curatorial experiences that both Neset and Džuverović realised they had unintentionally curated a two-year season showcasing

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1 [http://www.electra-productions.com/projects/2005/her\\_noise/overview.shtml](http://www.electra-productions.com/projects/2005/her_noise/overview.shtml)

only two women artists<sup>2</sup>, although their inspirations included many women, such as Kim Gordon, Lydia Lunch and Diamanda Galas. The crystallisation of an unequal musical landscape became more apparent when Neset interviewed Kim Gordon for *The Wire* in 2000<sup>3</sup>. It was at this meeting that a shared concern regarding the lack of female visibility in music surfaced.

The resulting *Her Noise Project*, the development of which initially began in 2001 and was originally a collaboration between Džuverović and Neset working with Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore and American independent filmmaker Andrew Kesin, took four years to fully develop, finally occurring in 2005. The culmination of the project included a five-week exhibition at the South London Gallery which housed five main installations: Christina Kubisch's *Security*; Jutta Koether's and Kim Gordon's *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*; Hayley Newman's *Miniflux*; Kaffe Matthews' *Sonic Bed*; and *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* by Emma Hedditch. The *Her Noise Project* also extended to additional events with a performance of Marina Rosenfeld's *Emotional Orchestra* opening the *Her Noise* season in the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern and Kubisch's land-sound-art installation *Electrical Walks*, a combined commission between London arts organisation Electra and the Goethe-Institut London.

Consecutively Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether presented their collaborative work at the *Her Noise Talks* held at Tate Modern, and sound artist Melanie Clifford presented a weekly radio program for the duration of the exhibition on London's art radio station, Resonance FM. There were also weekly scheduled performances throughout the

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2 The season, held at the LUX in London, was called *Interference* and featured Vicky Bennett of People Like Us & Kaffe Matthews.

3 The Wire #197 | Anti-Pop Consortium | July 2000

exhibition by people such as Ana Da Silva of the *Raincoats* and performance artist Anne Bean among others.

From its inception, the *Her Noise Project* was developed as a multifaceted program intended to extend over time and to traverse normative classifications of experimental and sound-based music and art. A vital, though somewhat distinct element of the *Her Noise Project* as a whole, was the *Her Noise Archive*, the development of which could be considered as providing a basis or back-bone of research for the entire project. The materials that constituted the basis of the *Her Noise Archive* were collected predominantly between the years 2001 and 2005<sup>4</sup>. During this period Džuverović and Neset, who had begun working collaboratively in 2003 with the then London-based artist and writer Emma Hedditch and Irene Revell, a member of the collective that organised the first *Ladyfest* in London in 2002, conducted and filmed over twenty interviews with women and men working in experimental and sound-based music and arts in both Europe and America<sup>5</sup>. These interviews formed the foundations of the *Her Noise Archive*. The collaborators also collected a wide range of music, zines, books and films exploring narratives and networks of people working in experimental and sound-based musics and arts, and charted avant-garde, experimental, post-punk, no-wave, DIY aesthetics and riot grrrl music histories with a focus on gender. The *Her Noise Archive*, as collected up to 2005, was exhibited at the *South London Gallery* alongside and between each of the five main installations identified above, in such a way that the *Her*

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<sup>4</sup> A few additional interviews were conducted in 2006, and along with the documentary *Her Noise: The Making Of* were added to the archive after the events of 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Kesin who was working on *The Other Woman* project in the U.S. at the time and was involved in the early stages of interviewing, was responsible for *Daytrip Maryanne*, *Small Steps: Conversations with Pauline Oliveros* and the *Women in Experimental Music Symposium* DVDs included in the Archive.

*Noise Archive* of 2005 may be considered as an additional installation, rhizomatically connecting all the elements of the *Her Noise Project*.

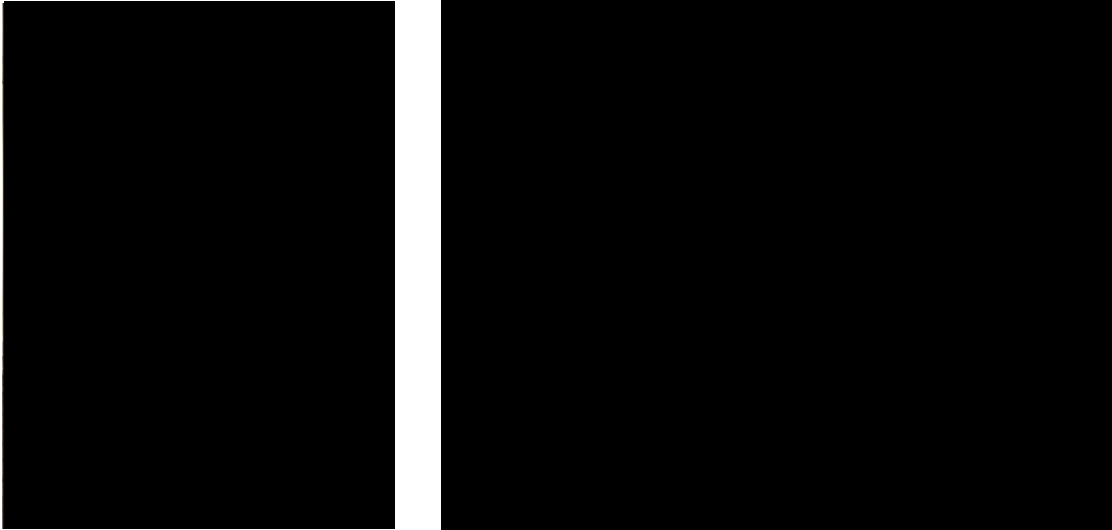


Fig. 1 [redacted] *Her Noise Archive*, South London Gallery 2005. Photography credits Holly Rose Wood, left. Marcus Leith, right. Courtesy of *Electra* and the *Her Noise Archive*.

After the events of 2005, the documentary, *Her Noise: The Making Of*, was produced collaboratively between *Electra* and Emma Hedditch, in which additional interviews with the *Her Noise* curators and selected artists were edited along with audio-visual footage collected from the various events of 2005 into a narrative and investigation of the project up to that point. *Her Noise: The Making Of* was then added to the *Her Noise Archive*, which was itself housed in the offices of *Electra* in central London from 2005 to 2010 and was made available for research purposes, in this way extending beyond the 2005 time-frame of the *Her Noise Project*.

In mid 2010, the *Her Noise Archive* was acquired by CRiSAP (Creative Research into Sound Art Practice) at London College of Communication (LCC), University of the Arts London. It was at this time that all the documentation from the entire project ranging from its inception in 2001 to 2010 was catalogued and transferred to the

Archives and Special Collections Centre at LCC. This included unedited footage gathered before, during and after 2005, administrative documentation of the development of the project, press clippings, installation artefacts, recordings, artist biographies and proposals and related audio-visual and written documents that were instrumental to the development of the project and also included the original *Her Noise Archive* of 2005. This expanded the original *Her Noise Archive* to include its own makings, in effect creating an archive within an archive, all of which comprises what is now known as *The Her Noise Archive*.

It was through my research on this archive at the beginning of this doctoral study that an original critical and paradoxical feminist position was reached and is a position that has provided the feminist rationale from which the rest of this research has proceeded.

When I began researching the archive of the *Her Noise Project*, I understood that the project was developed through the feminist beliefs and attitudes of the curators and that it was a feminist project. One only needs to consider the title, *Her Noise*, to appreciate that there are gender politics involved. But beyond the title and the fact that this was a project produced by and about women, I encountered some difficulty articulating explicitly *how* the project was feminist, with a further difficulty in appreciating what kinds of feminist approaches might have been instrumental to its development.

Through my research in this archive, I encountered the video footage of *Her Noise* co-curator, Lina Džuverović, interviewed by Irene Revell. In this interview Džuverović had asserted that for her the feminist politics of the *Her Noise Project* were “so at the core

of the project” (transcribed Džuverović HNI-2006) that they could and should remain implicit so that other issues in the project could gain equal recognition.

Irene Revell: Do you think that the title [Her Noise] is implicitly feminist?

Lina Džuverović: What else could it be? I think it is because it’s very clear what we are trying to say.

IR: So in that case do you think the project in itself has a strong feminist politic?

LD: I think the feminist politics are so at the core of it, that we almost felt we had to go beyond talking about that. Of course if you ask the question about equality and gender in a certain area of artistic practice, of course you’re coming from a gendered perspective. So to me that was implicit and then we had to go beyond that and explore further. So I didn’t feel we had to be overtly loud about the feminist agenda, I felt it was just there (transcribed Džuverović HNI-2006, 00:59).

That a “feminist agenda” was very much at the core of this project is not in doubt, but how that feminist agenda might be operative throughout the entire *Her Noise Project*, in the early stages of this research, was not so clear. On one level, what the curators were trying to say was very clear, that ‘her noise’ - which in this case is experimental and sound-based music and art made by women - not only exists but has also existed historically and it has been identified and displayed throughout the *Her Noise* program at the South London Gallery in 2005. But that is not all Džuverović seemed to have been suggesting, and exactly what the “need to go beyond and explore further” (transcribed Džuverović HNI-2006) meant for Džuverović was more ambiguous and difficult to grasp. Trying to appreciate what Džuverović desired to ‘go beyond’ in this statement has provided one of my own foundational questions in regard to establishing a critical feminist position for this research. Was it a need to go beyond ‘her noise’, that *Her Noise* once identified, needed to be overcome, dissolved or refused? Would not the establishment of a program by, about and for “women working with sound as a

medium”<sup>6</sup> then have been a contradictory move on behalf of the curators if the effacement of ‘her noise’ was the goal? Seeing as the latter option of effacement, or “going beyond”, appears to have been dependent upon the existence of *Her Noise*, it would seem that the strategies within the feminist politics of the project were more complex than a first reading of the title *Her Noise* as being self-explanatory would imply.

Džuverović in the same interview has suggested that the themes and ideas that traversed each of the different elements of the original *Her Noise Project* could be considered in ways other than solely through feminist theories. For example, questions about how to compose or improvise music, how to get a group of improvisers together or how to create an archive could be considered in many different ways. It appeared to me that it was Džuverović’s intention, that whilst for her in regard to the *Her Noise Project* these themes may have been considered through the question of how gender and music histories manifest in the making of works, the feminist politics within this question should remain implicit so as to enable analyses through a range of frameworks by a range of people. This identifying-yet-not-identifying with the feminist politics of the *Her Noise Project*, did not in my opinion, make the project any less feminist. As I will explain, this ambivalence may actually be understood paradoxically as constituting the *Her Noise Project* as a critical feminist project, as *the* feminist strategy of the endeavour.

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6 [http://www.electra-productions.com/projects/2005/her\\_noise\\_archive/overview.shtml](http://www.electra-productions.com/projects/2005/her_noise_archive/overview.shtml)

The ambivalence at the heart of *Her Noise*, I suggest, has to do with particular understandings of “sexual difference” as it pertains to feminist histories and their differing theories and practices. Explained extremely briefly, feminism is not understood as one monolithic theory in which everyone agrees on the meaning of sexual difference<sup>7</sup>. Some feminists historically have accepted sexual difference based upon biological differences, in which the differences between men and women have been explained by biological factors, for example the writings of Hélène Cixous and many so-called ‘second wave’ feminisms have been interpreted in this way (Cixous 1994; Cavallaro 2003). Other feminists have rejected biological claims of sexual difference, differences which they believe are produced culturally, through language or discourse and are in themselves productive of “heterosexual normativity”, most notably expressed by Judith Butler in the 1990s (Butler 1999: xii). And yet there are still other feminists who believe that sexual difference is a combination of both biology and discourse such as Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti (Grosz 1994, 1995; Braidotti 1994, 2002, 2006). Feminist historian Joan W. Scott has expressed an understanding slightly different even to these three approaches (Scott 1996, 1999). She has considered that sexual difference is not only discursively produced but that it may be utilised as “a framework for understanding how historical differences are established and destabilised through time” (Butler 2011: 20). It seems to me that the feminist politics of the *Her Noise Project* echo Scott’s understanding and application of sexual difference, which goes some way to explain the ambivalent and, as I have perceived it, paradoxical position that Džuverović has expressed. For Scott, paradox is at the centre of contemporary feminist thought, meaning that feminist theory and politics in itself has been socio-culturally produced

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<sup>7</sup> I do not mean to imply that feminism is only concerned with ideas of sexual difference, but that sexual difference has a particular relevance for my understanding of *Her Noise*.



through these contesting and converging claims over the meanings and applications of equality and difference, as they relate to ideas about sexual difference. As Scott has suggested,

In the age of democratic revolutions, "women" came into being as political outsiders through the discourse of sexual difference. Feminism was a protest against women's political exclusion; its goal was to eliminate "sexual difference" in politics, but it had to make its claims on behalf of "women" (who were discursively produced through "sexual difference"). To the extent that it acted for "women" feminism produced the "sexual difference" it sought to eliminate. This paradox - the need both to accept and to refuse "sexual difference" - was the constitutive condition of feminism as a political movement throughout its long history (Scott 1996: 3 emphasis in original).

As I understand it, this paradoxical “need to both accept *and* refuse ‘sexual difference’” (Scott 1996: 3) is foundational to the feminist curatorial framing of the *Her Noise Project*. This may be appreciated by Džuverović’s ambivalence toward an explicit feminist politics whilst at the same time claiming that they were “so at the core” (transcribed Džuverović HNI-2006) of the project. The *Her Noise Project* then may be appreciated as performing a “protest against women’s political exclusion” (Scott 1996: 3) both historically and in the present day as a protest about women’s exclusion from experimental and sound-based arts and musics. Further, the curatorial framing of the *Her Noise Project* may be appreciated as accepting ideas of sexual difference when making “claims on behalf of ‘women’” whilst simultaneously refusing the negative ideas of “sexual difference” that would group “women” as an homogenous category and by which they have historically been subjugated, oppressed and dominated (Scott 1996: 3). To me, this is the paradoxical basis of the *Her Noise Project* as much as it is the paradoxical basis of feminism. Such paradoxes, as Scott has suggested, are “not strategies of opposition, but the constitutive elements of feminism itself” (Scott 1996: 5)

and provide the basis of a non-oppositional yet critical and transformational feminist position from which the remainder of this current research has proceeded.

### **Feeling out the limits of history**

Women's representation in the field of sound studies in the UK reflects a fraught history, as similarly reflected in wider Western feminist musicological discourses, where women have struggled for recognition amongst their male peers. Feminist theory at the end of the last century developed a critical self-reflexivity through the development of gender studies, in part to address history's resistance to change through the continued production and subordination of difference, historicising its own development within a social constructivist paradigm in modes that resonate through contemporary enquiries in queer, queer of colour and critical race scholarship (Scott 1999; Alexander 2005; Butler 2011; Freeman 2010; Holland 2012). Feminist musicologist Ellen Koskoff has similarly addressed feminist musicology's own historicisation, noting the main phases of the discourse as correlating with the main phases of feminism (Koskoff 2005). Where both feminist scholarship and feminist musicology seem to have coalesced is around a critical awareness of the limitations of prior approaches and efforts, which though absolutely necessary, can be appreciated as not really having affected much wide-ranging change, ideas that are addressed in much more detail in the following chapter. But to state briefly for the moment, simply valuing women's work or considering unequal power relations within a broader sociological field, in effect producing herstory and critiquing history as individual and mutually exclusive processes have, as Scott has explained, had a limited effect upon the

foundational constructions and therefore deployments of gender within and especially beyond each respective field (Scott 1999: 18). The limited effects of feminist approaches that have sought to reify the notion of “woman” through the writings of “herstory”, as Scott has addressed, have the propensity to reinforce essentialist notions of “woman” and to reinforce the notion of separate spheres (Scott 1999: 18). A focus upon social histories on the other hand, as Scott has similarly addressed, has demonstrated the propensity to eclipse specific “women’s” issues with a more weighted focus placed upon macro-structures such as economic and political systems that can erase the specificity of everyday lived experiences of gender (Scott 1999: 4). As Scott has pointed out, as a result of these two separated historical methodologies, the reification of difference or its sublimation appear to be the only outcomes of such compartmentalised approaches. Thus their impact has been largely limited, implicitly, to reproducing a system that already exists. In light of an awareness of the efforts of the past that have sought to ‘write women into history’, either through presenting evidence of women’s musical contributions that have been erased *or* through analyses of larger and more systemic structures by which ideas about gender and music have been produced, the development of a specifically *critical* feminism is one that seeks to balance these tensions, between experience and theory, between epistemology and ontology, as the task of the historical present in which we currently find ourselves (Scott 1996, 1999; Koskoff 2005).

Considered through processes that engage speech act theory; performative composition; representational politics embedded within audition; the critical analysis of auditory fundamental parameters through paradigms of discipline and desire; and historically

shifting socio-political economies mapped through tensions and negotiations between the individual and the collective, each of the works within this research are addressed as feminist experiments in exercises of governmentality. By governmentality I mean that each work is addressed as a means by which to consider processes of “organisation, distribution, and limitation of powers in a society” (Foucault 2008: 16, 13) with a focus upon shifting materialisations of “woman” as subject, gender and politics considered through socio-aesthetic processes of sound arts and experimental music production. Specifically, these works seek to radically question and entangle the terms of their own construction and to proffer performative transformations against the historical silencing of “women” as a category through the processes of their sound art and experimental music production. In this way, this research aims to contribute new insights within an emerging field of feminist sound studies by connecting social and aesthetic processes in contemporary sound arts and experimental music practices within a discourse of feminist composition. Such a discourse seeks to contribute to the materialisation of alternative sound and music economies through the subtle calibration of compositional strategies that seek to displace dominant compositional processes intent upon regulating the noise of the social as a field of normalisation for the reproduction of the individual, self-sovereign and universally masculine subject of sound. Ultimately, what this research seeks to contribute is how to experience feminist composition as a social event.

Finally, an overarching intention of this research is not only to investigate the ways in which historical differences may have manifested in sound arts and experimental musics. Specifically, the intention is to connect these aesthetic disciplines as informed by recent scholarship undertaken within the field of sound studies directly with feminist,

queer and critical race scholarship. This research then is intentionally transdisciplinary and outward looking, listening out for relations and patterns with wider discourses so as to connect with broader ranges of experience that a listening-in to sound alone, as sound for sound's sake, might possibly allow and to instead situate the field in connection with a multitude of *other* herstorical temporalities.

### **Politics of Location**

I commenced this doctoral project focusing upon the *Her Noise Archive*, firstly because I knew about this archive before beginning this research as it resonated with concerns I had previously begun to address in my undergraduate studies, and secondly because I believe it is an important body of work. I realised the import of this archive before I began to work on re-cataloging its expanded contents in preparation of its move from the offices of Electra to London College of Communication in 2010. To me it represents a body of work that, if lost, would need to be done again. Gaining a deeper understanding of the amount of work that actually went into producing this project, I further realised that if it were lost, this work probably would not be done again and, most certainly not in the same way. This is one reason why I am such a strong supporter of this archive. It is an important and complex project which I have only just scraped the surface of.

In the early stages of this research I have listened to, thought and written about works by Hildegard Westerkamp, Katharine Norman, Salomé Voegelin, Christina Kubisch, Kaffe Matthews, Ain Bailey and LCC MA Sound Arts students' work made in response to the *Her Noise Archive*, as well as analyses of my own creative practice. In fact, I have

more words tucked away in Scrivener documents than I could ever possibly know what to do with. But, in gaining a better understanding of the curatorial framing of the *Her Noise Project* throughout the process of my learning and writing, as one that has been structured through a critical feminist performativity, I finally chose to focus upon more detailed analyses of Emma Hedditch's *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* and *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* by Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon as two installations from the *Her Noise Archive*. I could have written an entire thesis on each of the works in the *Her Noise Archive*, on punk or DIY or riot grrrl aesthetics, on zine production or sound and experimental film in the small but incredible collection of film in this archive. But I can't cover everything, and there are plenty of ideas within this archive for other people to take up should they so desire. I chose Hedditch's installation specifically because it is the one that really activated the entire archive for me. I chose Koether's and Gordon's installation because it is the work that, in my opinion, can be perceived as providing a grounding for the entire *Her Noise Project*.

I chose to place Cathy Lane's *Hidden Lives* as the first analysis of this research for several reasons. Firstly, to explain this choice I need to return to my initial instigation for this entire research at the beginning of this doctoral study which was an interest in feminine writing and also feminist performativity and embodiment. These interests stemmed from my undergraduate experiences, both of which I began to address in my undergraduate dissertation *Making Spaces: Feminist Contexts in Sonic Arts* (2005) written with the invaluable guidance of Salomé Voegelin. Yet within the first year of my doctoral studies I was advised away from the former - feminine writing - for being too essentialist and from the latter - performativity and embodiment - as being too

unwieldy, too large. And so I sought another way around, and that was to return to the foundations of feminism - the essentialist/constructionist debate - and to the basis of performativity, which is speech act theory. Discussions with Cathy Lane herself, combined with my own readings of Joan W. Scott's critical feminism and Judith Butler's gender performativity helped me to articulate what I heard in *Hidden Lives* (Scott 1996, 1999; Butler 1990, 1997). This then is the first analysis in this thesis, as a study in speech act theory, performativity and in my opinion, critical feminism.

I was aware from early on in this doctoral study that everything I was researching was still all very "white". I wanted to address this, actually, I wanted to address race in this research, but I had fewer tools at my disposal for this purpose, never having had to articulate "whiteness" in the same way as always seeming to have to articulate being "female" or even being "queer". In fact, most of my experience has been about *not* articulating race which has more to do with my own histories and entanglements with colonial legacies of migration than I was initially really conscious of at the beginning of this research. Yet, no one in academia has ever confronted me with the whiteness of my subjects in the same way that some have questioned my desire to focus on "femaleness". This is not an excuse at all, but is rather an important fact to note. Often throughout this research I've had to defend my decision to only write about women's work, being always reminded of Karlheinz Stockhausen or Pierre Schaefer or Pierre Boulez or even Beethoven as precedents for example. But at no time have I had to defend, at least within academia, why everyone seems to be white.

It was through my work with Irene Revell, Cathy Lane and Fatima Hellberg on the *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* symposium in 2012 that I was fortunate to encounter the work of Sonia Boyce. Up until this point, again as a marker of my own position of privilege, I was having difficulty articulating an ‘intersectional’ feminism in the works that I was listening to. For in everything that I was reading and researching, the “issue” of race only ever seemed to come up when predicated upon “other” bodies, be they African, Caribbean, Asian or Indian, in short anyone who didn’t immediately identify as “white”. Where was “race” then and how could *I* talk about it within the quagmire of identity politics were my questions at this point in my research. I was so fortunate to be able to speak with Sonia Boyce who so generously talked with me about the *Devotional Series* and her vast oeuvre. This was around the time of the Woolwich Lee Rigby murder in London (2013) and I remember distinctly being very disturbed by the images circulating in the press at the time, of a black man covered in blood and a white man in uniform. Boyce assured me then that, through hybridity and diasporan movement we had come too far, we had ‘mixed’ too much to ever go backwards to a singular truth of those images that haunted me. But even then, even though the ideas that have transpired through this thesis were still very much struggling for some form of articulation, I still couldn’t articulate the ways in which we are all implicated in the concept of race - the ways in which *I* am implicated in race-thinking - for I still struggled then to understand ‘white’ as ‘race’. Yet my conversation with Boyce at this time was expansive and open, I wanted to know and to understand, but I was still very *green*. In my mind we seemed to be talking about very similar things, but coming from different perspectives. This led me to question how it was that in talking about performativity within a music department my meaning could be misunderstood, yet in discussing performative



processes with Boyce we shared a common language - even though our ‘backgrounds’, on Boyce’s side largely coming out of visual arts and diasporan and post-colonialist critique and on mine sound, music, gender and queer feminist performativity, should seemingly be, but were not, quite different. This led me to explicitly search for connections between post-colonialist scholarship and theories of performativity, which in turn led me to connect race and sexuality as not merely intersectional, but specifically as co-incidental. My main critique of the *Her Noise Archive* up to this point had been that the terms of belonging in this archive seemed to be uncritically based upon an unacknowledged erasure of race in favour of a single focus upon gender. As it turns out, typically, my own unacknowledged biases performed this erasure of race from my own experiences of gender and sexuality. I am eternally grateful to Sonia Boyce for her deep patience and generosity that enabled me to write whatever I needed to write about the *Devotional Archive*, to explore it through my own devices, knowing full-well that however I might interpret it would reflect my own understandings or lack thereof. There is a generosity in allowing for failure which is not always rewarded by a reciprocal learning, so it is a chance one takes. What being able to consider the *Devotional Series* and the *Her Noise Project* together has made audible for me is an understanding of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender and sexuality as relational and co-incidental constructions that affect all of us, albeit in very different ways.

Finally, I chose Boyce’s *For you, only you* as the last work to focus upon in this thesis because it connects all of the concerns addressed within this research. Additionally, my experience of this work, was so affectively profound, it *moved* me and I wanted to know how and why. It is clearly performative, historical, political, juxtapolitical and musical.

It is about race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender, sexuality, sound and music worked through performances between the individual and the collective. It is affectively manipulative - and I mean that in the best possible way - and I wanted to know how and why it pressed my emotional auditory buttons. In fact this is the reason why I've chosen all of the works that I have included in this research. Because they made me feel *something*, anxiety, love, fear, frustration, deep, deep despair, euphoria and, dare I say it, hope, and I wanted to know how and why that was.

## **Chapter Outline**

The thesis opens in the first chapter, “Hierarchies of Difference”, situating the research context through a broad range of territories, which following Rodgers’ own Foucauldian admission, is “at once too much and too little” (Foucault quoted in Rodgers, 2010b: 180) to adequately represent an entire history of feminist enquiry in an expanded field of sound studies. As one of the intentions of the research is to connect ideas and aesthetic processes with wider cultural discourses, this chapter seeks to situate the research in relation to critical feminist, post-colonial, critical race and queer theory combined within an historical consideration of sound arts, sound studies and feminist musicologies.

Chapter two, “Unspeakable Noise”, proceeds with the first compositional analysis of the research through an investigation of speech act theory as evidenced in Cathy Lane’s composition *Hidden Lives*. This presents an interpretation of a compositional process that critiques dominant discursive constructions of woman and her historical silencing, mobilising paradox in the form of the performative speech act to challenge and

transform normative and essentialist understandings of ‘woman’ and ‘composer’. An analysis of Emma Hedditch’s *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* extends the concept of performativity as a compositional practice to investigate dominant constructions of gender and the erasure of lesbian cultures and histories in sound arts and experimental musics and puts forward the concept of performative composition as a way of extending ideas about what can constitute composition and how new musical communities might be formed.

Chapter three, “Politics of Audition”, sets out to question whose noise matters in the construction of composition as listening publics, extending the foundational research question through a consideration of the co-constructions of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality through an analysis of Sonia Boyce’s *Devotional Archive*. This chapter addresses the specificities of representational politics within processes of auditory masking and historical “cultures of dissemblance” and “politics of silence” (Hammonds 1997).

Chapter four, “Fundamentals of Desire”, reconsiders the construction of the fundamental parameters of pitch and timbre within audio-technical discourses through the installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* by Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon. The chapter develops a critique of the establishment of pitch as necessarily demonstrable of a fundamental frequency of heteronormal whiteness and of timbre as sound’s devalued materiality.

The final chapter of the research, “Practices of Freedom”, connects the critique of logics that have developed throughout the research with an analysis of the interplay between the individual and collective through shifting liberal economic frameworks. Mapping these concerns materialise through an ethics of antiphony in *For you, only you* by Sonia Boyce in collaboration with sound artist Mikhail Karikis and early music consort, Alamire. The socio-musical analysis of this work is traced through an unspoken indexing of jazz scat histories in the installation and explores the possibility of holding modernist and supposedly democratic ideals to account in a desire for the development of non-dominating relations.

# 1 HIERARCHIES OF DIFFERENCE

This chapter seeks to situate the research context in an expanded field of feminist sound studies focused upon sound arts and experimental musics. First I listen out for traces of a feminist subject in sound arts through ontological, epistemological and phenomenological discourses. I then trace the emergence of the “universal human subject” of sound as a masculine universal ideal, which, as Jonathan Sterne has asserted, a “phenomenological truth about sound sets up” (Sterne 2003: 14).

Next, I map the emergence of the masculine universal through Tara Rodgers’ epistemology of audio-technical discourse and explicate the correlations between her approach and the critical feminism of feminist political historian Joan W. Scott. The paradoxical construction of the ‘ideal’ individual that emerged through Enlightenment theories, which are the focus of Scott’s analysis, are then combined with a critique of historical notions of sexual difference that in themselves may be appreciated as contributing to the historical erasure of the ‘category of women’ from the “rights of man” (Scott 1996).

The ways in which women as a category have been silenced and written out of history are then analysed through a consideration of historical and normative limits of noise and silence as they may be perceived to have been imposed upon the sounds, speech and agency of women throughout history. This erasure is then matched with a consideration

of “woman-centric” and “gender-centric” feminist musicologies as historical efforts to write women into musical and sound histories. I trace the difficulties that these previous methodologies have met, particularly through Scott’s analysis of the “resistances of history” (Scott 1999: 18), to affect any wide-ranging change within the historical present. I then outline a paradoxical methodology, in light of history’s resistance to prior feminist work, as a means by which to write a feminist history in sound and music of the present.

The overarching methodology of the research is then addressed through a review of post-structural theory, in particular highlighting the connections between gender feminism and post-colonial theory. This enables an identification of some of the norms, laws and conventions that have governed the construction of sound arts and experimental musics within the discourse of sound studies so as to further enable a destabilisation of the “archetypal, Western, white and male” subject of sound (Rodgers 2010b: v).

This chapter concludes with a reconsideration of the main processes that have emerged throughout feminist musicology as tensions that have arisen from the post-structuralist destabilisation of the subject. These tensions are then reconsidered as they have materialised through queer feminist critical theory, in particular through what has become known as “paranoid critique” and “reparative readings” (Sedgwick 2003; Wiegman 2014). I conclude by reiterating the methodology that the remainder of the research follows, as one that identifies, destabilises and disorganises within an epistemology-ontology-ethics of critically queer, anti-racist, feminist sound studies.

### **1.1 Listening Out For a Feminist Subject**

Sound studies, as Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld wrote in 2004, “is an emerging interdisciplinary area that studies the material production and consumption of music, sound, noise, and silence” (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2004: 636). In particular, theorists engaged within this relatively new field of enquiry have sought to address ways in which music, sound, noise and silence “have changed throughout history and within different societies” with an explicit intention to engage “a much broader perspective than standard disciplines such as ethnomusicology, history of music, and sociology of music” (Pinch and Bisterveld 2004: 636). Whilst the newly emergent discipline of sound studies provides an over-arching framework by which to think about sound beyond previously established academic boundaries, the main areas this research focuses upon within this framework are the fields of sound arts and experimental musics. Neither sound arts nor experimental musics has a far-reaching feminist history and whilst categories of race, ethnicity and nationality may have played out through compositional practices and within acoustic ecology discourses in particular, it has often been through either an anthropological or ecological lens that can be considered as often having resulted in certain forms of ‘sonic tourism’ (Norman 2011: 203). The field of sound studies, as a relatively new discipline that intentionally seeks to engage questions of the “material production and consumption of music, sound, noise, and silence” (Pinch and Bisterveld 2004: 636) with broader discourses then, offers a means by which to connect analyses of sound arts and experimental music practices with scholarship about sexual and racial difference and the historical assumptions embedded within these categories through a range of critical feminist theories.

Where moments of feminist thinking and/or influence in particular have appeared within sound studies, sound arts and experimental musics on the whole they do not neatly fit into an accepted chronology of first, second and third wave feminisms or feminist musicologies as those categorised by feminist musicologist Ellen Koskoff (Koskoff 2005). Yet thinking of the field as a relative 'newcomer' belies the fact that the field can be considered as having been structured in ways that resonate, as Jonathan Sterne has asserted, with shifting notions of sameness and difference, the relevance of which I will expand upon momentarily (Sterne 2012b: 1). The majority of these developments have, though, largely occurred without much of a notable reference or acknowledgement of the historic universality of the white Western masculine bias operative within the field.

Histories of sound studies, necessarily interdisciplinary and in a manner similar to broader philosophies, may be conceived of in a very general sense as addressing sound, sonic practices, discourses and institutions as broadly phenomenological, ontological or epistemological. Of course these categorisations are neither fixed nor exhaustive. But, many theoretical enquiries within sound studies, sound arts and experimental music practices have focused upon sound primarily as a sensory or physical sensation/perception, with an ongoing dominance of ontological and phenomenological theorising about sound (Chion 1983, 1994; Schaeffer 2012; Cage 1961; Schafer 1977; Feld 1996; Truax 2001; Idhe 2007; Morton 2007; Voegelin 2010; LaBelle 2010). For instance, Francis Dyson has claimed an ontological “immersion and embodiment” through sound (Dyson 2009: 3). Others, such as Shelley Trower’s *Senses of Vibration*:



*A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound* (2012), take sound as a point of orientation through “vibration-sensations” (Trower 2012: 9).

Salomé Voegelin’s *Listening to Noise and Silence: Toward a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010) is a case in point that presents an account of phenomenological sonic subjectivity based upon self-awareness as a historically contingent and political process and practice. For Voegelin, the primacy of one’s subjective listening forms the basis of a communication that reciprocally co-constructs meaning through the primacy of perception, the “sensate sense”, as a phenomenological embodiment for understanding rather than knowing (Voegelin 2010: 186). The analogy of the two modes of analysis between noise and silence in Voegelin’s publication lends itself to normatively gendered interpretations of noise as masculine and silence as feminine, but this remains entirely implicit in the text. In her chapter on silence, Voegelin posited the need for a hearing of the body, resonating with twentieth century French post-structuralist feminist calls for a feminine writing of the body (Voegelin 2010: 117, 178). My understanding is that this is a particularly feminine text which I read as putting forward an idea of *écouter féminine* that correlates with continental feminist histories of *écriture féminine* (Cixous 1976; Cixous and Clément 1987; Irigaray 1985, 1987; Kristeva 1984b). A close reading such as this hears Voegelin’s text as expanding upon Hannah Bosma’s earlier work on “*Écriture féminine* in Electrovocal Music” (1997), placing Voegelin’s work within a small genealogy of feminist discourses in sound based upon fundamentally ontological beliefs about sexual difference and materialist thinking about sound and the body. Bosma, along with Sally Macarthur and Kaja Silverman for example, prior to Voegelin, have each developed theories that connect sound, compositional processes

and listening but with more explicitly feminist discourses that take the female body as essentially feminine (Bosma 2003), feminist art-music compositional practices that reflect Deleuzian notions of ‘becoming-woman’ (Macarthur 2001, 2010) and psychoanalytical feminist interventions into the female voice in cinema (Silverman 1988).

Sound’s own entanglement with discourses of hearing assumed as a primarily a priori sensory perception would seem to suggest a natural affinity with sound and listening as *sense perception*, as inherently and primarily related to the body whereby there would appear to be a continuity or direct correlation between hearing, nature, the body and sound phenomena within histories that, predominantly, have either sought after a universality of hearing or have claimed hearing as an always particular and subjective experience. Most of these approaches themselves have been oriented around certain notions or beliefs about the body and its ability to encode sensory perception as a ‘natural’ way of understanding the ‘natural’ world even if those understandings have changed over time.

As a critical response to perceived notions of essentialism within sound technology histories and their discourses, Jonathan Sterne’s work, which whilst not explicitly feminist, has sought to historicise the “naturalistic” thinking that he believes has dominated histories of sound reproduction technologies (Sterne 2003, 2012). Deriving largely through concerns developed within communication theory, Sterne’s scholarship has sought to challenge the phenomenological assumptions that he has claimed underlie the field of sound studies. Sterne’s critique of sound reproduction has sought to examine

the ways in which “audition is learned” rather than being an essential and timeless embodiment by “positing sound, hearing, and listening as historical problems rather than as constants on which to build a history” (Sterne 2003: 12, 22). Critiquing what he has claimed as a predominant belief in essential sensory experience within histories of sound that have been presented as largely transhistorical and over-arching theories, Sterne has asserted that these beliefs implicitly embody “the unacknowledged weight of a two-thousand-year-old Christian theology of listening” (Sterne 2003: 14). This weight of history, claims Sterne, is a hegemonic discourse that has governed the development and uses of sound in technologies of the telephone, gramophone and MP3 codec among other related audio-technical discourses as well as aesthetic applications of sound in histories of *musique concrète* and acoustic ecology (Sterne 2003, 2012).

Sterne’s critique, which has provided one of the foundational discourses for this research, has cited the ongoing influence of classical Platonic and Christian doctrines upon the field and is intended to challenge the notion of the “universal human subject” that a “phenomenological truth about sound sets up” (Sterne 2003: 14). As Sterne has explained, the age old division between vision and aurality within philosophical traditions developed from classical Platonic and Christian doctrines and later elaborated by the phenomenologist and Jesuit priest Walter Ong in particular have come to dominate the ways that sound has been theorised and practiced within Western sound and technology discourses (Sterne 2003: 15). The division between sight and sound according to Sterne has often been considered as a division based upon a belief in “biological, psychological and physical facts” that, to my ear, resonates loudly with biological beliefs about sexual and racial difference and which, subsequently, as Sterne

has suggested, have been applied “as a starting point for the cultural analysis of sound” (Sterne 2003: 15).

Most pertinently for this research, Sterne has addressed the “ideological framework” (Sterne 2003: 20) of origins and their assumed copies that he has asserted underpins both histories of *musique concrète* and acoustic ecology. Sterne has identified that both of these historical approaches of sound theory and practice “hold human experience and the human body to be categories outside history” in which the acousmatic sound of *musique concrète* is reproduced in terms of a “visual lack” and where acoustic ecology’s schizophonia is similarly based upon holistic desires to heal the sonic split of an ‘original’ sound from its ‘natural’ source (Sterne 2003: 20). These theories, Sterne has conceded, are based upon assumptions of the primacy of immediacy - a belief in a truth of unmediated experience - of “face-to-face communication and bodily presence” (Sterne 2003: 20, 21) and lend themselves to feminist critiques of patriarchal ideology in which notions of ‘originality’ and the ‘natural’ have been historically established through a masculine signifying economy that has promoted the masculine as the universal and original ideal. Yet Sterne’s focus in his work is never announced as explicitly feminist, where his critique of the “universal abstract humanist subject” (Sterne 2003: 9) as original and universally masculine, if this is a conscious critique at all, remains largely implicit.

### **Mapping the Masculine Universal**

Feminist sound studies scholar Tara Rodgers has expanded upon Sterne’s critical analysis of the original/copy dialectic embedded within sound reproduction

technologies as those that have implicitly sought to reinscribe “the reproduction of an existing cultural order” (Rodgers 2010b: 26). Instead, Rodgers has considered the potential of “a logic of synthesis” as one that might open a path for “a more radical and non-normative clitoral economy” (Rodgers 2010b: 26). With the aim of explicating this potential, Rodgers’ feminist historiography of audio-technical discourse, *Synthesising Sound: Metaphor in Audio-Technical Discourse and Synthesis History* (2010b) has been depicted through the development of the modern sound synthesiser. There are two overarching concerns within her thesis, firstly to examine the ways in which “audio-technical language and representation, which typically stands as neutral, in fact privileges the perspective of an archetypal Western, white, and male subject” and secondly to consider “the ways in which histories of electronic music technologies and cultures are conceived and written and how and why women seem to be routinely if not systematically excluded from those historical accounts” (transcribed Rodgers HNS-2012). Through an analysis of “key concepts” in the history of synthesised sound, Rodgers has identified “two primary metaphors for conceiving electronic sounds that were in use by the early-twentieth century and continue to inform sonic epistemologies: *electronic sounds as waves*, and *electronic sounds as individuals*” (Rodgers 2010b: v emphasis in original). Echoing and extending upon Andra McCartney’s earlier work on metaphor in the recording studio (1995), Rodgers has investigated the ways in which these “metaphors in audio-technical discourse are invested with notions of identity and difference” (Rodgers 2010b: v). In particular she has explained that the “modern practice” of metaphorical thinking about sounds as waves and individuals “is not neutral or without history, but entwined with histories of scientific determinations of difference and desires for social ordering and control” (Rodgers 2010b: 24). Specifically, Rodgers

has connected metaphors about electronic sounds as waves with histories of maritime voyages and associated colonialist narratives whilst the metaphor of electronic sounds as individuals has provided a means by which to critically analyse the concept of the individual as one considered through generative principles of unity derived from part-whole relations within audio-technical discourses. These discursive structures, as feminist musicologist Robin James has also addressed, have developed through legacies of musical harmony and theories of tonality that “claimed to build a model of social or musical organisation on the basis of natural order (e.g., the State of Nature, the overtone series)” (James 2014: 142). As Rodgers has asserted, “notions of sonic individuation and variability emerged in the contexts of Darwinian thought” in ways that “were deeply entwined with epistemologies of gender and racial difference in Western philosophy and modern science” (Rodgers 2010b: v-vi). Tracing romantic conceptions entwined in the “intersections of physiology and acoustics... the life sciences and aesthetics” through the “relation of biology to art” back to an Aristotelian tradition that systematically established a “totality of form”, Rodgers has demonstrated the endurance of acoustic concepts based upon holistic perceptions in which form was defined “as that which embodies the whole of an organism as well as its internal organising principles” (Rodgers 2010b: 118-9). In this analysis may be deduced an ongoing tension between the general and the particular - sameness and difference, abstract and concrete - expressed through procreative beliefs of “the genesis of whole sounds from internal organising principles” (Rodgers 2010b: 119) as assumptions about sound’s own transcendental self-birthing abilities invested in its ‘natural’ form of harmonious part-whole relations.

Rodgers' identification of the metaphorical investment of ideas about sounds and in particular electronic sounds as individuals "understood as complex wholes characterised by individually distinctive variations" is instructive for this research (Rodgers 2010b: 23). Echoes of discourses of racial and sexual difference, and thus racial and sexual segregation and erasure, reverberate throughout these historical constructions. Beliefs in which 'scientific' thinking about phrenology and biology as "differential variations", "analysed and controlled by specialised technologies and techniques" have also been historically applied as markers of differences between people whilst also serving as methodologies by which to organise the boundaries of electronic sound's fundamental parameters (Rodgers 2010b: 93, 23). Such historic scientific rationalism, as I expand more upon shortly, often resulted in the categorisation of individual characteristics based upon assumptions that the shape of the skull, pigmentation of the skin or female reproductive organs were actually productive of socio-cultural inferiority and secondary status. Further, Rodgers has identified "Helmholtz's physiological theories of acoustics" as informed by the "graphical inscription instruments" of his era combined with "experimental physiology research" as providing the basis which "grounded his theories of the experience of musical aesthetics in anatomical form and function" (Rodgers 2010b: 93). The ways in which these physiological assumptions that have underpinned a history of acoustics can be heard to echo through audio-technical discourses and their influence upon both auditory perception and aesthetic process in the historical present is one of the primary concerns that this thesis seeks to address.

## **Feminist Politics and the Rise of the Individual**

The methodology applied by Rodgers' in her feminist epistemology of the modern sound synthesiser relates in many ways to the scholarship of feminist political historian Joan W. Scott. Scott's own historiography of the development of feminist politics in revolutionary era France was similarly based upon an epistemological analysis of the historical construction of both the rise of the ideal individual and the development of feminist politics within this period. Scott's own production of a specifically critical feminism was based upon her socio-historical analysis of different practices of feminism across differing historical frames and shifting power relations which enabled her to identify the ways in which feminist theory and practice had been produced and had changed over time. This garnered her an appreciation of feminism as an "opportunity for action not determined, but resulting from contingent and converging historical effects" (Butler 2011: 12). Her historical analysis in particular focused upon a tracing of the norms and conventions by which dominant beliefs about "sexual difference", understood in this instance as perceived essential differences between women and men, had historically emerged.

Through the rise of the concept of the 'individual' and the establishment of a discourse of the "rights of man" in eighteenth and nineteenth century France, Scott, writing in *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* sought to historicise the theories and practices that converged in hegemonic beliefs about sexual, racial and class differences (Scott 1996). Throughout her historical analysis, Scott distinguished between two contradictory definitions and "ambiguous meanings" of the individual,



with a focus upon the “historical variations on these themes” that had been in circulation since the commencement of modernity at least and which increased in intensity throughout the age of the Enlightenment (Scott 1996: 5, 10). On the one hand the individual, Scott has claimed, has been historically defined as the “*abstract* prototype for the human” embodying the commonly shared human attributes deemed necessary for political recognition, for participation in the public sphere and thus citizenship within discourses of the “rights of man” (Scott 1996: 5 emphasis added). Yet on the other hand, as Scott explained, “the individual is a *unique* being, a distinct person, *different* from all others of its species”, a being whose unique and individual identity is constituted through relations of contrast (Scott 1996: 5 emphasis added). Through an analysis of the shifting definitions of *sameness* and *difference* as played out through the ideas by which the ideal individual was defined in this era Scott sought to expose the historically contingent processes by which both abstract and concrete ideals combined within beliefs about the prototypical human individual and which were assumed to represent universally masculine prerogatives.

The political recognition required for the right to full citizenship based upon ideals of an equality that would enable political participation and citizenship within the historical period of the French Revolution, as Scott has asserted, was initially granted on the basis that the political individual must necessarily possess a “certain set of invariant psychological characteristics and tendencies” (Scott 1996: 6). Such supposedly unchanging psychological traits, the expression of which was a prerequisite for political recognition and thus social intelligibility, were based upon beliefs about “natural” biological differences and a “natural” order of the world, which within the era of Scott’s

historiography culminated in the discourse of “sexual difference” assumed as a biologically grounded truth. Hegemonic and hierarchical beliefs about the biological, physiological and psychological basis of sexual difference within this era were used to legitimate the exclusion of women as a category from the “natural” rights of citizenship. “Sexual difference”, Scott has claimed, was “established not only as a natural fact, but also as an ontological basis for social and political differentiation” (Scott 1996: 3). It was the rise of psychology in the eighteenth century, according to Scott, that “emphasised the physiological basis of cognition”, basing the issue of difference primarily in the body’s organs where such differences were then applied as the basis by which to determine an individual’s role in the new society that was being written into history. In essence, biological assumptions were used to determine one’s social position and political participation within this new republic. These “organic differences” which “were taken to be the source of one’s impressions and experiences” as well as “the skin in some cases, the generative organs in others” were the assumed “organic differences” that were used to identify and hierarchically designate the “markers of human ability” required for political participation (Scott 1996: 6). Such assumed differences then enabled the distinction “between those who exemplified the human individual through their reason and moral integrity and those (others - women and initially blacks as well [sic]) whose so-called natural tendencies precluded their ability to live up to the individual prototype” (Scott 1996: 6). Based upon these assumed essential biological distinctions, the category of white, Western, heterosexual, bourgeois men at this time were deemed to express an innately “profound and desirable sensibility” whilst the category of women, based upon their “so-called natural tendencies” were deemed as being merely capable of “fleeting feelings” in regard to the demand that the prototypical

human individual must inherently possess the “moral integrity” deemed an enabling prerequisite for the ‘responsible’ undertaking of ‘intelligent’, political participation and thus full citizenship (Scott 1996: 7).

What Scott’s historical analysis of the construction of the discourse of the “rights of man” has provided is a means by which to explicate the unspoken assumptions bound within Sterne’s critique of the “universal abstract humanist subject” (Sterne 2003: 9) in histories of sound reproduction and to connect this with Rodgers’ exposure of the “archetypal Western, white and male subject” (Rodgers 2010b: v) as the universal subject of audio-technical discourse. Further, this analysis enables an explication of the processes by which these materialisations emerged through the historical processes that Scott has identified as heavily influenced by the processes by which *the* prototypical human individual emerged in the eighteenth century as one that simultaneously embodied both abstract and concrete ideals. Both these ideals, abstract and concrete, both as hierarchically and uniquely masculine prerogatives, emerged through discourses of sameness and difference and power relations of domination and subordination, which is an important dialectic that underlies the analysis throughout this research.

Scott has demonstrated that it was not only the invariant common traits supposedly embodied by the ideal individual, abstracted as he was from the endless variations of biological, physiological and psychological characteristics, that provided the necessary difference by which such an individual could be identified. For the prototypical human individual within this era also needed to stand above the crowd, to be unique and distinct. This ‘unique’ distinction was now based upon the inherent demonstration of

superior concrete differences. For the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the ideal of the prototypical human individual was based upon relations of sameness that were embodied by the category of white Western, heterosexual, bourgeois men in contrast to all others (Scott 1999: 9). Yet by the time of Emile Durkheim more than a century after Rousseau, the boundaries of ideal and thus political individuality rested upon the embodiment of unique and distinct characteristics that would set one apart from the crowd and which marked the political individual as one of superior sensibility and intellect in contrast to all others who were now considered an undifferentiated mass (Scott 1999: 9). Scott has quoted the “Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who was widely read in France during the Third Republic” as claiming “All women fall into the same category, whereas each man is an individual unto himself; the physiognomy of the former conforms to a generalised standard; that of the latter is in each case unique” (Lombroso quoted in Scott 1996: 10).

The concept of “sexual difference”, then, was applied in a way that enabled the political individual to be identified through common traits and characteristics whilst simultaneously marking him out as unique, distinct and different from the crowd. In this way, both abstract and concrete ideals of individuality were defined as a particularly “masculine prerogative” (Scott 1996: 10). In this sense, the ideal of ‘man’ became the norm for the abstract individual and the norm of the unique, concrete individual and *the* universal norm against which all others were measured, whether as general or particular, based upon relations of sameness for white, Western, heterosexual, bourgeois men *and* their relations of difference from all ‘others’. In this way, “woman”, by all accounts, was excluded from political intelligibility and recognition and thus disenfranchised

from any entitlement to the “rights of man” as the necessary ground that guaranteed the status of citizen from which she was categorically excluded.

### **Paradox of Difference as Sameness**

It becomes clear then that there is an inherent contradiction, or paradox, embedded within an idea of difference that was constructed as a ground from which to differentiate and contrast the common characteristics - or norms - that the political, male individual was expected to inherently embody. Whilst the idea of “man”, based primarily on relations of sameness for white, Western, heterosexual, bourgeois, male people by necessity needed to deny any embodiment of difference, he also needed to differentiate himself from what was considered an undifferentiated mass. Scott has eloquently explained the inherent paradox embedded within the prototypical human individual as an ideal individuality that “required the very difference that the idea of the prototypical human individual was meant to deny” (Scott 1996: 7). Yet this paradoxical reliance upon difference proved to be a contentious and difficult problem, whereby the concept of “sexual difference”, produced through naturalistic thinking, was conveniently embellished so as to provide a necessary boundary and “way of dealing with individuality and difference in politics” (Scott 1996: 8). This, according to Scott, enabled philosophers and politicians at the time to explain “difference as a function of gender, idealised sometimes in terms of a functional division of reproductive labor, sometimes as the natural and therefore unquestionable expression of heterosexual desire” whilst “the superiority of white Western men to their “savage” counterparts lay in an individuality achieved and expressed through the social and affective divisions of labor formalised by the institution of monogamous marriage” (Scott 1996: 8, 11). In

effect, “women” were paradoxically lumped together as an homogenous category of undifferentiated differences to be governed through relations of marriage and/as property. In this way, the category of women were completely excluded, both based upon asymmetrical and abstracted ideals, the higher of these which they did not embody and through the concrete, lived differences which they both did and did not embody, from the rights of political citizenship granted only to the ideal prototypical human individual, as universally masculine.

### **Gender and History**

Scott, writing in *Gender and the Politics of History* (1999) has asserted that “gender is the social organisation of sexual difference” as that through which intelligible, and therefore communicable, socio-cultural understandings by which the categories and appropriate behaviours of ‘women’ and ‘men’ are produced (Scott 1999: 2). Further, these ideas are produced through human relations, none of them being or providing fixed identities, the categories of men and women are not a “fixed form or timeless kind of being” (Butler 2011, 3), rather they are historical in a way that correlates with Sterne’s assertion of audition as something that is learned rather than being a timeless and ahistorical truth (Sterne 2003: 12). Scott’s understanding of sexual difference then as historical is important for this research because it is based not upon biology and ontological claims of a ‘natural’ sexual difference between women and men, but rather, it is the concept of difference itself, which I read in conjunction with the concept of audition, that is produced as a result of different and differential discursive *relations* of power/knowledge. Notions of sexual and racial difference, as much as beliefs about

audition, are relational and historical, neither timeless nor natural facts as both Scott and Sterne have each respectively explained.

Paradox then is at the centre of what Scott has developed as *critical feminism*, as the site of contestation and convergence that constitute the main conditions for change. For Scott, *equality (sameness) and difference*, rather than being the polar flagpoles of feminist enquiry between which one must choose from which to nail one's colours, are both required to bring about change. This presents a different and *critical* understanding of feminism and sexual difference as much as for histories of sound production and auditory perception and is one way in which Scott has been productive in the writing of feminist history, all important approaches for this research.

There is a connection to be made between Sterne's critique of "the "universal human subject" that a "phenomenological truth about sound sets up" (Sterne 2003: 14), Rodgers' critique of the physiological basis of acoustics as developed in particular through Hermann von Helmholtz's theories (Rodgers 2010b: 93) and the assumed physiological basis by which political citizenship was granted to an ideal "individual prototype" in revolutionary era France (Scott 1996: 6). That connection is the ideal individual as an inherently masculine universal, as a universally masculine signifying economy. Rodgers' identification of the privileging of the perspective of "an archetypal Western, white, and male subject" (Rodgers 2010b: v) through physiologically-based acoustic histories and their influence upon audio-technical discourses in the historical present links with the historic ideal of the "individual prototype" whose shared "invariant psychological characteristics and tendencies" (Scott 19996: 6), based upon

physiological assumptions, have historically provided the basis for and the boundary of both political and audible intelligibility within each respective analysis. By making more explicit the connections between legacies of Enlightenment thinking, the construction of the concept of the ideal political individual through Scott's feminist historiography and Rodgers' critical exposure of the historically gendered and raced assumptions within audio-technical discourses, Sterne's critique of the "universal human subject" (Sterne 2003: 14) as a transhistorical assumption that has underpinned phenomenological thinking in sound gains a necessary and more specific focus. In this analysis can be traced the tensions between concepts of the abstract individual constituted through paradoxical relations of *sameness* and the concrete individual constituted through equally paradoxical relations of *difference* as the tensions of sameness and difference by which, as Sterne has asserted, "sonic culture is characterised" (Sterne 2012b: 1). Further, Rodgers' tracing of the metaphors of electronic sound as individuals and as waves seeks to expose the ways in which these dialectical relations manifested in acoustic and audio-technical discourses, which I expand upon in more detail in chapters four and five in particular. Both of these concepts of sameness and difference, Scott has claimed, have been entwined in a paradoxical process through which the universal "rights of man" as much as historical feminist politics were established and demarcated and which, I suggest, can similarly be read in Rodgers' critique of the metaphor of electronic sounds as individuals comprised of part-whole relations, which I expand upon in more detail in chapter four (Scott 1996; Rodgers 2010b: 31). The paradox, as Scott saw it, lies in the complex process that sought to simultaneously accept and refuse these two dialectical distinctions between the abstract and concrete as they have played out in constructions of individuality.



## Silenced as Noise

Excluded as she was from political intelligibility within historical continental discourses of individuality, “woman” throughout Anglo-American histories of sound and music has similarly been ignored, negated and generally written out of existence. The title of Džuverovic’s and Neset’s project, *Her Noise*, whilst for the co-curators may be an anagram that references ‘heroines’, for this research has provided a foundational key through which to address the immediate power relations of the milieu in which this research project finds itself. The title *Her Noise*, can be further considered as a particular kind of ‘performed articulation’<sup>8</sup> that highlights and re-works the region that binds these terms as one which would connect a historical idea of ‘woman’ with historical ideas about noise and silence whereby “women”, as artist, researcher and writer Marie Thompson has explained, have been considered as harbingers of noise, chatting and gossiping unintelligibly and interfering in signals of pure communication (Thompson 2013).

The poet Anne Carson writing about the sound of gender throughout classical antiquity to the present day has claimed that “putting the door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture” whose primary strategy has been the “ideological association of female sound with monstrosity, disorder and death” (Carson 1992: 121). Carson has provided examples from classical literature that have written women as “a species given to disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound - to shrieking, wailing, sobbing, shrill lament, loud laughter, screams of pain or pleasure and eruptions of raw emotion in general” (Carson 1992: 126). Thompson, in her text

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<sup>8</sup> This is a term developed by musicology professor Nina Eidsheim which is taken up in more detail in chapter five (Eidsheim 2009).

*Gossips, Sirens, Hi-fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise*, has traced the associations of women, noise and silence through various religions, nations and cultures that have similarly constructed ideas about ‘woman’ through “philosophical dichotomies that have governed and legitimated their subordination” and that have “been constructed in terms of unreason, disorder, non-meaning and excess” (Thompson 2013: 299).

“Woman”, Thompson has written, has been “met with fear and degradation; she has been the perversion of reason, morally bankrupt and the abject defilement of the sacred and the pure”, an abject body best “seen and not heard” (Thompson 2013: 299).

Implicit within the admonitions of women’s silence is a fear of her sonic presence. It is not so much that her silence is virtuous but that her noise is dangerous to the ears of patriarchal orders. In turn, female or feminine speech has often been branded as unwanted noise; their ‘idle gossiping’, their squeals of excitement, and their conversations are cast out as abject distractions; their unpredictable outbursts are to be controlled and abated. The imagined noise of women, of feminine speech and conversation is marked within the languages of various cultures in derogatory and unflattering terms (Thompson 2013: 299).

Writer and sociologist Anne Karpf has similarly written of the historical “strident prejudice” against women’s voices dating from second century religions and classical philosophies to the present day (Karpf 2007). She has quoted a “sixteenth-century writer on rhetoric” as declaring “What becometh a woman best, and first of all: Silence. What seconde: Silence. What third: Silence. What fourth: Silence” (Karpf 2007: 156).

Extending her investigation through histories of radio broadcasting, Karpf has explained that “the invention of the megaphone, loudspeaker, and microphone did nothing to change the common belief that women made poor orators because their voices weren’t powerful enough” (Karpf 2007: 157). The sound of women’s voices within the heyday of radio were judged upon pitch and timbre where a “high voice in women was

associated with demureness, and low voice with sexuality” (Karpf 2007: 158), both voices disqualifying women on the basis of either promiscuity or lack of authority in an auditory example of the double bind of lack and excess that has dogged the category of women for centuries. Similarly tracing associations of women and noise where women are deemed to “talk too loudly and too much” Karpf has suggested “if silence is the ideal for women, then any talk in which a woman engages can be too much” (Karpf 2007: 160).

The cultural status of noise, which Sterne has analysed through the emergence of computing, the development of the MP3 codec and the resultant “domestication of noise” within acoustic histories and psychoacoustic discourses, has assumed historically shifting definitions as either noise to be controlled, noise to be eradicated or noise to be put to use (Sterne 2012: 92-127). Yet whilst the uses of noise may have changed throughout different historical periods, the underlying assumption about noise as something largely negative and as a sonic materialisation of difference has endured. Sterne has traced the ways in which noise has historically been defined “in terms of its frequency characteristics: nonperiodic, irregular, or otherwise not behaving like pitched or recognised sound...in contrast to a broader subjective and social definition of noise as “unwanted sound” that at its extreme could be a threat to the social order” (Sterne 2012: 108). Noise, according to Sterne, has been variously defined as “extraneous sounds which serve only to interfere with proper reception”, as “unwanted disturbance”, as “that which interfered with communication in a channel”, as “extraneous disturbances” and as “an interfering element to be eliminated” (Sterne 2012: 108). Noise, historically and throughout its various implementations and representations, only

moves towards gaining a slightly more positive reputation as something that, as Jacques Attali has asserted, can be commodified (Attali 1985).

Through the narration of these historical accounts of the ideal individual and historical representations of noise and silence, it is possible to hear the way in which the combination of ‘her’ and ‘noise’, historically, has been leveraged as an insult, as a means of silencing and discounting the sounds, speech, ideas, beliefs and most importantly the agency attached to the appellation *her*. Her noise then can be considered, more often than not, leveraged historically and often still in the historical present as a form of injurious speech, as a way to discount the legitimacy, authority and agency of female experience and women’s musical and sonic production, as a means of silencing. The continuing legacy of such thinking can perhaps be further grasped through the reporting of the *Her Noise Project* at the South London Gallery in 2005 by London-based art critic Adrian Searle, who called for “more structure, more sound, less noise” in a review titled *Quiet Please* (Searle 2005). The journalist’s critique of the unstructured noise of the exhibition is a contemporary example of the continued dismissal of women’s work based upon universal masculine standards whereby the article compared each aspect of the *Her Noise* exhibition with male precedents as a way of largely dismissing the noisy claims of the project, from John Cage, Lou Reed, Philip Glass and Steve Reich, through to Morton Feldman (Searle 2005). In insisting upon normative and historical definitions of both women and noise through the locution “more structure...less noise” the critic has attempted to fix the sound produced within the project within dominant and normative representations of artistic value, trading in the aesthetic separation of music and noise and maintaining the sexist and derogatory

association of women with unwanted noise. In particular, the critic has traded upon misogynistic, romantic and historical definitions of both women and noise, as categories that threaten social order and that need to be controlled and regulated through recognised linguistic and musical structures (Attali 1985: 8; Sterne 2012: 124).

### **Written into History: ‘Woman-Centric’ Feminist Musicology**

Hegemonic discourses and power relations which sought to write women as a category out of musical history have been met with numerous attempts by feminist musicologists and feminist ethnomusicologists to write women into the histories they have been erased from. Early feminist musicology, which gained momentum and recognition predominantly within Euro-American discourses in the 1980s, can be considered as largely reflecting what feminist musicologist Ellen Koskoff has called a “woman-centric” approach (Koskoff 2005: 93). This, according to Koskoff, connects the 'first wave' of feminist musicology with the early 'second wave' of feminism. Whilst I do not fully subscribe to the compartmentalising of feminism into successive generational waves because such thinking itself is largely based upon progressive and heteronormal organisational structures, Koskoff's analysis may yet prove to be productive. Her identification enables a focus upon some of the strengths and weaknesses inherent to this particular approach. For as a primary engagement invested in writing forgotten musical women into histories from which they had either been neglected or erased, this “phase”, as a political strategy, resonates with feminist efforts that have similarly sought to 'write woman into history' such as those invested in processes of writing “her-story” and ‘feminine writing’. Women's music anthologies such as Carol Neuls-Bates' *Women In Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present*

(1982), Jane Bower's and Judith Tick's *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950* (1987), Karin Pendle's *Women and Music: A History* (1991) and Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner's *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States* (2006), among others, attest to this impulse to write 'woman' into history. As Koskoff has suggested these texts "first proposed "woman" as an analytic category, thus forever separating woman from the all-inclusive category "man" (as in mankind)" (Koskoff 2005: 93). Koskoff's analysis of this "phase" of feminist musicology echoes somewhat with Scott's identification of "her-story" as a feminist methodology applied in the writing of women's histories in which, "as the play on the word "her-story" implied, the point was to give value to an experience that had been ignored (hence devalued) and to insist on female agency in the making of history" (Scott 1999: 18). A consideration of early feminist musicological methodologies of woman-centric approaches as 'herstories', can in hindsight be appreciated to have within their construction the propensity for reifying the ideologies of gendered separate spheres, which Koskoff has noted (Koskoff 2005: 93). Woman-centric feminist musicology, in a manner that is also in line with early Western feminist theories predicated upon notions of ontological sexual difference, have been critiqued for rarely including "efforts to recover black women's histories or account for the factors that have historically marginalised their efforts" (Hariston 2008: 97; Hayes & Williams 2007). Whilst queer musicology has developed as a recognised site of enquiry from roughly the 1990s onwards, the fact that feminist critical race musicology has not materialised as a distinct site of enquiry, may in part be perceived to be due to generalised assumptions about "race", "ethnicity" and "nationality" as being specific primarily to ethnomusicology. Yet, as Koskoff has noted, the latter's predominant working methodologies of fieldwork

indebted to historical anthropological practices and discourses have often operated within a different paradigm to the predominant development of structural critique within musicology (Koskoff 2005: 92). Additionally, relegating issues of 'race' to ethnomusicology alone maintains historically normative and hierarchical structures of race-thinking that would insist that 'race' is something that happens 'over there' in a way that implicitly conflates race with ethnicity. Early feminist musicology's assumption of what can be called essential identifications for the category of 'woman' and the widespread neglect of critical difference regarding issues of race, ethnicity and nationality in this period, seemingly left to the field of feminist ethnomusicology and resonating with historical 'white' feminism's own erasures of intersectional differences, belies a certain failure within its own historical workings.

The majority of musicology and critical theory that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and that engaged with discourses of race, gender and sexuality has tended toward a focus either upon popular music or jazz and blues (Rose 1994; Gourse 1995; McRobbie 1995; Davis 1999; Carby 1999; McClary 2001; Moten 2003; Collins 2004). Angela Y. Davis and Hazel V. Carby have both identified the blues as historically productive sites for black female musics and sexual representations (Davis 1998; Carby 1999). In a manner that responds to critiques of the inherent masculinism in many writings about music and migration within diasporan discourses, Carby has examined the ways in which historical effects of "migration had distinctively different meanings for black men and women" and where the songs of the classic blues women of the 1920s and 30s were "part of a discourse of sexual relations" in which "migration for women often meant being left behind" but which were also sites in which black

women “constructed themselves as sexual subjects through song” (Carby 1999: 13; 1998: 471). In an era that would eventually come to define a “politics of silence” around black female sexuality in response to negative racial stereotypes and representations of sexuality for black women, which I address in more detail in chapter three, Evelyn M. Hammonds has noted that women’s blues presented a particular moment when “the blues women defied and exploited those stereotypes” (Hammonds 1997: 176).

### **‘Gender-Centric’ Feminist Musicology**

Through what Koskoff has identified as a 'second-wave' of feminist musicology and ethnomusicology is scholarship that has sought to question productions of gender through productions of music such as Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991), Marcia Citron’s *Gender and the Musical Canon* (1991) and Elaine Barkin’s and Lydia Hamessley’s *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music* (1999) (see also Oliveros 1983, 1994; Carson 1995; Macarthur 2002, 2010; Born, 1995; Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000; Jarviluoma et al, 2003; McCartney 1995, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2010; Hubbs 2004; Brett et al 2006; Mockus 2007). These texts have largely sought to address “understandings of how both music, sound and sociomusical activities are gendered” (Koskoff 2005: 90) and have largely been based upon defining the field, identifying key artists and analysing their work or establishing and defining key terms and practices by which to shape the discourse. Koskoff has noted that at this time, whilst texts in feminist musicology continued to find publication, textual publication of feminist and gender ethnomusicology began to slow down, as a signal of the shifting ground between musicology and ethnomusicology, the changing



understandings between formerly fixed categories of music as Western and non-Western and between hierarchies of, at one end, avant-garde and art music and, at the other, popular and folk music (Koskoff 2005: 90). Koskoff has claimed, in light of these shifts, what actually distinguishes each field is “not the genres they study, where they study them, who studies them, or even the analytic and interpretative models they use but, rather, their method of data collection - textwork versus fieldwork” (Koskoff 2005: 92-3). Textwork, according to Koskoff has historically been the preferred methodology in musicology with fieldwork more typical of ethnomusicological methods. The field of sound studies in which this research is situated, with a narrowed focus upon sound arts and experimental musics, consists of both textwork and fieldwork approaches, though there are very few of either that focus specifically upon the work of women let alone that engage feminist or critical race analyses.

Andra McCartney’s *Creating Worlds for My Music to Exist: How Women Composers of Electroacoustic Music Make Place for their Voices* (1997) and Tara Rodgers’ *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (2010a) have each presented interviews in which women sound artists, soundscape composers and electronic musicians have been granted sites from which to speak for themselves within each text. Cathy Lane’s edited text *Playing with Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice* (2008) and Lane and Angus Carlyle’s edited texts *In The Field: The Art of Field Recording* (2013) and *On Listening* (2013) are all texts consisting of interviews with artists and artists writing about their own practices, but none of which focus specifically on women or gender. The field of experimental music, particularly where there is a cross-over with rock and punk, evidences a greater number of anthologies of women talking about their music,

such as Zora Von Burden's *Women of the Underground Music* (2010) and Liz Evans' *Women, Sex and Rock 'n' Roll in Their Own Words* (1994) as well as musicological writing about women in music (O'Dair 1997; Reddington 2007; Leonard 2007). Archives, such as the *Her Noise Archive*, *Devotional Archive*, *Women in Punk*, *Women's Liberation Music Archive*, and *Odd Girl Out* may be considered as seeking to fill the perceived gap of women in sound arts and experimental musics in the UK, developed largely through ethnomusicological methodologies that have sought to make spaces for women 'to speak for themselves' often through audiovisual interviews. But these archives have not yet received much critical musicological or ethnomusicological interest in terms of any reflective analysis of the data collected as either detailed investigations into the 'herstories' or social histories contained within or any combination there of.

### **Feminist Gender-Centric Sound Studies**

The few feminist texts that may be considered as circulating within the field of sound studies predominantly reflect Koskoff's assertion of more gender-centric analyses of socio-musical histories situated within a textwork paradigm of musicological research practices but *have* combined ethnomusicological processes of fieldwork as a means by which to generate analysable data. Within early electroacoustic arts and soundscape composition, Andra McCartney was perhaps one of the first feminist voices to explicitly speak up about feminism and gender in sound studies, electroacoustic music and acoustic ecology. McCartney has contributed to the establishment of feminist sound studies since she freely made available her Masters thesis in which she traced the gendered assumptions underlying the dominant discourses of electroacoustic music,

*elektronische musik* and soundscape composition which she combined with interviews with and analyses of the work of fourteen female Canadian composers (McCartney 1997). Since then she has continued to work towards bringing the words “woman” and “composer” into some sort of combined recognition. Working through listening, composing and reception in soundscape composition and environmental sound (2002b), taking seriously Hildegard Westerkamp’s compositional practice through detailed analyses of her works (2002a), analysing *Gender, Genre and Electroacoustic Soundmaking Practices* (2006) and exploring working methods of female sound producers in the sound studio have all contributed to establishing a “greater sense of community among women sound producers” (McCartney 2005), particularly for those living and working in Canada. McCartney’s *Inventing Images: Constructing and Contesting Gender in Thinking about Electroacoustic Music* is an important text that set the scene for ongoing research in feminist sound studies (1995). In this paper McCartney challenged dominant stereotypes of women through deconstructions of language and technology in the recording studio. Through case studies McCartney traced the use of audio metaphors as “embodying powerful and cognitive performative functions” through “early scientific and technological discourses” modelled on violence and misogyny, which through repetition, through daily use and through advertising in specialist audio magazines, she claimed, have come to seem natural (McCartney 1995: 58).

Rodgers’ *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound*, published in 2010 and similarly reflective of a socially embedded combination of gender feminist musicology and ethnomusicology, also combined an anthology of interviews of women working in

sound and electronic music predominantly in the USA with a theoretical introductory chapter. In the introduction Rodgers extended McCartney's uncovering of "early scientific and technological discourses" (McCartney 1995: 58) into an analysis of the dominant foundational discourses and origin stories of Western electronic music and sound studies, through the binary poles of noise and silence. Rodgers addressed and questioned the dominant origin stories and progress narratives that noise and silence have presented throughout histories of electronic music, where the former is often originated with the futurists and the latter with John Cage in ways that she has suggested are shaped through discourses of violence and domination in the former and where Cage's legacy "in electronic and experimental music histories has often had the effect of silencing others" (Rodgers 2010a: 10). Further, where Voegelin seemingly sought to heal the split between noise and silence by positing an idea that resonates as *écouter féminine*, Rodgers in *Pink Noises* sought to understand how it is that noise and silence have become the undisputed limit-points of this expanded field by critically questioning the historical construction within audio-technical discourses of these foundational terms themselves.

### **Written Out of History**

Whilst Rodgers' and Sterne's work in particular has sought to historicise sound reproduction technologies and audio-technical discourses by charting their shifting histories, the question of *how* to write a feminist history of the present in sound arts and experimental musics that focuses upon feminist compositional process is not such an easy question to answer. This difficulty can perhaps be appreciated in light of the question, 'where are the women', which seems to be a perennially recurring question

even after all the feminist work that has been undertaken throughout the history of feminism, feminist musicology and feminist ethnomusicology and as such raises questions about the efficacy of historical feminist theory, musicology and politics in the historical present. For the issue of overlooked and erased histories of women's production from hegemonic sound and music discourses in itself is certainly not new, nor is this erasure unique to the fields of sound arts and experimental musics. Rather, and perhaps obvious to some, the erasure of women from history itself is a recurring and historical pattern. In the field of avant-garde music in 1970, composer Pauline Oliveros, similarly to Linda Nochlin in 1971 in the visual arts, posed the rhetorical question to the New York Times, "Why have there been no great women composers?" (Oliveros 1985: 47; Nochlin 1989: 147-15). *Her Noise Project* co-curators Lina Džuverovic and Anne Hilde Neset, over thirty years after Oliveros and Nochlin rhetorically asked 'where are the women' posed the same question as foundational to the development of their project:

In a way, our question was a rhetorical question. It wasn't a question that we felt actually needed an answer from us. Our answer is *Her Noise*. Our answer isn't, it's like that question, why are there no good women artists? You know, it's the same question. It's like well, here's the answer, *Her Noise* (Transcribed Džuverovic HNI-2006).

Why this question, 'where are the women' is still being asked over thirty years later, in hindsight, is perhaps the more pressing question to be asking<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the question arises of how it is that the category of 'woman' within these discourses still faces similar historical erasures in light of more recent efforts such as the countering of

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<sup>9</sup> As another example, an article from 'The Telegraph' with the headline "Where are all the women headlining music festivals?", published August 8th, 2014, cites the ongoing male bias in music festivals across the UK. see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/music-festivals/11016441/Where-are-all-the-women-headlining-music-festivals.html> [accessed 11/08/2014]

history with *herstory* or the analysis of the stratifying processes of social history through prior work within the fields of feminist political history and feminist musicology.

Some of the problems with feminist histories intent on highlighting inherent structural contradictions, which perhaps may offer correlations with processes of archiving that would seek to instate new canons instead of challenging or transforming existing value systems, is, as already mentioned, the lack of ability to actually affect any real long-lasting change. One only needs to consider the ongoing male bias, for instance across concert programs and gigs and on recording labels, radio playlists and in educational environments where the ‘exceptional woman’ is still a common theme to perceive the powerful resistance of history to feminist projects that, as Scott has explained “have documented the lives of women in the past, that have provided information that has challenged received interpretations of past periods and events and that have analysed specific conditions of women’s subordination” without actually effecting much change within those conditions<sup>10</sup> (Scott 1999: 18). Recently there has been a swathe of articles

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10 Research undertaken for the “Global Gender Gap Report 2014” by the World Economic Forum gave the UK an overall ranking of 26th out of 142 countries. The UK ranked 46th in economic participation and opportunity; 32nd in educational attainment; 94th in health and survival; 33rd in political empowerment (Schwab et al 2014: 370). Whilst women in the UK have a life expectancy of 72 and men of 70, evidencing a relatively small gender gap, John Middleton, of the UK Faculty of Public Health, has suggested “wages and opportunities for promotion impact on health” pointing out that “women face specific problems in terms of reproductive health, but are also more likely to be on antidepressants and tranquillisers” which, he says, “relates to the disadvantages women face in the job market” (<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/oct/28/how-life-for-women-britain-getting-tougher> [accessed online 28-10-2014]). Additionally in the UK in 2013 “the gender pay gap widened again for the first time in five years reaching 19.1% for all employees” - as 19.1% less than men (Fawcett Society 2014: 19). In education in the UK in STEM fields “only 30% of the UK’s graduates at tertiary level are female” noting “the effect of the “leaky pipeline”: the gradual and continuous loss of women at consecutive career stages within Stem”. The Commons’ Science and Technology Select Committee report of February 2013 stated ““Just 17% of all professors working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics are women.”” (<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/oct/28/how-life-for-women-britain-getting-tougher> [accessed 01-11-2014]). George Arnett writing in The Guardian in response to the “*The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*” has found that “Women currently have 60% of the standing of men

and blogs appearing online whose authors have expressed the ongoing gender imbalances that they face within sound and music professions. Ellen McSweeney has written about the gender inequalities that she has personally experienced as a musician and writer in contemporary classical music and the arts in Chicago (McSweeney 2013). Composer and professor Kristin Kuster has written of her experiences coming to terms with the label “woman composer” in US institutions where women are still woefully represented, if at all (Kuster 2013). The web based network *female:pressure* collated data collected from the personal and professional experiences of its 1185 international members and produced a press release for International Women’s Day in 2013 highlighting the continued under-representation of women in contemporary music production and performance, at festivals, on recording labels and in music charts (*female:pressure* 2013). Concert pianist and lecturer Xenia Pestova undertook a “random sampling of UK music departments” in August 2013 with her findings reflecting ongoing gender imbalances (Pestova 2013).

This research then proceeds from the position in which gender may be perceived to manifest in the making of works which *Her Noise Project* co-curator Lina Džuverovic has expressed as, “*knowing that there is a certain inequality as a starting point*” (transcribed Džuverovic HNI-2006). This ‘knowing’ has often been based upon experience, where as in Džuverovic’s case for instance, as well as in the personal experience of this researcher, one may have experienced inequality in her personal or

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worldwide - just four percentage points up on 2006 when WEF started the report measuring female economic participation, education, health and political involvement” and has estimated that “It will take 81 years for the worldwide gender gap to close if progress continues at the current rate, according to the latest report by the World Economic Forum (WEF)” (Arnett 2014 [accessed online 28-10-2014]).

professional life, which Džuverovic has considered as “coming from a gendered perspective” (transcribed Džuverovic HNI-2006). But this ‘knowing’ has been reiterated again and again by others who have expressed similar ways of ‘knowing’, which the examples by McSweeney, Pestova et al cited above testify to. Further, certain inequalities as personally *felt* and expressed through the relaying of personal experiences point towards specifically emotional and subjugated knowledges which, due to historical limitations as the norms, laws and conventions of representation that have hegemonically established what can count as “knowledge”, have proven “hard to document, let alone archive in traditional ways” (Danbolt 2010: 96). “Knowing that there is a certain inequality” is then as Džuverovic has explained, “a starting point” from which each of the works that will be addressed throughout this research may be understood as having proceeded from (transcribed Džuverovic HNI-2006). Attempting to understand how that inequality is operative within and through the field and thus how it might be challenged and transformed, is in itself one of the primary ways that unequal experiences of race and ethnicity and gender and sexuality among other axes of difference can be perceived to manifest in the making of works.

At the fourteenth international *New Interfaces for Musical Expression* (NIME) conference of 2014, Georgina Born organised and chaired a panel/workshop titled *Gender, Education, Creativity in Digital Music and Sound Art* (Born et al 2014). This was the first panel to address issues of gender in sound and music in NIME’s fourteen year history. Born, along with Kyle Devine and Mark Taylor presented findings from their UCAS/HESA research in which they demonstrated “the enormous growth of



music technology degree provision in British Higher Education since the mid 1990s”

drawing particular focus to the following demographics:

...the demographic of British music technology degrees, in comparison to both traditional music degrees and the national average, is overwhelmingly male (more than 90%), from less advantaged social backgrounds, and (slightly) more ethnically diverse. At issue, then, is the emergence in the present of a highly (male) gendered creative digital music scene (Born, Devine & Taylor 2014 - see appendix 3).

This startling demographic of a “more than 90%” male and highly masculine “gendered creative digital music scene” in the UK in 2014 presents stark evidence to the largely ineffectual force of much prior feminist work to bring about any real change within the British landscape of music and technology upon the ratios between men and women enrolled in these courses (Born, Devine & Taylor 2014 - see appendix 3). This, as Born has asserted, means that the current (and future based upon the trends exposed in Born’s research) digital musical landscape is a masculine one.

These statistical findings and personal experiences all point to a certain failure within feminist efforts to actually, really change the ongoing experience of gendered imbalances in the historical present, particularly within this field. Such ‘failures of feminism’ to actually effect widespread change have been addressed by Scott who has critiqued the ways in which past efforts “have encountered the powerful resistance of history - as a disciplined body of knowledge and as a professional institution” (Scott 1999: 18). As a result, Scott has critiqued what she called the “acceptance of history’s positivism” within historical feminist frameworks based upon “an implicit belief in pluralism” (Scott 1999: 3). This she has claimed - admittedly with the luxury of

hindsight - has been based upon a naivety in thinking that existing historical categories and topics could be expanded to include women, particularly where a desire to expand the categories in question does not “effectively change established definitions of those categories” in themselves (Scott 1999: 3). Echoes of Audre Lorde’s critique of the impossibility of bringing down the master’s house with the master’s tools reverberate through this assertion (Lorde 1984). By combining the previously segregated feminist methodologies embedded within ‘herstory’ and feminist social history processes - which can each be heard to echo through the two historical feminist musicological processes addressed so far in this chapter - Scott developed what she called a “critical practice of feminism” as one that seeks to self-reflexively trace the construction of its own terms and conventions, with a particular focus upon the key terms “woman as subject, gender and politics” (Scott 1999: 24). This methodology is applied throughout this research and is joined with an added focus upon the key terms of noise, silence, pitch, timbre and amplitude. Reading this methodology through an analysis of the *Her Noise Project* for example, seemingly suggests that rather than simply attempting to write ‘women’ into existent sound and music histories, the definitions of key terms such as ‘her’ and ‘noise’ as well as ‘sound’ and ‘music’ and the region that binds such modalities themselves need to be critically engaged with and effectively displaced or transformed if any challenge to the “resistances of history” (Scott 1999: 18) is to be lodged at all.

In light of the “resistances of history” Scott developed an approach to writing histories through a specifically critical feminism addressed to feminism’s failures of the past to actually produce any tangible change in the relations between ‘men’ and ‘women’ and

“the relatively limited impact women’s history was having on historical studies more generally” (Scott 1999: 3). Scott critiqued the historical methodologies of herstory and social history as two mutually exclusive processes of feminist historicising as failing to produce change within their discursive fields based upon an assertion that the concept of sexual difference, upon which historical feminism has largely rested, had either been taken as a given or had not been critically analysed. In ways that resonate with the anti-essentialist sea-change in the 1980s and 90s where the dispute about ideas of sexual difference as linked with biology and as ideological hegemony perhaps were most intense, Scott called for a critical analysis of gender, understood as the "social organisation of sexual difference" (Scott 1999: 2). This enabled Scott to tap into what she perceived as the potential agency contained within historical notions of ‘sexual difference’ as a specifically “critical function” rather than maintaining understandings of ‘sexual difference’ as they have been “equated with modes of heterosexual presumption” (Butler 2011: 19). Scott maintained that herstory and social history approaches can only be productive when in dialogue with each other *and* when incorporating a re-questioning of the terms “woman as subject, gender and politics” (Scott 1999: 24) within a paradoxical and temporal framework that interrogates the connections between the social and the political and the conflictual processes and forces by which meanings are established.

Through her political practice of critical feminism Scott developed upon the Foucauldian concept of ‘reverse discourse’ as an inherent “tactical polyvalence” within language through her insistence upon the productivity of paradox as a strategy, not only of displacement, but specifically as one of transformation (Foucault 1990: 100-101). For

Michel Foucault, the strategy of ‘reverse discourse’ offered the possibility for destabilising discursive hegemonic orthodoxies through a reclaiming of the resistive power invested in words by seeking to alter the value judgement or connotation of a word “often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories” upon which the originary discourse relied (Foucault 1990: 101). The reclamation of terminology such as gay, queer, dyke and ‘*her noise*’ offers a clear example of the strategy as one that works to highlight contradictory discrepancies within discourse yet leaves the original phrases of the contradiction in tact. Paradox for Scott works differently to a basic contradiction, such as speaking the words ‘I am lying’. Whilst a sentence such as this is what Scott has identified as a “formal paradox”, the terms of the contradiction within such a paradox remain in tact, the terms ‘true’ and ‘false’ remain as dominant structures. Instead Scott sought to expand upon the Foucauldian concept of reverse discourse by insisting upon a more complex performative paradox as one that has the potential for a more radical change. For whilst the destabilisation of inherent contradiction, though a necessary precursor, works to highlight and displace an originary discourse, Scott’s idea of paradox is one that seeks not only to challenge and displace the original terms in question, but also importantly to transform them.

## **1.2 Destabilising the Subject**

The displacement and transformation of orthodox beliefs is a major strategy within much post-structuralist theory, within feminism and queer theory as much as within post-colonialist scholarship. As a strategy invested in repeating stereotypes to expose and subvert the fallacy of dominant assumptions about authenticity that are bound up

within hegemonic representations, critiques of authenticity, origin and originality can be found at the centre of both Butler's theory of performativity and are also central to Homi K. Bhabha's theories of colonial mimicry (Butler 1990: 42; Bhabha 1994: 111-21; Harris 2006: 71). Whilst Butler sought to undo the hierarchical dependency between the original and its assumed derivative copy in relation to heterosexuality and homosexuality by exposing that dualism as a false construction of power/knowledge with a specific focus upon the im/possibility of a lesbian aesthetic, Bhabha's intervention engaged an undoing of the hierarchical dualism of coloniser and subaltern through a similar original/copy performative paradigm (Butler 1993; Bhabha 1994). Bhabha's *The Other Question* in particular sought to deconstruct colonial stereotypes through a combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis aimed toward the displacement of racist stereotyping and the development of an always ambivalent and fluid hybridity (Bhabha 1994). As Bhabha has explained, "an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" (Bhabha 1994: 66). Strategies of hybridity in Bhabha's writings have sought to harness the enigma of the "*productive* ambivalence of the subject of colonial discourse" so as to reveal "the boundaries of colonial discourse" which he has claimed enables "a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness" (Bhabha 1994: 67 emphasis in original).

Post-colonial discourses of hybridity can be heard to resonate with gender feminist discourses engaged in the destabilisation of the unified sovereign subject, even if the 'original' in either discourse proceeds from a slightly different starting point and takes different forms of subjectivisation as the mode of analysis. Both approaches can be

appreciated as sharing the intention of displacing and transforming commonly held orthodox beliefs, hegemonic ‘truths’, as a strategy that is similarly at the basis of Scott’s historiography of critical feminism engaged in a revolutionary questioning of rights. Paradox, gender performativity, colonial mimicry, all are engaged in processes of destabilising representational politics through forms of repetition intended to insert points of resistance within dominating discourses as a de-disciplining and decolonisation of the subordinated body of the other. Jacques Attali has similarly cited the shift from a politics of representation to an era of repetition in the political economy of music as one in which “the simulation of the master’s word leads to a questioning of the status of the master himself” (Attali 1985: 86). A discourse of repetition, Attali has asserted, is one of the primary means by which “mechanisms for recording and reproduction” have provided both “a technical body, a framework for representations” and specifically “by presenting themselves as a double” have constituted “a simulacrum of power, [to] destroy the legitimacy of representation” (Attali 1985: 86).

My intention in forging a genealogy of post-structuralist processes across different discourses here is not carried out with the intention of collapsing or equating all forms of socio-political or cultural difference and thereby erasing the specificities of ongoing forms of racism, sexism or homophobia or any combination thereof. Rather, the intention is to seek out recurring patterns as they may emerge across different discourses more in terms of what Born has called an “analytics of mediation” (Born 2010: 87) as one that seeks to consider relations between social, political, economic and most importantly historical and musical “experiences” and the systemic means by which such experiences may be perceived to have materialised.

## Identification of Norms

For this research in the field of sound studies, it is Jonathan Sterne and Tara Rodgers who have recently written most convincingly of an epistemology of sound studies, tracing the development of sound's historiography through the wider discourses that have shaped what so often appears as *natural* within traditional discourses of sound. In terms of histories of sound studies and audio-technical discourses, both Sterne and Rodgers have addressed disciplinary norms and conventions in ways that can be read as a critique of certain organising logics (Sterne 2003, 2012; Rodgers 2010a, 2010b, 2012). Sterne has addressed the discourse of sonic 'fidelity' as "the social organisation of sound-reproduction technology [that] conditioned the possibility for both "original" and "copy" sounds" (Sterne 2003: 26). Rodgers has addressed the historical "logic of synthesis...examining electrical signals as a form of technical and aesthetic representation" (Rodgers 2010b: 26). Historical logics of reproduction, fidelity and synthesis are informed by and relate to the exposure of norms and conventions that have occupied many critical investigations in cultural theory, in particular gender, queer, critical race and post-colonial scholarship ( Bhabha 1994; Baker Jr 1987; Butler 1999; Halberstam 2007; Freeman 2010). In a way that resonates with Sterne's critique of a "philosophy of mediation that ontologises sound reproduction too quickly" (Sterne 2003: 219) Butler has critiqued the heterosexual assumptions about identity and identification that have historically bound gender to sex as a *natural order* by explaining that instead "this is a kind of metaphorical substitution, an act of imposture, a kind of sublime and momentary participation in an ontological illusion produced by the mundane operation of heterosexual drag" (Butler 1993: 317). This certainly takes into consideration performativity through Butler's influential gendering of the theory,

where gender performativity is understood as a set of repeated everyday performances that combine to create the illusion of a stable and coherent identity. Butler's understanding of gender as an act, an *everyday drag*, sought to insert points of destabilisation and resistance into the notion of fixed gendered identities that are themselves the product of specific socio-cultural norms. As she has suggested, "drag enacts the very structure of impersonation by which *any gender* is assumed" exposing the fundamental instability of all gendered categories (Butler 1993: 312 emphasis in original). An ontology of mediation therefore erases the power/knowledge regimes by which norms, in gender and sexuality and in race and ethnicity and their intersectionality as much as in music and sound are established and maintained based upon assumptions that technologies of reproduction - social, cultural, political and economic, sonic and musical - "can function as neutral conduits" (Sterne 2003: 21). As Sterne has asserted, a philosophy of mediation shifts the focus "from processes to products" in which "technology vanishes, leaving as its by-product a source and a sound that is separated from it" (Sterne 2003: 21).

A separation of music from the social relations through which it has been produced forecloses the possibility of an analysis of the "social and institutional conditions" by which "socialities engendered by musical practice and experience" have been constituted (Born 2005: 378). Such a separation further occludes any consideration of the ways in which "power and knowledge constitute identity and experience" (Scott 1999: 5) and the ways in which normative assumptions about the categories of gender and race, ethnicity and sexuality may manifest in the making of music. For the focus on a product alone, be it an archive, a musical composition, sound-artwork or an identity



removed from the social milieu in which it was produced is the moment at which, as Stuart Hall has explained, the “whole apparatus of ‘a history’”, its “periods, key figures and works, tendencies, shifts, breaks, ruptures - slips silently into place” (Hall 2001: 89). Focusing upon “the practice of musical creation” rather than “the music itself” as a process-based relational methodology therefore enables an investigation into the creative processes of both the composer/artist/musician and the social context in which they worked and which shaped their production (Folkestad quoted in Armstrong 2013: 9). For to simply insert “woman” as a subject into sound and music histories not only keeps her locked in the double bind by which she has originally been produced through relations of domination and subordination but also “women's history written from this position, and the politics that follow from it, end up endorsing the ideas of unalterable sexual difference that are used to justify discrimination” in the first place (Scott 1999: 4).

### **1.3 Practicing Balancing Acts**

Koskoff's reflection upon the main “phases” of feminist musicology as “woman-centric” and “gender-centric” proves additionally useful for the two main themes that she has identified as having emerged from these previous approaches. For between “older-style research paradigms” and between “those of the present and future” as those between previous practices which sought to reify the ‘woman composer’ for example and latter processes that sought the destabilisation of categories through process and movement, as Koskoff has suggested, can be deduced a tension that emerges between ideas of “reification versus process” and “theory versus experience” (Koskoff 2005: 98).

To further appreciate the nuanced shift between these approaches, between practices and acts, performances and processes, Born's musicological analysis of the ways in which “socialities have been mediated in music” can help to further place the concepts of reification, process, theory and experience within an "analytics of mediation" read through what she has called a “musical assemblage”, which I return to momentarily (Born 2011: 376). The point is, these tensions in themselves and an awareness of their replication across a range of disciplines can further extend the ways in which “socialities engendered by musical practice and experience” may be perceived to emerge through an “analytics of mediation” that is itself mediated through and that in turn materialises specifically queer feminist scholarship (Born 2011: 378).

These tensions, which may be appreciated as ongoing paradoxical ‘balancing acts’ between the individual and the collective, between subject and object, between material experiences of ongoing marginalisation and discrimination and between theories of deconstruction and destabilisation that have sought the dissolution of the subject altogether and which are lived upon micro, individual scales that are mediated through macro, institutional frames, have been the focus of much recent thinking in feminist, queer and critical race scholarship and their intersection (Alexander 2005; Puar 2005, 2007; Holland 2012; Halberstam 2005, 2011; Cvetkovich 2003, 2012; Freeman 2010; Berlant 2011). Professor of literature and women’s studies, Robyn Wiegman, in a manner that resonates with Scott’s earlier assessment of historical feminist methodologies, with Koskoff’s assessments of the shifting practices of feminist musicology and with Born’s analytics of mediation that accounts for a more complex appreciation of both the personal and the political, has critically assessed recent

movements within contemporary queer feminism. Wiegman has identified what she has considered to be the two pillars of contemporary queer feminist critical theory as those established largely through Judith Butler's and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's scholarship (Wiegman 2014; Butler 1999; Sedgwick 2003). Butler's theories, largely through Sedgwick's own critical engagement with her writings, have been framed as a particular form of 'paranoid critique' with Sedgwick's scholarship often being considered as providing a necessary and more 'reparative reading'. These two historical approaches of critique, *paranoid* and *reparative*, Wiegman has suggested, have provided the "twin figures of critical practice" by which the field of queer feminist critique has developed (Wiegman 2014: 10).

### **Paranoid Repairs**

In particular, Sedgwick, based upon what Lynne Huffer has cited as Sedgwick's own obsession with Butler's now canonical text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* has critiqued Butler's framing of gender performativity as a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Sedgwick 2003: 129, 143; Huffer 2012: 29). Through her own practice of critique, Sedgwick demonstrated what she interpreted as an inherent paranoia within Butler's formulations as one that seeks endlessly to expose hidden ideological structures (Sedgwick 2003: 139). This, Sedgwick has claimed, is a specifically ahistorical process, reliant upon "iteration, citationality, the "always-already" that whole valuable repertoire of conceptual shuttle movements that endlessly weave between the future and the past" (Sedgwick 2003: 68) as an over-dependence upon an ahistorical criticality and suspicion that implicitly re-centres the subject in the present as the *knowing* subject. Butlerian paranoid critique, Wiegman has claimed, has

been “taken to confer epistemological authority on the analytic work of exposure” (Wiegman 2014: 6). Butler’s gender performativity as a critical interpretation of knowledge that seeks to measure the assumed limitations of intelligibility, the laws, norms and conventions by which society is regulated, read through Sedgwick’s critique, is a form of interpretation that has been considered as “too distant from its object of study” (Wiegman 2014: 10). This detachment, as Wiegman has explained, has thus been perceived to be “too committed to social construction to find intimacy with its objects of study” (Wiegman 2014: 10).

Sedgwick’s reading of affect, most notably of shame, has sought to extend prior “critical attachments once forged by correction, rejection, and anger with those crafted by affection, gratitude, solidarity, and love” (Wiegman 2014: 6). This movement within queer feminist theory is one in which “the critical act is reconfigured to value, sustain, and privilege the object’s worldly inhabitations and needs” (Wiegman 2014: 6). In other words, materiality of a kind returns through repair which emerges, it would seem, through a ‘loving’ return to the object of study. Born has similarly cited a return to the musical object as a means by which to reconsider the mediation of not only a musical subject, but also importantly the mediation of musical experience *as* listening. Such a listening is one that “entails and proffers relations between objects and subjects; indeed it construes what might be called a musical assemblage – a series or network of relations between musical sounds, human and other subjects, practices, performances, cosmologies, discourses and representations, technologies, spaces, and social relations” (Born 2010: 87-88). In a way that chimes almost harmoniously with the affectivity of the reparative turn ushered in by Sedgwick, Born has suggested that “by producing

particular engagements, confrontations or combustions between musical objects and subjects...musical experience can generate affect and create transformative effects” (Born 2010: 88). Listening, then, for Born, as “a significant musical experience”, always social, is mediated by and through “an engagement with the musical object” as the means by which the the musical subject, “entangled in a musical assemblage” (Born 2010: 88), as one that is always produced on the plane of sociality, is materialised as an always social ontology.

In a way that also enables a forging of another connection with the radical negativity that underlies much queer feminist critical theory, Born has asserted that such an “analytics of mediation” is one that necessarily “encompasses and addresses conceptually the kinds of difference and antagonism that routinely inform musical experience, as well as the question of the social, historical and musical conditions that may engender the mutual transformation of musical object and subject” (Born 2010: 88). Listening then *is* musical experience that is accessed through a return to the object as an assemblage which is reconnected “to analyses of the macro-dynamics of cultural history and technological change” (Born 2005: 34). This suggests a way in which to critically align Born's recent musicological analysis with the body of work within what Wiegman has called “queer feminist criticism” as a genre that specifically “attends to the condition of the present through the converging analytics of affect and time” (Wiegman 2014: 5). Born’s call to reconnect “the corporeal, the affective, the collective and the located nature of musical experience” - the body, feelings and the social with/through the musical object - with “the macro-dynamics of cultural history and technological change” (Born 2005: 34) - i.e. social histories such as audio-technical

discourses and political institutions such gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity - suggests a way in which to trace the impact of listening *as* (musical) experience through a *queered* analysis of social histories and institutions as one that returns to focus upon the musical object as an always social mediator of the musical subject. Born has suggested that “what is required...is precisely a focus on the relations between musical object and listening subject, where the latter demands an analysis of the social and historical conditions and the mediation of listening, as well as the changing forms of subjectivity brought to music” (Born 2010: 80-1) as itself a way of being, as Wiegman has suggested, “drawn to the intimacy with the object of study that reparative reading affords” (Wiegman 2014: 16). Similarly, Sedgwick has suggested that ““what we can best learn from such practices” are “the many ways in which selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture – *even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them*” (Sedgwick 1997: 35 emphasis added). This would allow a further indication of “the kinds of questions opened up by empirical research that takes listening-as-musical-experience, and the situated, relational analysis of musical subjects and objects, as its focus” (Born 2010: 81) but situated specifically within the critically queer, anti-racist, feminist archive.

### **Critically Queer, Anti-racist, Feminist Archive**

In a way that speaks to Born’s assertion that an “analytics of mediation...encompasses and addresses conceptually the kinds of difference and antagonism that routinely inform musical experience” (Born 2010: 88), J.Jack Halberstam working directly within the queer feminist archive, has articulated a nuanced politics of negativity and radical passivity through a particularly queer feminist and dyke-political temporality

(Halberstam 1998, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011). Halberstam's queer feminist re-working of the 'archive' is one in which "the archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity" (Halberstam 2005: 169-70). Halberstam's dyke-political archival intervention is one that is articulated as a "snarling rejection of the tradition" of the archive produced through the "powerful negativity of punk politics" (Halberstam 2008: 152). This is an (anti-)archive that not only insists upon the validity of "rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, over-investment, incivility, brutal honesty" (Halberstam 2008: 152) as valid and important forms of knowing, but that also seeks to utilise these *political* affects as a means of survival and collective *repair* in sites of the historical erasure of lesbian musical sub-cultures. These political affects, as Halberstam has written "are the bleak and angry territories of the anti-social turn; these are the jagged zones within which not only self-shattering (the opposite of narcissism in a way) but other-shattering occurs" (Halberstam 2008: 147). This "self-other-shattering" that Halberstam writes of occurs in the queer feminist dyke-political archive, for example, through alternative forms of performative and historical enquiry, such as the queered temporalities that emerge through Elizabeth Freeman's process of *temporal drag* (Freeman 2000, 2010, 2011). Freeman's concept of temporal drag, as one that builds upon Butler's gender performativity as everyday drag but combined with an historical and temporal theatricality is one that emphasises the affective relations between past and present, between generations through a politics of negative affect addressed, lovingly, towards the 'failures' of history. Such a stance is inspired in particular by queer theory's critique of the normal invested in the productivity of *failure* as a modality of anti-capitalist and anti-colonial queer struggle. Failure becomes,

paradoxically, productive through a negative refusal of legibility, as an art of unbecoming - specifically as a narrative without progress (Halberstam 2011; Grant 2011; Cvetkovich 2012).

Anne Cvetkovich's uncanonical "archive of feelings" is a decidedly queer feminist archive in which "an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions...are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (Cvetkovich 2003: 7). This archive of feelings, of rage, rudeness and refusal is one that acknowledges that 'feeling is political' and that such politicised affects are hard to document let alone to archive in traditional ways (Cvetkovich 2003: 9). Because of the ephemerality of both the affective knowledges and the cultures in which these knowledges circulate, Cvetkovich has maintained that a more radical notion of the archive is necessary, exactly as an archive that can account for how it feels to be marginalised, negated and erased as well as how it feels to love and be loved. These affects of everyday sexual and racial trauma, recognised within specific cultures - within 'intimate publics' - as valid forms of knowing, are then made available to be reworked and reorganised collectively in ways that intend to forge collective memory in the space of its erasure. Affect and temporality throughout these approaches have been re-organised through the Lacanian concept of the *future-anterior*, but one that is worked through a specifically lesbian aesthetic for the collective production of a "past that will have been" (Hart 1998: 181) rather than a present prescribed by traumas of the past that resurface from a lack of resolution. Such an archive, as an 'intimate public' that emerges in the space of its own erasure, like both the *Her Noise* and *Devotional* archives, is intended as a disrupter of



communication and the linear temporal progress narratives that would seek to materialise normalised subjects through such narratives, to make audible hidden and denied histories, as a political project for the present.

The return to a dialogue of intimacy and love that has arisen through the reparative turn has been critiqued by Lauren Berlant as an often uncritical return to a discourse that has historically been representative of normative ideas of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender and sexuality specifically for women and as such, again, exhibits a propensity for reification, a return to separate sphere ideology and an erasure of Western feminism's own, often unflattering past (Berlant 1991, 1997, 2008, 2011). This 'sentiment' has been echoed by Mimi Nguyen in her critique of riot grrrl histories as those that she claims have sought "to contain and subsume the disruptions of race" through an insistence upon intimacy and "girl-love" in which, in her opinion, "the personal and the political" have been uncritically "collapsed into a world of public intimacy" (Nguyen 2012: 173-4). Through her own critical scholarship on citizenship and belonging, Berlant has set out a less optimistic yet nonetheless reparative thesis for attaching and detaching from "politics" as such, whilst also performatively working in the queer feminist archive through the slowed temporality that a hesitation in the space of the impasse provides (Berlant 2011). The impasse that Berlant writes of, "where living is repetitious, not heroic" (Wiegman 2014: 5) is a necessarily juxtapolitical space in which an ongoing "desire for the political" can be reorganised in ways that can account for what she has called the "crisis ordinary" of the historical present (Berlant 2011: 263). Pausing within the suspended animation of the impasse, enables one to affectively listen out for "what is halting, stuttering and aching about being in the

middle of detaching from a waning fantasy of the good life; and to produce some better ways of mediating the sense of a historical moment that is affectively felt but undefined in the social world that is supposed to provide some comforts of belonging” (Berlant 2011: 263).

The emergence of these theories and practices that re-work affect, time and space through a refusal of progression and the politicisation of affect focused upon the musical, literary or cinematographic object reconnected with the social history from which it emerged for example, is a part of the paradigm shift toward object-oriented reparative criticism. This shift has largely typified queer feminist theory since Sedgwick’s, now famous, own paranoid reading of Butler’s ‘original’ paranoia. Yet Wiegman has pointed out the brevity of a practice that would seek to sequentially replace Butlerian critique with Sedgwick’s advocacy for repair. Wiegman in turn has thus sought to disrupt the progressive logic that she has read as implicitly emerging within queer feminist critical theory predicated upon a wholesale uptake of the reparative turn and rejection of what has become known as Butlerian paranoia as queer feminism’s own unacknowledged ‘progress narrative’. This is a temporal narrative that would implicitly place Sedgwick’s theory of repair as sequentially following and thus eclipsing and replacing Butler’s ‘paranoid’ interpretation of gender as a ‘newer’, ‘better’ and more relevant paradigm for queer theory. For Wiegman has pointed out that Sedgwick’s ‘reparative critique’ was similarly written in the 1990s, first appearing in print in, albeit in a shorter form, in 1996 (Wiegman 2014: 8). This would seem to be an important distinction as it highlights the need for both forms of critique rather than understandings that would seek to replace Butler’s ‘paranoia’ with Sedgwick’s ‘repair’.

Wiegman's temporal disruption and disorganisation of Sedgwick and Butler as proffering concurrent rather than sequential modes of critique "alerts us to the coexistence of paranoid and reparative critical practices as part of the queer theoretical project from the outset, making it important to address not only how these distinctions are currently cast, but the poverty of any intellectual history of the field that writes them either as antithetical or as sequential" (Wiegman 2014: 12). For ultimately, as Wiegman, through her reading of Sedgwick's own work has demonstrated, practice cannot work without process;

Sedgwick repeatedly acknowledged that her dissection of the critical tactics of paranoid reading was not possible without the very tools she critiqued, and there is still no way to read Butler without sensing how, for her, paranoid forms of revelation help nurture subjects for whom survival is always a matter of interpretative intervention (Wiegman 2014: 12).

### **Repairing the Self as Other**

Returning to the recent disdain within some narrations of queer feminism for interpretation and paranoid critique within the 'reparative turn', Wiegman has asked the right question, "what precisely motivates the widespread embrace of reparative reading for queer feminist readers [listeners] today?" (Wiegman 2014: 12). For as Wiegman has astutely pointed out, Sedgwick had to critique Butlerian theory, had to use the tools of critique to develop her own theory as one which was critical of what she perceived as the dominance of interpretation as the only means by which knowledge may be produced. Again, what this points to is the destabilisation of queer feminism's own progress narrative. An intact political program has not been handed down from one generation to another, neither in feminist musicology, ethnomusicology, historical

feminist theory, critical race feminism, intersectionality, gender, post-colonial studies or queer theory. The motivating factor of “the widespread embrace of reparative reading”, according to Wiegman is an often unacknowledged need “to repair damaging versions of the self” wrought by a critical reception of interpretation as too focused upon the researcher than the researched whereby apparently “whole generations of critics abandoned the love of their objects, turning away from the artefacts of culture in both their formal density and their social complexity to luxuriate in the superiority of their own authorship” (Wiegman 2014: 17-18). As a result Wiegman has pointed out that the reparative position has been defined as “a decided critical good, celebrating... its impulse ‘to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self’” (Sedgwick 2003: 149 quoted in Wiegman 2014: 17). But, and importantly in a way that echoes Berlant’s assessment of the current pain of detaching from the fantasy of the ‘good life’, Wiegman has noted “the pledge to the good is never simply what we want it to stand for, in part because the ‘inchoate self’ at risk in this scenario is the critic herself” (Wiegman 2014: 17).

At the very least, this means that the current celebration of reparative reading as a form of intimacy, if not love of and for the object of study, must be understood – against its burgeoning reputation – as making rather significant demands on the object, not against the authority and security of the critic but on her behalf (Wiegman 2014: 17-18).

For Wiegman has asked, what might it mean “to confer love on an object as a tactical strategy in rescuing one’s self from condemnation” (Wiegman 2014: 12)? Indeed, such a *new* materialism with a refocused interest upon the object of study, yet which is implicitly based upon a *paradoxical deferral* of the self may be appreciated as one that

actually seeks to repair the self through a renewed focus upon the object, projecting, forcing love upon the object as a *repair of the self*.

When it comes to the matter of the critic's investment in herself, then, the widely heralded distinction between paranoid and reparative reading is not one, as both practices are engaged in producing, confirming, and sustaining critical practice as a necessary agency, no matter the different object relations and analytic itineraries that govern each. In this broader context, the defining characteristic of queer feminist criticism – its heralded refusal of the critic's authority in the name of an interpretative practice born in an ethical embrace of the object's need – may be important for what it *most shares* with paranoid reading: an emphatic and instead empathetic attachment to *interpretation* as a self and world enhancing necessity (Wiegman 2014: 18-19 emphasis in original).

The seeming choice between paranoid *or* reparative critique echoes Scott's critique of historical feminist methodologies in which one must choose either separation *or* integration, either sameness *or* difference, and thus either paranoia *or* repair (Scott 1996: 3). Koskoff's assertion that "finding a balance between these tensions will, no doubt, be the challenge of the future" (Koskoff 2005: 98) is then the historical present that this research finds itself within. Balance, I want to suggest, might be more 'productively' considered through the notion of paradox, which is at the centre of Scott's critical feminism as much as at the centre of contemporary queer feminist critique and the centre of this research. Attaching and detaching, accepting and refusing, identifying and dis-identifying, contesting and converging, these are the patterns that repeat throughout feminism's long, multi-faceted and uneasy story, and, as Scott has asserted, are the necessary paradoxical conditions for change (Scott 1996: 3-4).

This research applies both paranoid and reparative critiques then so as to situate both “socialities engendered by musical practice and experience” and “social and institutional conditions that themselves afford certain kinds of musical practice” (Born 2011: 378) incorporating both musicological and ethnomusicological methodologies to write a sounding herstory produced through social histories that seeks to entangle reification, process, theory and experience within an epistemology-ontology-ethics of critically queer, anti-racist feminist sound studies. All of these processes are necessary, and I am fully implicated in this research through my desire to contribute to the fledgling field of feminist sound studies in the UK and by doing so to provide for myself some means of care and survival “as a self and world enhancing necessity” (Wiegman 2014: 18-19).

The methodology that the remainder of this research follows then is one that establishes and **identifies** the dominant structures and representations by which a particular milieu has been governed and by which hegemonic identities have been materialised.

Dominant structures are then **destabilised** through processes of repetition. The tensions that arise from that destabilisation are **disorganised** through the production of collective memory as one that re-works the negative affects of the erasures of history through alternative temporalities for the materialisation of historical presents based upon a past that will have been. The following chapters represent my own working through of this methodology, in the process of doing it, of working it out through writing as an aesthetic practice engaged in the interpretation and repair of sound arts and experimental music practices as feminist composition. This in itself, is my attempt at an

always social writing/living/sounding of feminist composition of, for and in the historical present.





## 2 UNSPEAKABLE NOISE

*Speech acts, forms of writing, modes of public expression, all become crucial to revolutionary action and to understanding and fomenting social change. It wasn't just that women took up a position in public space, but that public space also became configured in such a way that women could find themselves speaking; and it wasn't just that women found sites from which to speak, but that women, as a category, became established as a site of enunciation. As a result there is no agency **in** the subject, but we might find the potential for historical change in the sometimes convergent and sometimes divergent sites of enunciation that shifting historical forces make possible.*

Judith Butler 2011: 24

This quotation from Judith Butler in her appraisal of the work of Joan W. Scott suggests an initial framework for this chapter. “Speech acts, forms of writing and modes of public expression” (Butler 2011: 24) are the discursive forms through which Cathy Lane’s *Hidden Lives* and Emma Hedditch’s *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* will be considered. Both of these artists have created artworks that speak up and talk back in paradoxical ways. Each are invested in creating “sites of enunciation” for “women as a category”, though the idea of ‘woman’ for each artist explores a set of different socio-historical and political forces in the present.

Both of the works addressed in this chapter take struggle as a starting point, as a certain protest against dominant forms of representation and their attendant exclusions. One could generalise and claim that all the works that will be addressed within this research protest in one way or another against the historical exclusion of women from sound arts

and experimental musics. But each artist and work takes a different representation of ‘woman’ as a starting point from which to question the constructions of the category of women. This allows me to attempt to understand some of the different ways in which ‘woman’ has been excluded and/or disqualified from musical and sound-based discourses and to address possible strategies for ‘women as a category’ to talk back to such dominant erasures that each work proposes. Lane’s composition *Hidden Lives*, as analysed within this chapter may be perceived as addressing the dividing line between public and private spheres historically applied as a means to silence ‘woman’. By doing so, the composition seeks to question the grounds by which the words ‘woman’ and ‘composer’, unlike ‘her noise’, have seemingly struggled to meet. An analysis of Hedditch’s installation *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* in the second half of the chapter allows me to extend my deconstruction of ‘woman’ through a reparative critique as outlined in the introduction, to further consider the construction of gender, specifically heteronormative genders and the erasure of lesbian cultures and histories from dominant sound art and experimental music discourses. The chapter reads these two artworks together as an inter-generational dialogue that seeks to connect the two pillars of contemporary queer feminist critique that have been established largely through Judith Butler’s and Eve Sedgwick’s foundational theories, what has since been termed ‘paranoid reading’ and ‘reparative reading’ as the necessary “twin figures of critical practice” by which the field of queer feminist critique has developed (Wiegman 2014: 10).

## 2.1 *Hidden Lives* by Cathy Lane (1999)<sup>11</sup>

Composer, sound artist and researcher Cathy Lane's composition *Hidden Lives* (1999) is an example of a work that deals with the collective experiences of 'women' and a historical idea of 'woman' through memory and repetition. A group of women, mostly friends of the composer, were each asked to read excerpts from a 1930s text, *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*, in which domestic expectations for women were clearly outlined.

*Hidden Lives* is informed by the idea of the house as the repository of memories, and of women as the curators of those memories. Through the repeated carrying out of domestic chores, women have shaped and sorted cupboards, rooms, all manner of dwelling places, the inner lives of societies and cosmologies. They have been at once confined inside the house and have colonised the 'inside' as their own, the place for daydreams and memories.

The material for this piece is drawn from a selection of women reading from *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles* a small piece of social history from the 1930s which describes how women should manage both their houses and themselves in no uncertain terms. The daily routine timetable is enough to ensure that no woman could ever spend much time outside the house or away from this backbreaking schedule, a sharp contrast to the lives of the women reading the text. The piece is in celebration of all lives lived and forgotten. ([www.cathylane.com](http://www.cathylane.com))

The following interpretation of *Hidden Lives* is explored through an investigation of speech act theory, particularly of the force of the performative illocutionary utterance. It is my understanding that the composition exposes the relationship between power and speech and between memory and repetition, raising questions about the constructions of the public/private dualism, the category of 'woman' and the historical ways in which English women individually and collectively have been silenced. The composition examines the ways in which certain speech acts have the power to silence and puts forward a performative proposal of fighting speech with speech so as to establish sites of enunciation, as composers, for women in sound arts as a site through which to

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<sup>11</sup> For schematic breakdown see appendix 1.a page 342

consider notions of publicness, which will be a developing thread throughout this research. As I will aim to elucidate, *Hidden Lives* may be perceived as a sonic example of paradoxical speech that speaks up and talks back to dominant norms and conventions through its intentional structure.

In *Speech acts and Unspeakable Acts* (1993) Rae Langton has analysed elements of speech through J.L Austin's "distinctions between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts" devoting a fair amount of analysis on subordinating speech acts that have the power to silence their speaker as a "mark of political power" (Langton 1993: 298). She has suggested,

If you are powerful, you sometimes have the ability to silence the speech of the powerless. One way might be to stop the powerless from speaking at all. Gag them, threaten them, condemn them to solitary confinement. But there is another, less dramatic but equally effective way. Let them speak. Let them say whatever they like to whomever they like, but stop that speech from counting as an *action*. More precisely, stop it from counting as the action it was intended to be (Langton 1993: 299 emphasis in original).

By interrogating the modalities of speech act theory, *Hidden Lives* aims to expose the power dynamic in such speech acts and by doing so puts forward the proposition that the speech acts of the original 1930s text, *she has only herself to blame, wash and...., baby's breakfast, kitchen and lavatory, make beds, prepare lunch, wash up, freshen up*, are speech acts that have historically silenced women (Anon 1930). Within this analysis, the composition presents a scene in which a contestation against the disciplinary norms intoned throughout the text seeks itself to silence such silencing speech, which I will return to.

## Speech Acts

The raw material of Lane's *Hidden Lives* is drawn from the 1930s *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*, itself a slice of social history that harks back to an era of Victorian moralism. Lane, as the composer of this work, selected a particular passage from the text, a "daily routine time-table" from the chapter, "Running the Home" which provides a list of things that English women were expected to perform to ensure the functionality of the household (Anon 1930: 112). Friends and colleagues of the composer were given a copy of the particular passage which they were recorded reading.

6.45 am	Lift and give orange juice to baby; get tea for self and husband
7.30	Light your boiler; set breakfast table
8.00	Wash and dress baby
8.15	Baby's breakfast
8.30	Put baby in pram on veranda; prepare breakfast and serve..... etc. etc.

Before moving into an analysis of the composition itself, I would like to spend a moment on the analysis of the actual speech act that is being expressed in these instructions. Speech act theory distinguishes between three interdependent modalities; *locutionary acts* "the actual utterance" (of words/sounds) "and its ostensible meaning"; *illocutionary acts* as the intended real significance (meaning) of an utterance; and *perlocutionary acts* - the actual effect of an utterance such as persuading, convincing, enlightening - getting someone to do or realise something (Baker and Sibonile 2011: 138). Illocutionary speech acts are commonly understood as those that "in saying, do what they say, and do it in the moment of that saying" whilst perlocutionary speech acts "produce certain effects as their consequence: by saying something a certain effect follows" (Butler 1997: 3). Butler's articulation of the differing processes contained

within these two speech acts, but the later in particular, uncovers the functions of cause and effect inscribed within the process of locution.

The list of instructions in the 'daily routine time-table' may be understood as a locutionary act in that it utters a statement, *prepare breakfast and serve*, for example. The illocutionary act is evidenced through the force of the utterance where its real intended meaning is that you will prepare the breakfast and you will serve it. The perlocutionary act may be evidenced through the effect of persuasion, it seeks to convince, where the effect is that someone will do or realise something, the effect is that you understand and do the action intended. Focusing on the illocutionary act here, "it can be thought of as a *use* of the locution to perform an action" (Langton 1993: 300). The locution, *prepare breakfast and serve*, either urges, orders or advises the reader to do something where the illocutionary act "may have a particular perlocutionary act as its goal" (Langton 1993: 300). Langton explains,

What we have here are utterances whose force is something more than the semantic content of the sentence uttered - the locution - and something other than the effects achieved by the utterance - the perlocution. What is responsible for this important third dimension? Austin's answer was that an utterance has illocutionary force of a certain kind when it satisfies certain felicity conditions (Langton 1993: 300-301).

As *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles* was written as a guide for the appropriate behaviour of women in England in the 1930s, it sets out the expected norms and conventions of its own time. But for speech acts such as this to be effective, a set of *felicity conditions* need to meet. These felicity conditions are *intention*, *authority* and *legitimation*. Intention to perform the illocution will often, but not always, determine what illocution

is performed. For the intention to be successful, the recipient of the demand for action must recognise that intention, there must be *uptake*, where what is intended and what is achieved meets up (cause and effect). This requires *authority*, where the authority of the intention is intelligible and recognised. The classic Austinian example is the marriage ceremony whose illocutionary act, “I do” requires that the intentions of all the participants are agreed and recognised and where the authority of the minister and the legitimacy of the act through agreed upon laws, norms and conventions must all be met for the the words to fulfil the stated intention. As an illocutionary act in *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*, the locution *prepare breakfast and serve* makes the case that English women must perform domestic servitude within the bourgeois home. Implicitly, within the cultural text - *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles* - as locution it refers to women, specifically as the functional organisers of the bourgeois English home as a relation of property. Its perlocutionary effects are that white women will do these tasks, ensuring a racialised and gendered division of labour and property. As illocutionary act, it orders white women to do these tasks, and simultaneously orders men *not* to do them, thereby further constituting the correct roles, norms and conventions for both ‘sexes’ within a heteronormative and supremacist framework.

### **Subordinating Speech Acts**

As such, there is a claim in *Hidden Lives*, that certain kinds of speech can be illocutionary acts of subordination that silence. Langton has suggested that there are three features by which speech acts may subordinate; they *rank* (value and place) asymmetrically, *legitimate* certain behaviours and *deprive* certain powers (agency) (Langton 1993: 303). Using the speech acts of apartheid as an example, Langton

through her reading of Austin, has claimed that speech acts subordinate when illocutionary acts involve an authority delivered as a verdict, where “the authoritative role of the speaker imbues the utterance with a force that would be absent were it made by someone who did not occupy that role” (Langton 1993: 304). The emphasis of authority in this instance is placed on the ability to define and assert ‘truth’ within the context in which the speech is uttered and results in what is known as a *verdictive* utterance as one based upon the delivery of a verdict (Langton 1993: 304). Additionally, “illocutions that confer powers and rights on people, or deprive people of powers and rights”, labelled as *exercitive* illocutions “legitimate discriminatory behaviour” through a “force that would be absent if they [the speech acts] were made by speakers who did not have the appropriate authority” (Langton 1993: 304). So authority and legitimacy here are bound together within the assertion of ‘truth’. These are speech acts Langton, following Austin, calls “*authoritative* illocutions: actions whose felicity conditions require that the speaker occupy a position of authority in a relevant domain” where authority and legitimacy are the contextual and contingent means through which ‘truth’ should arise (Langton 1993: 305).

### **Silencing Speech Acts**

If speech is action, then silence is failure to act (Langton 1993: 314).

If the goal, of feminism for example, is to have a voice and for that voice to carry authority ensuring that the speech act has the intended outcome, to be able not only to do what one says but also to have others meet one’s requests/demands/expectations,



then the speech act needs to be recognised with the according authority and the utterance needs to be deemed legitimate and intelligible. But speech acts can be silenced in ways that deem their illocutionary force, their intended meaning, nonsensical or unintelligible; “Let them speak. Let them say whatever they like to whomever they like, but stop that speech from counting as an *action*. More precisely, stop it from counting as the action it was intended to be” (Langton 1993: 299 emphasis in original). Particularly speech acts uttered through asymmetrical power relations, based upon ranking, legitimising and depriving can be understood as silencing opposition, silencing any oppositional agency in the very act of the utterance. Speech dismissed as gossip, for example, is bound by these discursive norms.

Langton has addressed three types of speech acts that silence. Firstly there is the failure to perform the locutionary act at all, *locutionary failure*, where a speaker may be too afraid to speak or be in the belief that they will not be listened to anyway and where any form of protest is deemed futile from the outset. In this instance, the speaker believes that they will not be heard. This may be perceived in Lane’s composition between 0’40” to around the four minute mark where the voiced sounds remain unintelligible.

Secondly, one may speak, but the intended effects will not be achieved. This presents what Langton has called *perlocutionary frustration* and may be experienced for example, in losing an argument or not winning when casting a vote. One’s utterances may be heard but not accepted, occurring in the composition as uttered yet not fully-formed protests approximately between 4’00” and 5’00” up to the point where the whispers and utterances thin and fade to sparsely formed intakes of breath. Thirdly, is *illocutionary disablement*. As an inversion of a speech act that has illocutionary force,

illocutionary disablement is a situation in which the speaker lacks the required authority for one's speech to perform the intended illocutionary act. One speaks but fails to achieve the intentional effects and intentional performance of the speech act, "here speech misfires...although the appropriate words are uttered with the appropriate intention, the speaker fails to perform the intended illocutionary act", in this instance speech is deemed unintelligible (Langton 1993: 315).

Authority, as Langton has demonstrated, is one of the felicity conditions required for a speech act to be effective, for it to be constituted as action, for it to fulfil its meaning and intention, to achieve its stated goal. The historical problem and the challenge to normative history relates to how authority may be granted or assumed when one's speech has been rendered ineffective. One may say 'no', may protest, but if the dominant, normative structure does not recognise or cannot/will not hear that 'no' then the perlocutionary force of the protest is rendered ineffectual. The question is, if a person or group's speech, in this case the women and their utterances in the composition, has been silenced through illocutionary disablement whereby any speech in opposition to the disciplinary norms of the text is deemed as nonsensical or inaudible, how might they turn illocutionary disablement into a successful illocutionary act? How might *their* intended meaning be recognised? Following Langton's hypothesis, it would seem that intention needs to be backed up by authority<sup>12</sup> to gain any legitimacy or to enable a sense of agency for a speaker or group.

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12 Authority in this instance may be understood as agency in a way that links with Butler's assertion that there is no agency in the subject as such in the opening quote of this chapter, but where change may be possible in "shifting historical forces" - through the collective (Butler 2011: 24)

### **Speech that can Silence (silencing speech)**

Langton has further identified three main related modes of speech acts that can silence, what she has called *silencing speech* (Langton 1993: 318). The first relates to the ways in which speech can silence by order or threat. For example a judge ordering silence in a court. This is what Langton has called “simple silence”, where no sounds as a result are produced (Langton 1993: 318). Secondly, related to perlocutionary frustration is the frustration of the perlocutionary goal, by which the spoken order may be disobeyed and the effect frustrated, for example the judge’s order may well be ignored. Thirdly, through certain laws, norms and conventions, the speech of some is made *unspeakable*. For example, prior to equal marriage in the UK, the actions of non-heterosexual people saying “I do” were made unspeakable - these speech acts were literally unspeakable<sup>13</sup>.

### **Performative Speech Acts**

My proposal about *Hidden Lives* is that it claims that the speech acts of the text have historically silenced any protest that might refute its demands. As a speech act that silences contestation against the norms and conventions that it proscribes, the text has rendered the speech of its intended audience as mute, disabling a disputation of its claims as a metaphor for the general silencing of ‘women’. Secondly, this investigation into how speech acts can silence certain individuals and groups will be followed by an investigation into how speech acts that silence may themselves be silenced -

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13 A more contemporary example from the US: In Department of Defence medical regulations, being “transsexual” is listed as an “unallowable medical condition”. Moreover, the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell” (DADT) did not include transgender persons. Therefore, according to the DoD, a person with gender identity disorder, diagnosed or even displayed, will no longer be able to serve because within the remit of the DoD such a person/condition does not exist.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/25/chelsea-manning-military-transgender-revolution>

paradoxically how to silence silencing speech acts, which I will aim to demonstrate through an analysis of the composition.

So then, if *Hidden Lives* posits the claim that the speech acts of *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*, by relegating women to the private sphere and an interior space, silences their speech and is a subordinating and authoritative speech act that through its locution ranks, legitimates and deprives, how does it challenge this? For the composer, it seems to be by assuming a position of authority based upon a shared experience *as women* by which the tropes of language are used against themselves, where the book may speak (presented as the primary speech act), but where the intended action of the speech is frustrated, denied and disabled through a strategic *assuming of subordination*. This assumption of subordination is a particular performance that intends to challenge the assumed authority of a text that intends to subordinate its reader. Paradoxically, a position of subordination is assumed by the subjects of this composition, which will become clearer through the following analysis.

The opening moments of the composition are filled with footsteps and voices walking along a public thoroughfare, quite obviously the public/external world. The listener begins in a collective, public space but is quickly and violently locked away by the sound of a reverberant door slamming closed that literally silences the soundscape (at 0'40"). Before the door slams there is the bubble of speech and legible communication, after the door slams speech has been silenced. Impeded *pst*, *kss*, *tsk* plosive consonants, phonetic occlusives in which the vocal tract is blocked, erupt scattered in the soundfield and are juxtaposed against a background of low, time-stretched and filtered sound. The

low time-stretched sounds gradually increase in intensity and occasionally burst as if stretching toward speech, but fail to materialise into any intelligible linguistic form. What this quite clearly highlights is the demarcation of public and private space and it is the category of ‘women’ in this work whose lives have been hidden from public view *and* from themselves. It is the relegation of each speaker to the private realm that “deprives the speakers of their language and expression” as reflected in the “heavy editing” of their speech (Lane 2006: 8). Between 0’40”, from the point that the first door slams in *Hidden Lives*, to 2’00” when a key in a lock turns, the public communication of the opening seconds of the composition is silenced whereby the speaker is condemned to solitary confinement, both literally in the private realm of the house, but also metaphorically within the ‘interior’ of each isolated individual. This form of sonic alienation represents the perlocutionary frustration and illocutionary disablement of the authoritative speech act.

Katharine Norman writing about the work in her 2004 text *Sounding Art: Eight Literary Excursions Through Electronic Music* has hinted toward the performativity of the composition but has kept her analysis within the realms of the “reading voice”, the “listening voice” and the “authorial voice” as they relate to listening (Norman 2004: 112). It would seem that these ‘voices’ link to locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts through notions of authority, intention and legitimacy, but I want to prod that link a little by questioning the notion of experience that the composition sets up.

I want to explore how paradoxically, Lane's composition of herself and her female friends' readings of the list from *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*, which incidentally has been written by *anon*, queries the foundations of experience by turning the authoritative illocution of the text that has silenced women around on itself through the very (paradoxical) performance of the composition, which may be further read as offering a critique of the seeming impossible connection of a category of 'woman' and 'composer'. This seems important, because I want to suggest that it should not be taken for granted that the subject of this composition is 'woman', but rather it might be the *dominant discursive practices* that construct the category of the white<sup>14</sup> English woman through hegemonic categorisations of order, obedience, cleanliness and purity that may provide the key to the subject of the work.

At about two minutes into the piece, a key turns in a lock. This registers quite a drastic change of space as the listener enters another room in the house of *Hidden Lives*. The long time-stretched sounds have passed and now the listener is surrounded by sharp intakes of breath and aired initiations to produce sounds, a static, stuttering spectrum of whispered breaths that collectively builds as a mass of insistent, reverberating noise, filling the audio bandwidth. But as yet there is still no intelligible speech. Three minutes in, soft but plosive consonant forms emerge from the band of noise, accentuated by a gradual eruption of bodily voiced vowel sounds, where the individual body of the voice slowly begins to emerge from the collective spectrum. But the noise persists, as a searching for language, for expression increases and then quickly thins to more sparse

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<sup>14</sup> I am not for a moment suggesting that 'white women' have an innate purchase on cleanliness or purity but rather that race, ethnicity and nationality as much as sex, sexuality and gender are socio-cultural and political constructs and that these 'characteristics' are some of the ways that these categories have historically been constructed.

and individual stutters, sibilants, trills and fragments. This ‘interior’ world continues, and I want to pause in this space here a moment, where the “community of tiny speech sounds *cannot* speak because it is truly incorporeal” as Norman has suggested, signals the moment of assuming a body, voiced through an “indignity beyond words” (Norman 2004: 111, 113 emphasis in original). Norman has conceded that the sounds as they slowly come to speech are “all women’s voices - this is very clear from the timbre” (Norman 2004: 111). This would quite clearly seem to provide an identity and subject for the work, where it would appear to be about women because of the sound and timbre of the voices used. But Lane has explained in the program notes that the samples are of recordings of her and her women friends reading the text and that it “explores ideas of women as the curators of memory and of hidden histories”, so the knowledge that the composition is by, for and about ‘women’ is already established (Lane quoted in Norman 2004: 110). Following that we know this already, that the material of the work has been spoken by Lane and her friends, might the timbre<sup>15</sup> of the voice not necessarily nor essentially denote ‘woman’ here? Instead might it not be the performative force of the speech act that constructs the voice as gendered, by which we perceive the timbre to be feminine and which relatedly denotes the body within the work as female? It is through the very norms and conventions that are the subject of this composition, that gendered speech has been constructed and by which ‘women’s’ speech has historically been prevented “from counting as an *action*”, as being *essentially* passive (Langton 1993: 299 emphasis in original). This is what signals the gender of the voice in the composition, the fact that the voices have been silenced by the text/composer, not their

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15 Susan Cusick, Judith Peraino and Judith Halberstam have debated the timbral mimicking that occurs in drag performances and cover songs in a way that scrambles any essentialising correspondence between timbre and voice. See Cusick 1999; Halberstam 2007; Peraino 2007; Schlichter 2011.

timbre. The paradoxical construction of the category of women through these discursive silencing speech acts, that essentialised links between timbre and voice confuse, is the crux of the *matter*, where “the possibility of politics” does not “rest on” nor “follow from, a pre-existing women’s experience” (Scott 1991: 787) but is the means by which that experience (and sociality) is constructed.

In this way it may be perceived that the composer has assumed a subordinate position, by initially silencing the voices in the work, of which hers is one. But why would she do this? If she’s claiming that women’s speech is already denied, frustrated and disabled in a way that hides their ‘true’ lives, why would she appear to be complicit in that silencing? I suggest that it is so that she may paradoxically assume and thus undermine a position of authority and an associated notion of truth from which to challenge the text and also to historicise the concept of experience.

Assuming a subordinate position to challenge authority is the paradox in the work because if the claim is that women as a category have been silenced through authoritative illocutionary acts, then it would seem logical to assume that women as a category do not have the required authority within this context to challenge the illocutionary act - the text of *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles*. Their silence indeed signals a failure to act, or rather a failure of individual action, but perhaps not necessarily a failure of action on the part of the collective memorialising and mimicking of times supposedly past that occurs through the construction of the composition. For the very “structure of impersonation reveals one of the key fabricating mechanisms through which the social construction of gender takes place” (Butler 1990: 136-7). As



such, one woman speaking up against the ways that she has been silenced is not perceived as intelligible speech, she is ignored, no matter what she says, she is not heard. To make herself heard she needs to be recognised as ‘woman’, where women have historically been positioned as subordinate to men. For this is the only context in which her speech is deemed to have any legible, legitimate authority, in the context of hetero-patriarchy. And this is a performance. By assuming the dominant norms of gender and their supposed internalisation the composition “fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity” (Butler 1990: 137). Here, “appearance is an illusion” (ibid). It is a subversive imitation of silence and noise that effectively displaces the meaning of the original silence as a corporeal re-enactment “that constitutes its interior signification on its surface” (Butler 1990: 139). This is the *performative act* that Butler writes of in 1990<sup>16</sup>. In response to Norman’s “community of tiny speech sounds [that] *cannot* speak because it is truly incorporeal” and is “the speechless voice of a disturbed ‘interiority’” (Norman 2004: 111), Butler posits “a *corporeal style*, an “act,” as it were” (Butler 1990: 139), which is both intentional and subversively performative, where “*performative*” suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” and where any notion of an original interiority is played out across the surface of this collective body as the interiority of the composition dissolves into the public realm.

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16 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* was originally published in 1990 and reprinted in 1999.

## 2.2 *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* Emma Hedditch (2005)

Following the theme of covering and uncovering hidden lives and histories is British born artist and writer Emma Hedditch's installation *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* (2005).

Hedditch's installation was one of the five main works commissioned and displayed for the duration of the *Her Noise* exhibition at the South London Gallery in 2005.

Hedditch's many and often conceptual performances involve a diacritics of covering and uncovering<sup>17</sup>, of closure, disclosure and deciphering. For instance, her contribution to the *Working Documents* exhibition at Laverena in Barcelona in 2002 consisted of covering the window and sign to the gallery of the exhibition from the outside. From a later performance at an artist space in Williamsburg, New York, Hedditch's action involved covering members of an audience that had gathered to hear Mattin, Margarita Garcia and Marcia Bassett perform. Many of her works incorporate or refer to sound through her actions and also through her collaborations with other artists and performers. But specifically, she has stated her interest as one of how "relations produce physical and psychological spaces for experimentation, research, self-organising and direct action, including performing", what may be understood as a practice of social production (transcribed Hedditch HNS-2012). She does this, I want to suggest, not so much as a "tool of differential diagnosis, but as a tool for better seeing [hearing] differentials of practice" (Sedgwick 2003: 130). This signifies a shift in the notions of performance and performativity, particularly in regard to the study of music that Alejandro Madrid puts forward, which I expand upon through the following analysis, as

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17 What this also relates quite directly to is Scott's accepting and refusing of the rubrics of sexual difference - the double bind of being interpolated as sexually different, as female, as gay or lesbian, or as queer and whereby "a certain, stylised violence of sexual differentiation must always be *presumed* or *self-assumed* - even, where necessary, imposed - simply on the ground that it can never be finally *ruled out*" - the mimetic paranoia of sexual difference (Sedgwick 2003: 133).

a means for considering musical performativity as always social rather than as purely self-referential musicality (Madrid 2009).

Hedditch's installation *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* is a performative sound-based art installation which uses the materials of the *Her Noise Archive*, of which Hedditch was directly involved in collecting along with Džuverovic, Neset and Revell, as a basis from which to explore socio-musical processes, practices and publics. This commission by Hedditch for the *Her Noise Project* culminated in a series of six 'get-togethers' over the course of the exhibition at the South London Gallery in 2005. Hedditch has explained that she intentionally used the term 'get-together' "so as to not be a workshop or a talk or a lecture and simply around the idea of people coming together" (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Each weekly get-together proceeded from a particular "theme or an idea to begin the discussion and they were open to anybody who wanted to come" (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Guests such as Tobi Vail and Alison Wolfe, from riot grrrl bands Bikini Kill and Bratmobile, Amy Spencer author of "DIY: The Rise Of Lo-Fi Culture", independent film maker Vivienne Dick, sound artists Melanie Clifford and Isa Suarez as well as members from *Creative Routes*<sup>18</sup>, a group established to connect mental health and creativity, among others contributed their time and experience to the get-togethers. Hedditch has explained the progression of the work over the six week period as working "on different levels" where "in the early period it was more focused around what the function of the archive was and then as it developed it became more participatory and people could bring things and actively make exchanges, to bring

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<sup>18</sup> Creative Routes is a survivor-led interdisciplinary community arts organisation that aims to promote and celebrate the creativity and individuality of survivors of the mental health system and of mental distress.

things and to leave [them] in the archive” (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Participants of the get-togethers explored “relations between historical acts”, “ways of forming collaborations”, and the ways in which this information can “transform and inspire action” through performance and the making of sound works (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Further, the get-togethers used the collected materials from the *Her Noise Archive* in the process of the installation, the tangible and ephemeral results of which were then refolded back into the archive. For instance, one of the get-together’s focused upon zine production exploring the zines collected in the archive, inviting people who had made their own zines to share them with the archive and actually making zines which were then added to the archive.

### **Performative Composition**

The installation *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!*, similarly yet slightly differently to Lane’s *Hidden Lives*, may be perceived as enacting a further performative shift in thinking about sound, music and culture. Alejandro Madrid, writing the introduction for a co-edited edition of “Transcultural Music Review” in 2009 conveyed how he unexpectedly encountered “opposition to the use of the concept of “performativity” in conjunction with the act of composition” within the field of musicology (Madrid 2009: 1). After submitting a paper on what he called “performative composition”, Madrid encountered a rebuke from an English language musicology journal reviewer who explained that “the term “performativity” had a long history in music studies - used in reference to the act of musical performance, music-making, or musical interpretation” the meaning of which his use of the term conflicted with (Madrid 2009: 1). The contention arose, Madrid has explained, because his use of performativity in the context of composition

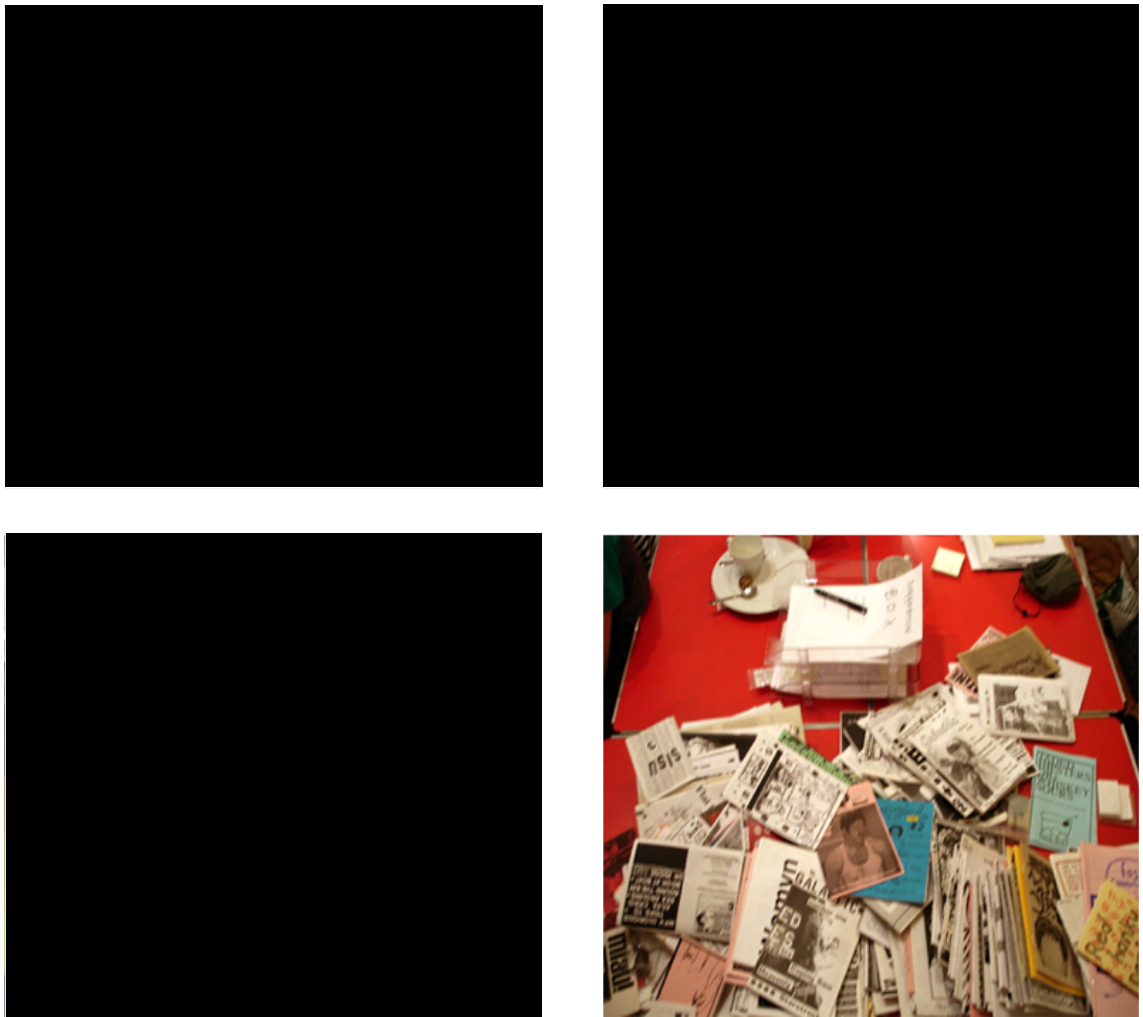


Fig. 2 Emma Hedditch *We're Alive Let's Meet!* installed at the *South London Gallery* 2005. Courtesy of *Electra* and the *Her Noise Archive*.

“seemed to disrupt the composition/performance dyad” (Madrid 2009: 1). Of course though, it does more than this, performativity as used in cultural and performance studies, disrupts the entire relay of meaning making and thus the notion of authorship and authority in the composer/performer/audience triad. The challenge to traditional beliefs about authority and authorship as the sole preserve of a composer occurs through a shift or reversal in the locus of meaning-making onto the audience, who in effect acquire compositional authority through their listening which performs the work within such a paradigm. The performative shift in the locus of meaning-making upon the

audience through *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* provides a means through which to trace the affective resonance and ephemeral noise of this work which would otherwise remain inaudible because actually, no normatively audible nor easily documentable object, such as a finished composition of this work remains.

Madrid has explained how the term performativity has been applied within music scholarship where traditionally “the study of performance has meant the study of a wide variety of music-making paradigms” that have focused upon questions that “remained within the realm of the rendition of a musical text” (Madrid 2009: 3). This more traditional paradigm of the musical text was primarily focused upon answering questions in regard to how to make “such texts accessible to listeners, musical performances as texts, or at best, how the notions of performance and composition might collapse in improvisation” (Madrid 2009: 3). These questions, Madrid has claimed, keep the focus of performativity upon “the means by which music is created or re-created in performance” (Madrid 2009: 3) as the classic scenario of music as a closed and self-referential system rather than opening up to questions that can address the social process of composition itself.

In contrast with performativity as it has been applied within “traditional music scholarship”, Madrid has linked the theory to performance studies primarily through J.L. Austin and philosophical concerns about the social construction of language (Madrid 2009: 3). He has outlined the development of the term through Northern and Southern American performance studies, further citing Butler’s post-structuralist approach as opening “the door for the use of the notion of performativity not only to

analyse speech or bodily actions but also to approach other cultural discourses and manifestations in terms of processes” (Madrid 2009: 4). This, Madrid has asserted, “enabled a shift away from asking about the meaning of sound in culture and society into asking about the social and cultural uses of that sound”, raising questions about what sound does or what it “allows people to do” (Madrid 2009: 4) rather than questions about what sound is or might mean musically. Considering soundworks, musics, installations and compositions then “as processes within larger social and cultural practices” enables an appreciation of how such works “can help us understand these processes as opposed to how these processes help us understand music” (Madrid 2009: 4).

Through his disruption of the traditional composition/performance dyad, Madrid re-figured performance *as* composition within his theoretical framework. Further, he has traced the movement of this thinking in sound and performance studies that sought to expand “understandings of what a musical performance could be” through an idea of music as “part of larger performance complexes” (Madrid 2009: 10). Citing case studies that analyse the “performance of race and nationality through music” Madrid has suggested,

Performance complexes operate within historical processes, making us understand that music acquires meaning and significance as it articulates a variety of practices (from dance to reception to social discourse to listening) and processes that go well beyond the sounds and the texts that represent them (Madrid 2009: 10).

In other words, music acquires meaning through the social relations that are both embedded within and that ensue from its use which “go well beyond the sounds and

texts that represent them” (Madrid 2009: 10). Music, its production and its meaning considered in this way is an imminently social and historically changeable process. Madrid’s analysis of what he thus calls *performative composition* is one that collapses the distinction between composer, performer and audience through the analysis of artefacts, experiences and processes, such as concerts, media, video footage, memorials, technology, activism and memory which are all considered as “part of a larger performance complex” (Madrid 2009: 10). These, Madrid has proposed, may “be made into cultural citations that mobilise powerful emotions and structures of feeling that in turn could be used as sites for the development of cultural memberships” (Madrid 2009: 4). I want to follow Madrid’s thinking, to suggest that the elements that Madrid has analysed as part of a “performance complex” which moves “beyond the sounds and the texts that represent them”, in Hedditch’s installation are zines and musics as much as they are conversations, social gatherings and shared memories (Madrid 2009: 4, 10). These ‘performance complexes’ are themselves the performative acts which materialise the composition of this installation through a shared performance of audition that composes a ‘kind of public’. Hedditch has explained this process as,

...more in keeping in the ways in which a lot of the music and the ways this kind of music is produced and distributed and the kind of communities around that kind of music evolved. So it doesn't strip away all of that social interaction. So we set up also just as a space here...to form around the archiving project and the whole exhibition, to form a mini kind of community that gets together and exchanges information (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005).



### **Audition <=> Exchange**

Anthropologist and musician Georgina Born has proffered an alternative term to Madrid's 'performance complex', what she has called a "musical assemblage" (Born 2010: 88). Born has described this musical assemblage as "a series or network of relations between musical sounds, human and other subjects, practices, performances, cosmologies, discourses and representations, technologies, spaces, and social relations" (Born 2010: 88). Connecting Madrid's 'performance complexes' with Born's "musical assemblages" is intended to explicitly provide a means for connecting social processes and social relations. Additionally, transnational queer feminist Jasbir Puar, in a reworking of the concept of intersectionality through a frictional interplay between subject oriented philosophies and "non-representational, non-subject-oriented politics" has retranslated the term 'assemblage' back into its original French as 'agencement' so as to retain the original meaning of the term as it appeared in the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Puar 2012: 7). Assemblage translated from 'agencement' is, according to Puar, "a term which means design, layout, organisation, arrangement, and relations - the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns" (Puar 2012: 7). This is in contrast to an assemblage understood as a bricolage, collection or combination of objects whereby the focus of analysis then shifts from a collection of objects to *patterns, processes* and *relations*. Hedditch's stated interest in connecting objects in the archive with their histories and the people who made and who listened to them through the musical assemblage of *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* is the performative musical content of this installation. The processes as patterns of relation emerge through the durational composition of the installation - the 'get-togethers' - processes that an

ontology of mediation would otherwise erase and are tuned into and transmitted along a queer feminist frequency<sup>19</sup>.

Hedditch has discussed how the collection of materials for the archive was informed by and in turn informed her own creative process, which occurred through the exchanges of the first get-together;

Somehow we would think about collecting materials but we would also think about what it meant to collect materials, from all the different kinds of places and the ways that you can do that. We wanted to think about the archive as something that it's not just objects that are just there without any history but that they are objects that have attachments to people and to that person's history. So the idea was to not separate the objects from the people that they come from and that we would try and record those journeys that those objects had made somehow (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005).

*We're Alive, Let's Meet!* then is not simply a site where people may gather to talk about or even to produce music, but is a situation of the exchange based upon a specific performance of audition. It is a kind of direct action that takes the archive as a starting point where the composer as activist engages affective experiences that can provide the basis for alternative collective memories and cultures. Instead of analysing traditional musical patterns, Hedditch as the composer in this instance composes through a deciphering of social patterns as the sounding elements of the composition which are materialised through the political economy of this work which is that of the exchange. In an effort to further sound out the 'exchange' in *We're Alive, Let's Meet!*, Madrid's 'performance complexes', Born's 'musical assemblages' and Puar's 'agencement' read

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19 The term 'frequency', as applied throughout this research, is intended to enable a multiplicity of meanings, from tuning in to a specific radio frequency, to the regularity and reoccurrence of an event, to the frequency at which a signal is transmitted within the audio spectrum. This last definition of frequency, as an indication that enables the 'identification' of a signal, is addressed in much more detail in chapter four, "Fundamentals of Desire".

through an explicitly political articulation connects these processes with the Foucauldian concept of the apparatus<sup>20</sup> as the disciplinary laws, norms and conventions that govern discourses and institutions through “the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault 1980: 194).

A tracing of histories and objects as processes and relations, rather than a focus upon a work as a finished product bracketed from the social milieu in which it circulates, is a political practice that necessarily shifts the meaning of composition. The exchange in *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* is the interpellative “system of relations that can be established between these elements” (Foucault 1980: 194), between “*we’re alive*” and “*let’s meet*”, between survival and desire. As a performance that sounds out the “apparatus”, the get-togethers of *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* are the means by which “specific connections with other concepts” are precisely the point in the exchange that “gives concepts their meaning” (Puar 2012: 7). In other words, it is through the exchange that identities and socialities, however fleeting they may be, are materialised. In this sense then the concept of performative composition as a sounding out of the exchange presents a way to reconsider and “broaden the understanding of what performance can mean in music” enabling a “creative practice of performance as a way of knowing, the critical analysis of culture from the perspective of performance, and activism as performance” (Madrid 2009: 4). As Hedditch has explained,

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20 Foucault explains the ‘*dispositif*’ as “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements” (Foucault 1980: 194).

What I do care about is that there is some kind of exchange. The idea of this archive is that it is a database, but also, the idea is, if we've got the six weeks for the exhibition period, it's really nice to meet people and to not have that impersonal collecting mentality, that we don't just want to collect anything, but that it's more interesting to find out a bit more about people who have stuff and who produced it and why and how they made it. Those kinds of stories that are trying to break down the traditional archiving and collecting mentalities (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005).

Connecting the objects and 'herstories' of the archive with their social histories amplifies the regions of and between public and private experience through noise as an emotional attachment that seeks to connect memory and history in spaces of historical erasure. It is a scene in which the development of performance cultures are combined with queer publics as mutually constituting and where "an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions" such as the zines, DIY strategies of production and distribution, interviews, queer feminist cinema, records, CDs, books, DVDs, magazines and personal stories "are encoded not only in the context of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (Cvetkovich 2003: 7). It is in the exchange of the 'get-togethers' that the alternative practices of 'production and reception' that have historically seemed to be inaudible may be momentarily tuned into. These exchanges which are the political economy of this work are not a permanent economy but are fleeting, ephemeral and temporal.

### **Musical Structure <=> Ephemeral Musical Relationships**

Instead of requiring a traditional analysis of musical structure, a composition such as this calls for an analysis of musical relationships between socio-political bodies, rather than between the sounds themselves. By musical relationships I mean relations between people based upon a sharing of music. Musical relationships based upon a sharing of music made by 'women' in lesbian cultures in particular are often difficult to 'analyse'

in a normative sense because “the cultural traces that they leave are frequently inadequate to the task of documentation” (Cvetkovich 2003: 9). Queer theorist Jose Esteban Muñoz writing about the ephemerality of queer archival practices and histories has suggested,

Queerness is often transmitted covertly. This has everything to do with the fact that leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself open for attack. Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere—while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility (Muñoz 1996: 6).

Whilst Muñoz has discerned the need not to leave too much “visible evidence” as a survival strategy in the face of an ever ongoing elimination of *radical* queer possibility, his ephemeral traces that pass by as innuendo and gossip tantalise the mind’s ear (Muñoz 1996: 6). For these audible ephemeral traces provide the coordinates for scanning the airwaves so as to momentarily tune into the frequency of this work, a frequency which otherwise might not so much “evaporate at the touch” so much as fade from the ears “of those who would eliminate queer possibility” (Muñoz 1996: 6).

Hedditch speaking at the *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic Symposium* in 2012 addressed the possibilities contained within the word ‘noise’ as a “powerful term which opens up the space for the illegible and non-compartmentalised practices...not defined by one person or another” (transcribed Hedditch HNS-2012). Noise then, as Hedditch seems to be using it, puts forward a claim not only against the silencing of historical erasure, but as a specific transmission of subjugated knowledges, “illegible and non-compartmentalised practices”, in a way that links with Muñoz’s ephemeral traces of the queer archive as something overheard, as double entendre, as gossip and fleeting

moments, as a persistent static and hum which carries a hidden signal for those who care to listen.

In discussing the construction of the *Her Noise Archive* which forms the basis of *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* Hedditch has said of the process that “there was a kind of realisation about the production of certain, or recordings of certain women's work, that there was less of it and it was harder to get” (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Traditional analysis in this instance proves insufficient, not only because “certain women’s work” is difficult to access, in particular where these sounds are difficult to trace having often remained intentionally undocumented and mostly erased from hegemonic histories (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Specifically traditional musical analysis proves insufficient here in particular because the moment of realisation of the difficulty in accessing this work is one of the moments that the installation seeks to materialise. In this sense then, Madrid’s writings on performative composition that shifts, and thereby expands the performative focus in music may be further appreciated as opening up the performance of audition to enable a hearing of the unheard, the said as much as the unsaid, as a way of tuning in to the ephemeral archive so as to materialise a public, a collective memory, in spaces of historical erasure.

To perform audition in this sense then, is an activation of a fluid production of meanings that are produced collectively in the moment of performative composition rather than being inscribed by an original ‘composer’ as a fixed, timeless and ahistorical meaning for a work. Instead the circuit of meaning that produces an (un)intelligibility for a composition becomes not only contingent upon the social milieu in which and

through which it is produced but also, crucially, upon the social milieu which such an act of composition itself produces. The interpellative scene and therefore inscription of meaning within performative composition is reliant upon who the members of this listening public might be, “who’s in the audience creating community” (Cvetkovich 2003: 9). Therefore tuning into this work requires a particular performance of audition, where audible signals that emerge through this frequency are transmitted only for “those within its epistemological sphere” while fading from the ears “of those who would eliminate queer possibility” (Muñoz 1996: 6) as a specific strategy for communicating the tools of survival in often hostile environments.

I mean to kind of look at why so few women are written about, how that's recorded and how that all feeds in to a general sense of representational invisibility and this kind of feeling of being slightly marginalised because it's women but also because of the kind of music that it is, it's even more marginalised, so it's like a double thing (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005).

Women’s and especially lesbian musical sub-cultures that have faced not only institutional neglect and marginalisation but have been historically and discursively disqualified, have by necessity developed what might seem to be unorthodox and grassroots strategies to create, account for and preserve their histories compared to normatively recognised institutional practices. The music that Hedditch expresses as being “even more marginalised”, which is represented in the *Her Noise Archive*, is largely the music of the “early nineties girlpunk scene” (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005). The bands circulating within this scene, such as *Bikini Kill*, *Bratmobile* and *Le Tigre* to name just a few of the most well-known, as Judith Halberstam has suggested “are most often folded into histories of the “riot grrrl” phenomenon and girl punk,” but

she has advised “they must also be placed within a new wave of dyke subcultures” (Halberstam 2005: 154). That Halberstam considers these dyke subcultures as a “new wave” points to the lack of a widely acknowledged historical specificity that this music as a music specific to lesbian cultures has received. Terry Castle writing about the historical figure of the lesbian as a “ghostly apparition” has explained that,

Lesbian contributions to culture have been routinely suppressed or ignored, lesbian-themed works of art censored and destroyed, and would-be apologists - like Radclyffe Hall in the 1920s - silenced and dismissed. Politically speaking, the lesbian is usually treated as a nonperson - without rights or citizenship - or else a sinister bugaboo to be driven from the scene at once” (Castle 1993: 5).

Dyke subcultures then, that have been “routinely suppressed or ignored” and “silenced and dismissed” (Castle 1993: 5) have by necessity had to develop alternative memorialising and sounding strategies in the face of a continued “representational invisibility” (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005). Butler has exposed this historical silencing of lesbian sexuality and culture as occurring through a specific set of discursive practices that implicitly produce so as to completely disqualify lesbian sexuality as a ‘discursive falsehood’, as an *unspeakable* speech act (Butler 1993: 312).

To be prohibited explicitly is to occupy a discursive site from which something like a reverse-discourse can be articulated; to be implicitly proscribed is not even to qualify as an object of prohibition (Butler 1993: 312).

Where “to be prohibited” is about not only an erasure from discourse, but also to be inscribed as a discursive falsehood, not only of women from historical music discourses where the words ‘woman’ and ‘composer’ struggle to meet, but specifically in this instance about the unthinkability, ‘unspeakability’ and “representational invisibility” of



lesbian identity and culture from hegemonic music as well as wider discourses. In the shadow of this ongoing representational invisibility, Anne Cvetkovich whose scholarship is situated within queer theory and queer archival practices has suggested,

Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism - all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive (Cvetkovich 2003: 241).

Cvetkovich's politicisation of affect within a social milieu that transforms Oedipal familial structures through wider kinship systems can be thought to expand upon the critique that Scott levelled toward feminist social history approaches as those that had neglected the "personal and social life - family, sexuality, sociability... areas in which women have been visible participants" (Scott 1999: 24). The social patterns, relations and processes that are the compositional material of Hedditch's installation are materialised through a politicisation of 'personal' everyday emotional knowledges as everyday "traces of trauma" (Cvetkovich 2003: 3), for instance that "feeling of being slightly marginalised" that Hedditch has mentioned (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005). Cvetkovich's "radical archive of emotion" (Cvetkovich 2003: 241) proffers a way in which an acknowledgement that "this kind of feeling of being slightly marginalised" is itself a legitimate way for measuring how "so few women are written about and how that's recorded" (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005) where affective experience *is* the means of recording that erasure that has been historically negated and relegated as a 'hidden life'. Thus this 'feeling' *is* both the archival and compositional material whose ephemeral traces can be acknowledged, shared, politicised, depathologised and remixed as an alternative and legitimate form of knowledge production. How it *feels* to be

marginalised becomes the compositional material of the get-togethers, the substance of the exchange, so as to work through that feeling in a way that can affectively address and re-work the everyday trauma of exclusion through a shared listening as a politics of audition.

The get-togethers then, that queer hegemonic disciplines of psychoanalysis and pedagogy through a subversive appropriation of the aesthetics of a therapist's waiting room and the educational workshop open up a space in which "illegible and non-compartmentalised practices" (transcribed Hedditch HNS-2012) circulate through what Lauren Berlant, writing about the world-shaping affectivities of intimate publics has considered as, "a kind of communication more akin to gossip than to cultivated rationality" (Berlant 2011: 227). In effect the get-togethers 'eventalize'<sup>21</sup> the body politic through the process of "listening-as-musical-experience" (Born 2010: 81) which occurs through the political economy of the exchange by "taking on *listening together* as itself an object/scene of desire" (Berlant 2011: 224 emphasis in original). An eventalization of the political economy of the exchange is a means by which to transform a political economy of music "into a use-value" (Attali 1985: 24) and to further force such an occurrence "from its status as object (use value) to thing (resistant, attractive enigma)" (Berlant 2011: 275).

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21 Eventalization is a Foucauldian genealogical practice based upon "rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary. In this sense one is indeed effecting a sort of multiplication or pluralization of causes" (Foucault 1991: 76). Additionally, Berlant has explained that for Foucault, eventalization further "refers to a need to move analytically beyond the moment when a happening moves into common sense, or a process congeals into an object-event that conceals its immanence, its potentially unfinished or enigmatic activity" (Berlant 2011: 64).

This process involves taking on *listening together* as itself an object/scene of desire. The attainment of that attunement produces a sense of shared worldness, apart from whatever aim or claim the listening public might later bring to a particular political world because of what they have heard (Berlant 2011: 224).

In this way, ephemeral, diffuse noise can simulate a *sense* of immediacy, as a particular kind of “transmission” that “*performs* political attachment as a sustaining intimate relation” (Berlant 2011: 224 emphasis added). The shared audition of ephemerality provides a *feeling*, a *sense* in the double meaning of the word, as understanding *and* knowing that can provide feelings of immediacy and solidarity. It does not escape mediation, but affectively shapes it as a means for measuring the parameters of the historical present. The thing “that shapes the *sense* of immediacy among mass mediated intimate publics in the historical present” (Berlant 2011: 228) is like looking through murky water, or listening through a water glass placed on the wall to hear what’s on the other side, scanning the airwaves through the crackle of static and noise, searching through the tentative, slippery connections and disconnections. What is heard here though, shapes the *sense* of immediacy, it is not really immediate as affect (affective ephemeral noise is not necessarily engaged in ontological illusions), but can provide a sense of it being so in ways that enable connections and communications and the exchange between strangers that might “produce the sense - if not the scene - of a more liveable and intimate sociality” (Berlant 2011: 228) through what Hedditch has called, “alignments without unity” (transcribed Hedditch NHS-2012).

This performance of audition comes together through the series of “get-togethers” that constitute the installation. The title of the work, *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* may be deciphered as a specifically queered performative utterance. For it signals not only a

stubborn refusal and survival in the face of institutional disqualification through insistent attachments to a denied historical past, but also simultaneously performs a desire for the political as a mode for thriving. The sustenance of a ‘desire for the political’ is one that interferes in the scene of interpellation that would seek to “constitute a being within the possible circuit of recognition and, accordingly, outside of it, in abjection” (Butler 1997: 5). For survival itself points to a crisis in which the production of everyday life is fraught with continued historical erasures and social violences connecting “the experience of living” to “the difficulties of coming out” often again and again (Cvetkovich 2003: 1). Berlant has extended the historical crisis of denied sexualities in the historical present as an “ordinary crisis”, as “a crisis of history, body and intuition about how we live now” (Berlant 2011: 61).

Listening into and with the intimate publics that emerge in their absence through *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* presents a way to reconsider and “broaden the understanding of what performance can mean in music” (Madrid 2009: 4). It connects a “creative practice of performance *as a way of knowing*, the critical analysis of culture from the perspective of performance, and *activism as performance*” (Madrid 2009: 6 emphasis added). It is an everyday strategy for surviving the trauma inflicted by institutional violences that would erase music made specifically between women who love women. Working in the queer archive Cvetkovich has explained that “queer performance creates publics by bringing together live bodies in space, and the theatrical experience is not just about what’s on stage but also about who’s in the audience creating community” (Cvetkovich 2003: 9). The stage in this instance is the space of *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!* where the “audience creating community” is the auditory performance of the composition, recalibrating what

counts as both '*her*' and '*noise*'. Combining Madrid's concept of performative composition with Cvetkovich's queer performance extends the notion of performativity with a temporal theatricality in a way that activates the audience through shared memories of negated histories further disrupting the traditional composer/performer dyad where the audience become both the composers and performers of the work through their listening. The composition then becomes the creation of a kind of community, as an intimate public emerges through the process of listening together. For the archive itself, activated through such a performance, enables the study of how "publics are formed in and through cultural archives" (Cvetkovich 2003: 9) to actually be not only the performance but also the composition of radical collective histories in the space of their erasure. As Hedditch has explained, "*this is the art*" (transcribed Hedditch SLG-2005 emphasis added).

### **2.3 Activating Publics**

The two works addressed in this chapter have provided complimentary movements for an appreciation of the ways in which sound arts and experimental musics may be perceived to socialise experience and as a means of experiencing socialisation. In other words, each work can be heard as de-materialising and re-materialising alternative identities and publics through sound and music.

Both *Hidden Lives* and *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* may be perceived as seeking to critique and expand upon some of the ways in which the 'category of woman' has been constructed in and through practices of composition, sound arts and experimental

musics. The collection of archival materials that underpins each work, and that each express similar performative concerns, I believe, aims to create the *sense* of belonging for those who may “already share a world view and emotional knowledge” for what Berlant has called “nondominant peoples” (Berlant 2008: viii). By trading through a “culture of circulation” including the circulation of texts, musics, images, zines, records, memes, gifs, Tumblr pages, blogs, word of mouth, mixtapes, CDs, objects and ideas that people share in time and space as happenings and across time and space through ephemeral resonances, a means of communicating is met with the intention of communicating *something* through “the generation of affect through representations that aim to touch their audiences” (Cvetkovich 2012: 9). This *something* is transmitted through a politicisation of affect for a working through of feelings of indignation, depression or marginalisation, of *feeling political* that is invested in creating the *sense* of having something in common and as a means of survival, indeed as a means by which to engender survival tactics in hostile and increasingly precarious environments.

### **Composition as Intimate Public**

Berlant has claimed that “the gender-marked texts of women’s popular culture cultivate fantasies of vague belonging as an alleviation of what is hard to manage in the lived real - social antagonisms, exploitation, compromised intimacies, the attrition of life” (Berlant 2008: 5). As a pointed critique, Mimi Nguyen has questioned the sentimental fantasy of an “aesthetics of intimacy” such as that which she experienced in the riot grrrl movement as “engendering an emotional style, and a rhetorical practice, that sometimes glossed intimacy for reciprocity, experience for expertise, and misrecognised

how forces work through these idioms” (Nguyen 2012: 178). I want to suggest then, building upon these concerns and following Cvetkovich, that an intimate public mediated by sub-cultural musics for non-dominant peoples might not be one that is based upon normative assumptions that idealise the good life as ‘living for love’, but may instead take the site of struggle, as a struggle for an “on-going, continuing, unfinished, open-ended” life, such as that which Stuart Hall has explained is a necessary modality for the activation of a ‘living’ archive, as its starting point (Hall 2001: 89). Hall’s explanation of ‘living’ archives, written in regard to the constitution of the *African and Asian Visual Artist’s Archive*, seemingly necessitates an engagement with an intimate public, in part due to the investment of the people whose interests form the basis of the archive’s construction,

The very practice of putting the collection together is informed by practitioners who are themselves active participants in defining the archive. They may have contributed to it. They may have collected some of it. They have appreciated and helped to interpret it. They have learned from the work in their own practice: and this new work will, in turn, become candidates for inclusion. An archive of this kind is a continuous production (Hall 2001: 91).

Seemingly, Hall’s explanation of how to make an archive ‘live’ in which “the practitioners who are themselves active participants” in the construction of the archive would be practitioners whose very “continuous production” is based upon the ongoing development of emotional knowledges and ways of feeling *in common* (Hall 2001: 91). Living archives then by necessity engage with various discourses of publicness - counter-publics, partially hidden publics, ephemeral publics and intimate publics. This ‘public’ engagement becomes most evident especially when the “ability to endure may be intimately bound with the need to engage a larger public”, not as a drive for power

but as the desire to inhabit “a material world in which that feeling can actually be lived” (Berlant 2008: 3). I want to suggest that compositional processes, such as the two that I have addressed in this chapter, may similarly be thought of as ‘living’ compositional processes that collapse the boundaries between archiving and composing where “the very practice of putting the collection together”, as the collection of musical relationships “is informed by practitioners who are themselves active participants” (Hall 2001: 91) within those musical relationships which form the basis by which such a composition might be sensed, through relations of production. As Berlant has suggested,

What makes a public sphere intimate is an expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff *already* share a world view and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience (Berlant 2008: viii emphasis in original).

The collection of specific archival materials, installations and performances associated with what could be called *feminist composition*, that each express similar performative concerns, I believe, aims to create the *sense* of belonging for those who may “already share a world view and emotional knowledge” as non-dominant peoples (Berlant 2008: viii). Such processes that could be called feminist composition then, seek to connect social and aesthetic processes in contemporary sound arts and experimental music practices through various feminist, including LGBTQI and anti-racist, discourses. This may at first be considered as ‘preaching to the choir’, but as Berlant has pointed out, this is an often undervalued yet necessary process, for “when an intimate public is secreted in its own noise, it rehearses affectively what the world will feel like when its vision gains mass traction” (Berlant 2011: 238). As Berlant has suggested,



... an intimate public is an achievement. Whether linked to women or other non-dominant people, it flourishes as a porous, affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging and provides a complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline, and discussion about how to live as an *x* (Berlant 2008: viii).

Yet the question remains, of who creates this intimate public, who has access, and whose interests form the basis of the terms of belonging? Berlant has suggested, “any person can contribute to an intimate public a personal story about not being defeated by what is overwhelming... they do not have to do anything to belong” (Berlant 2011: 226-7). Following Berlant’s lead then as an understanding that has been developed throughout this chapter, it is not necessary to audition to belong to an intimate public, but rather to *perform audition* (Berlant 2011: 226). To engender a sense of citizenship in an intimate public, Berlant has claimed that listening out for the political in a “mode akin to eavesdropping, overhearing and gossip is preferred”, for it is affective knowledge - as *ways of knowing* - within the melodramatic noise of the political “that can measure the materiality of status and power” (Berlant 2011: 230; 2008: viii). But whilst the establishment of an intimate public may be an achievement and one may not actually have to do anything to belong other than track the scene’s “visceral impact”, the notion of belonging itself is perhaps the point at which “the question of whose noise matters, whose immediacy-pressures rule the tendency of the situation - who controls the zoning” (Berlant 2011: 230) become most audible within the noise of the political. The concept of belonging seemingly assumes, within its dominant use, that a desire to belong is the ‘correct’ desire to cultivate, to aspire to. As such, it is the assumed concept of citizenship within an intimate public that might most “register the normative distinctions in terms of who has the formal and informal right to take up soundspace”

(Berlant 2011: 230) which is the focus that is extended throughout the following chapter.

### 3 POLITICS OF AUDITION

*Those who order the world, who are world-making master time -  
those animals and humans who are perceived as having no world-making effects -  
merely occupy space...If the black appears as the antithesis of history (occupies space),  
the white represents the industry of progressiveness (being in time).*

Sharon Patricia Holland 2012: 10

From the different processes in the previous works that have been considered, the spaces of historical amnesia have been interpreted as expressing feminist concerns and queer theories that have each addressed different aspects of women's cultures in sound arts and experimental musics as complex critiques of structural subordination and as making claims for alternative moments of the present. Both of the previous works have focused through different aesthetic forms on the problems of political exclusion from dominant musical/sonic discourses - as a struggle against the multiple forms in which the category of 'woman' has been constructed in subordination. In each of these cases, the terms of representation have been both accepted and refused through different strategies that reflect the different and shifting positions of woman, composer, performer and audience addressed toward questions of authority and experience, in particular of who seeks to speak for whom.

This chapter, extending upon the previous, will seek to measure some of the assumed thresholds of auditory intelligibility - in other words, the limits of what are assumed to be intelligible and thus recognisable as 'sound' and 'hearing' within established sound

reproduction practices and audio-technical discourses. This practice of measuring is performed through an analysis of the ways in which societal thresholds of ‘race’, ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ may be appreciated as manifesting through these discourses. Lauren Berlant has suggested that notions of belonging thought through the place of “ambient citizenship” raise questions about communication and representation within the sites of the political as much as within the construction of an intimate public (Berlant 2011: 230). Berlant has put forward the thesis that tuning into political noise - gossip, the over-heard, ambient noise and performative silence - has the ability to affectively measure the parameters of the political where “the noise of the political measures the materiality of status and power” (Berlant 2011: 230). This chapter takes-up Berlant’s suggestion of the noise of the political as a potentiality by which to measure the assumed thresholds of auditory intelligibility. In particular, the chapter aims to consider the measuring potential of noise through historically shifting concepts of ‘masking’ as processes which have been utilised in both audio technologies and as performative social strategies deployed to negotiate between different environments and social norms and expectations. Using the framework of the research criteria, this chapter will seek to address ways in which the organisation of audio technologies may be considered as being informed by and in turn materialising certain aspects of socio-political organisation through theories of masking, both auditory and political. These ideas will be primarily considered through the *Devotional Wallpaper*, the *Good Morning Freedom* print and the foundational placement of Shirley Bassey in the initial construction and later exhibition of the *Devotional Archive*, all produced as elements of the *Devotional Series* by artist Sonia Boyce and exhibited during the “Scat - Sonia Boyce: Sound and Collaboration” exhibition at Rivington Place, Iniva in London 2013.

### **The *Devotional Series* by Sonia Boyce**

The *Devotional Series* resonates with the *Her Noise Project* in that it focuses upon collective memorial strategies as a counter to forms of historical amnesia, but in regard to black British female singers, songwriters and performers. Initiated in 1999 through a collaboration program with FACT in Liverpool, lead artist Sonia Boyce, who draws upon her political identity as a British Afro-Caribbean woman in her work, was paired with the Liverpool Black Sisters<sup>22</sup> to facilitate a series of workshops over a six-month period with the aim of co-producing an artwork. Similarly to the *Her Noise Project*, at the centre of the *Devotional Series* is the *Devotional Archive*, a collection of vernacular culture<sup>23</sup> by black British women in the music industry; performers, musicians, composers, singers, songwriters and deejays. As Eddie Otchere reviewing the *Devotional Wallpaper* when displayed in a previous manifestation at London's National Portrait Gallery in 2007 has suggested, this work "marks the evolution of Boyce's exploration of sound as memory and as a collective portrait of black women in British music all brought together within the context of her visual arts practice" (Otchere 2007). Throughout the ongoing development of this project since its inception in 1999, Boyce has continued collecting artefacts for the *Devotional Archive*; musical assemblages consisting of recordings, testimonials, personal correspondences, books, CDs, videos and ephemera which have been continually sent to her by friends, family, colleagues and the public since the project began. As she has explained,

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22 Collaborators on this project include Sonia Boyce, Nicola Duzant, Sandi Hughes, Ann-Marie Norbert, Oluwatoyin Odunsi, Sally Olding, Dianne Paul, Pilar Rowland, Claire Taylor and Michelle Walker.

23 Of note, there are no actual sound artists listed in this archive. The majority of artists are singers/songwriters of soul, blues, r'n'b, jazz and pop with a small handful of classical singers. There are a handful of historical figures such as Adelaide Hall and Elizabeth Welsch. There are two composers, Shirley J. Thompson and Priti Paintal. There is one sound artist in the archive, Ain Bailey, but who is listed under her deejaying alter-ego, DJ Miss Bailey.

This information is passed on to me in the most informal ways. Very similar to how gossip travels, friends of friends pass on names and donate items resulting in the *Devotional Collection and Archive* consisting of records and tapes and brief testimonials from members of the general public. Affectively, this project is building a collective memory (transcribed Boyce HNS-2012).

The following analysis is based upon the exhibition of the *Devotional Archive* at Rivington Place, Iniva in London in 2013 where the archive was exhibited within the curated program “Scat - Sonia Boyce: Sound and Collaboration” (Iniva 2013). For the exhibition at Rivington Place, Boyce re-created the *Devotional Wallpaper* which framed the exhibition space of the lounge in which the *Devotional Archive* was displayed. Additionally, the artist published the *Devotional Newspaper*, produced the print *Good Morning Freedom* and extended the archive into the permanent Stuart Hall Library at Iniva, where a selection of magazines, books, DVDs and videos, presented alongside some of Boyce’s own research materials, were made available for perusal. A series of events also accompanied the exhibition, including artist talks and sound art performances.

### **Questioning Time and Space**

Feminist, queer and critical race theorist Sharon Patricia Holland, critiquing the seeming incompatibility between “race” and “sexuality” in contemporary cultural scholarship, has challenged recent theories that call for an overcoming of race through the lexicon of *beyond* (Holland 2012: 17). Issues of “race” and “sexuality”, within some historical approaches, have appeared to eclipse each other through, on the one hand, a desire within some tenets of queer theory to move beyond categorisation and, on the other hand, through some histories of critical race theory and intersectionality by involving a

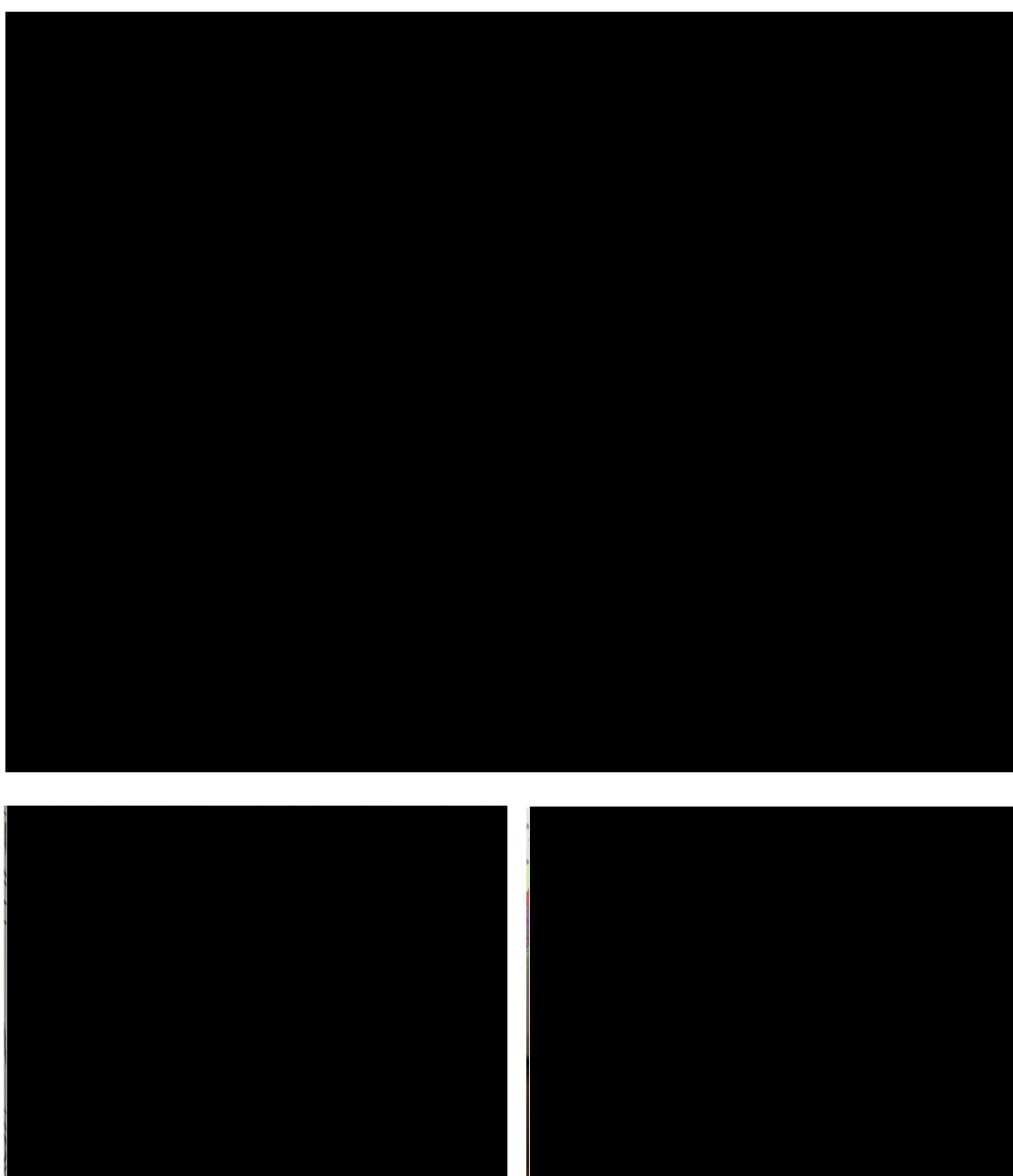


Fig. 3 Sonia Boyce *Devotional Archive* and *Wallpaper* in situ at Rivington Place, Iniva 2013.

playing down or denial of sexuality itself. This historical denial of sexuality has occurred in part, as Evelyn M. Hammonds has explained, as a resistant strategy “of black women both to negative stereotypes of their sexuality and to the material effects of those stereotypes on black women's lives” (Hammonds 1997: 171) Echoing this legacy, Holland has considered that one of the main challenges “that the next generation of feminists have” dealing with legacies of intersectional feminism in the historical present is that intersectionality “cannot account for sexuality in its framework” (Holland 2012: 22).

In an effort to address these historical erasures from either discourse, Holland, in *The Erotic Life of Racism* (2012), re-visited the question of the black/white binary through a return to the time/space split, considered as the “West’s progress narrative” (Holland 2012: 18). Through the dominant-hegemonic ordering of time and space as a particularly progressive Western narrative Holland has asserted that “the black subject is mired in space and the white subject represents the full expanse of time” (Holland 2012: 18) in ways that have foreclosed the possibility of any dialogue between these two planes to ever actually occur. What this historical spatio-temporal split means, Holland has suggested, is that “black” as “mired in space” and “white” as “the full expanse of time” have never really been able to connect in any meaningful way (Holland 2012: 18). The Western progress narrative then is one that affords the lie of ‘relation’ - that there has been some commonality reached which would enable a consideration of a ‘post-racial’ world - to what Holland has considered as a “non-event” (Holland 2012: 18). In a way that accentuates her critique of progressive time, Holland has asked how, in this instance, can “one move *beyond* a non-event?” (Holland 2012:



18). Further interrogating the notion of *relation*, she has suggested that “relation technically happens (two persons, black and white, face to face) but never occurs given the time/space split” (Holland 2012: 19). Questioning the ordering of (non)relation through the tropes of proximity and familiarity that rather than creating “a level playing field of difference”, Holland has conceded, might actually “replicate the terms upon which difference is articulated and therefore maintained” (Holland 2012: 19). In other words, it might indeed be our *assumed* closeness within supposedly ‘multicultural’ Western societies which continually articulates this non-relationality. Relatedly, what Holland asks, is “what if our coming together (all the time) is the thing that we continue *not* to see as the lie of nonrelation” (Holland 2012: 19 emphasis in original)? To answer this question Holland has returned to the “somewhat banal pairing otherwise known as the black/white binary” (Holland 2012: 7), which as a supposed ‘backward movement’ resonates with Berlant’s suggestion for delaying in the impasse. Such a delay is intended to enable a pause, to stop and listen within a paradoxical space of “animated still-life”, as a time-space in which “one keeps moving, but one moves paradoxically, in the same space” (Berlant 2012: 212, 199). This return or pause as a ‘backward movement’ Holland has suggested, is intended to enable thinking about everyday experiences of ongoing racisms as a project “that seeks to normalise racism, to move away from “good” or “bad” assessments of its agents (black and white) and toward an understanding of its psychic life and how that life “glues a particular racial order” (Bonilla-Silva quoted in Holland 2012: 32). Further, Holland has suggested,

Such a return, to echo Hortense Spillers, might be “embarrassing” or “backward.” When race becomes the basis for social organisation - determining and fixing not only what we are to others, but also defining who we are - it gains an immutability that

neither pro nor con can shake - it gains ontological might and becomes “too high to get over, too low to get under.” (Spillers quoted in Holland 2012: 7).

Considering race as the “basis for social organisation”, as is explicitly evident in the socio-musical organisation of the *Devotional Archive* and implicitly evident in the *Her Noise Archive*, might enable thinking about “how much racism demands of us, from us” (Holland 2012: 7). For it flags not only the ‘embarrassed amnesia’ that Boyce has illuminated as an initial affective response to sublimated everyday racisms as a specific latency of memory, but is also contagious (transcribed Boyce HNS-2012). Feelings of embarrassment when they occur, much like shame, can highlight moments as affective flashes or triggers that can alert one to the moments when race and racism are applied particularly as unconscious bases of social organisation. Pausing in time-spaces that “might be embarrassing or backward” (Holland 2012: 7), rather than always seeking a movement beyond, can affectively measure the boundaries of racist discourse and enable a seeking out and measuring of the limits that race-thinking would seek to impose. These limits can further be thought of as hegemonic societal thresholds, the rules, laws, norms and conventions by which not only the social has been organised, but thresholds that also relate to the ways in which auditory perception has been organised.

### **3.1 Wall of Silenced Sound**

Rethinking, re-visiting and reworking history appears as a major concern in Boyce’s oeuvre spanning almost forty years, as a critique of historical narratives inherent in archival processes and knowledge production which may be perceived on one level through the use of grids and seriality in the *Devotional Wallpaper*. Wallpaper has been a

recurring means for the presentation and deconstruction of representation in Boyce's larger practice. As a domestic and everyday object, the use of wallpaper as an aesthetic form has enabled Boyce to appropriate and transform symbolic and spatial constructions between public and private spaces so as to "tell stories" - stories that can contribute to a re-writing of history (Boyce quoted in Tawadros 1997: 39). In 2007 Boyce installed the first manifestation of the *Devotional Wallpaper* at London's National Portrait Gallery as "an elaborately hand-drawn installation on the gallery walls" (Ochere 2007) containing the names of one-hundred and eighty black British female singers and performers presented chronologically through a dialectical narrative structure of black/white, inside/outside, centre/margin and space/time. Through a particular repetition of these dialectical frames the *Devotional Wallpaper* sought to expose the inherent contradictions between these originary dualisms whilst simultaneously refusing to resolve them. In particular the *Devotional Wallpaper* sustains and extends Boyce's critique of assumed relations between history and memory through aesthetics that subversively appropriate the generic conventions of a list or map, its order and chronology, whilst radically questioning them at the same time. What Boyce's use of seriality and grids in the *Devotional Wallpaper* references, and ultimately reworks, are the notions of modernity, chronology and history themselves.

Serialisation is a characteristically modern process. Seriality and chronology display a concern with modernity as processes central to modernity itself. Serialism displays a continual movement of from here to there, a temporal progression, "between 'here' and 'somewhere else'" which as an occupation of time and space is organised so as to

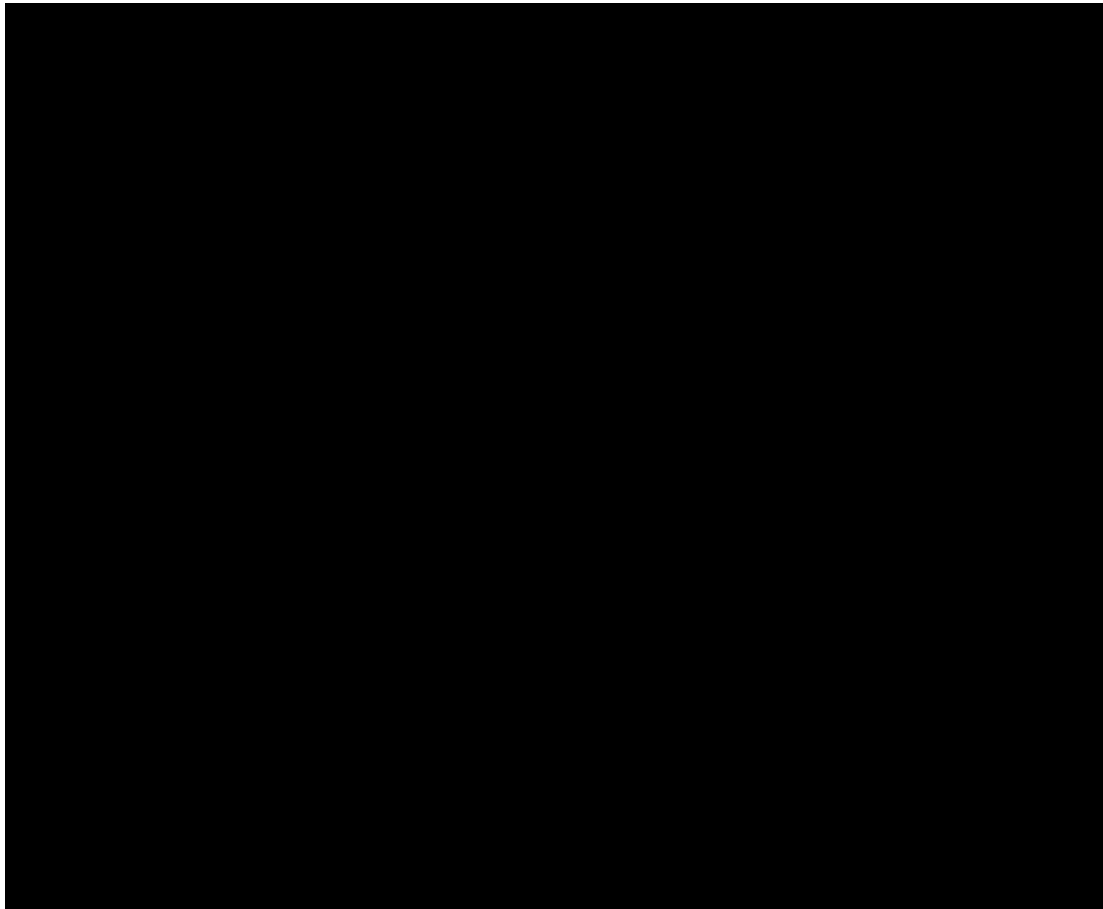
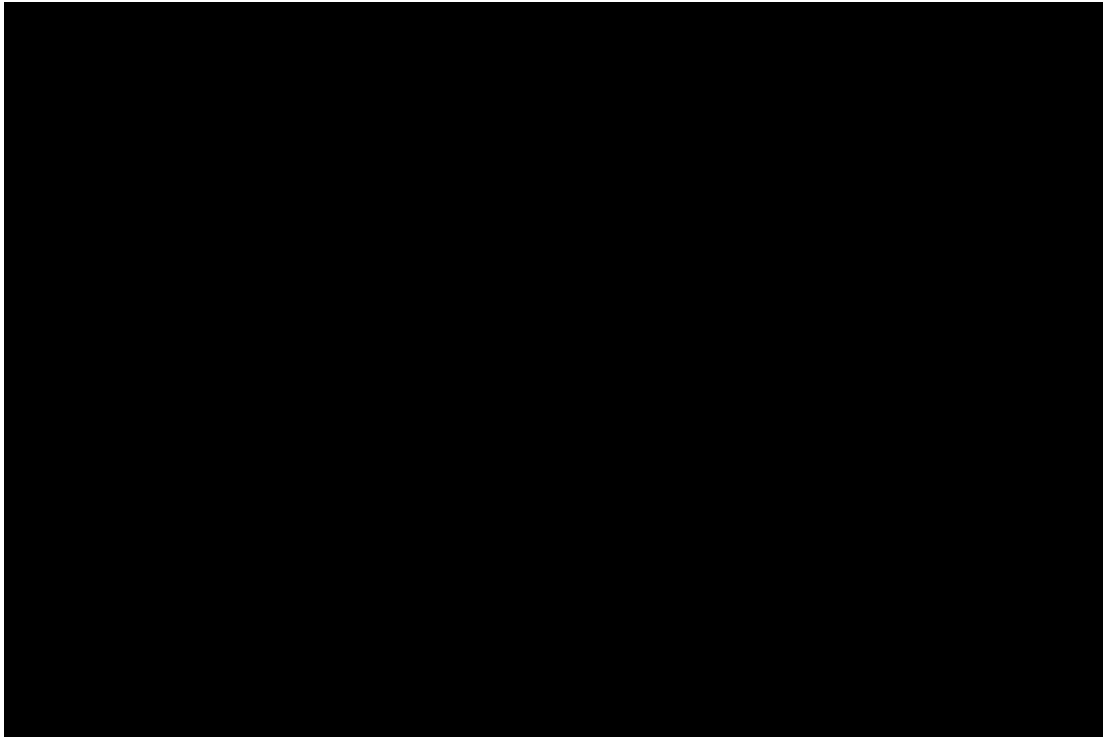


Fig. 4 Sonia Boyce *Devotional Wallpaper* in situ at Rivington Place, Iniva 2013

actively frame experience in the world, as a “succession of historical moments” (Bhabha 1994: 147; 150). The wallpaper seriality engages a gestalt-like activity of framing and de-framing, of forming and de-forming so as to simultaneously organise and transform perception and experience and ultimately to critique and transform historical norms and assumptions. For the figure of the frame here is reversible, on one hand the frame - the lines surrounding the names - stands outside the work, providing a background against which the framed content can emerge as a figure. On the other hand, the frame becomes part of the figure when seen against the background space of the wall. This oscillating play with gestalt and the grouping of ‘successive moments’ relates also to psychoacoustic theories of listening, in that we commonly switch our listening focus in a similar manner, blocking out one sound so as to focus in on another in a noisy environment for example (Chowning et al 2001: 32-35). But, in both an auditory and visual sense, this is more than a Derridian play with the de-centring of absence/presence, as both Houston A. Baker Jr. and Homi K. Bhabha have each explained (Baker 1987: 16; Bhabha 1993: 148). What is occurring here can be appreciated more in the line of a post-Foucauldian reverse discourse of modernist form, as one that engages shifting perspectives of context, content and form and their inter-relation rather than one that seeks to replace one term, one category or one sound with the other. Oscillating between ground and figure, the problematic boundaries of the frame as margin both centres and de-centres the work through a performative rather than metaphysical play of absence and presence engaged in contextual reversals and formal oscillations between repetition, variation and periodicity “signified in the narrative temporalities of splitting, ambivalence and vacillation” (Bhabha 1994: 147; Julien & Mercer 1988). This de-centring and de-marginalising seeks to expose the gaps

between names, words, identities and their assumed meaning, between identities and their assumed place, exposing the gaps between history and memory and sound.

### **Resounding Histories**

In an effort to explain the modernist challenge that the *Devotional Wallpaper* and the archive itself engages, it is necessary to briefly address the norm which Boyce may be perceived as working against. Normative understandings of modernity and modernism engage linear assumptions about time and history, where pre-modern, modern and post-modern periods considered through a legacy of enlightened rationalism are largely taken for granted as the natural order of things. This is stating the obvious, but as will hopefully become clearer, this I believe, is the normative progress narrative, or ‘framework,’ that the *Devotional Archive* seeks to challenge and which I aim to explain throughout this analysis. Additionally, Jacques Attali’s discussion of the “historical and musicological tradition” that would “like to retain an evolutionary vision of music, according to which it is in turn ‘primitive’, ‘classical’, and ‘modern’” (Attali 1985: 10) similarly echoes historical desires for a musicological linear narrative, where ‘evolutionary’ and ‘primitive’ become extremely loaded terms. I want to suggest, and will explain further, that the structure of the wallpaper, its chronological, linear, horizontal and vertical axial structure, its very dialectical and cartesian seriality, has been designed specifically and strategically by Boyce to reproduce and transform the historical linearity of an assumed evolution that Attali, among others, claims as an illusion (Attali 1985; Baker 1987; Gilroy 1993; Bhabha 1994; Moten 2003; Sterne 2003; Holland 2012).

**"A bare chronology makes modernists of us all"<sup>24</sup>**

The performativity specific to *Devotional* may be deciphered through elements of Houston A. Baker Jr's strategies of *the mastery of form* and *the deformation of mastery* that he reads as inherent in Amiri Baraka's<sup>25</sup> influential concept of the "*changing same*" (Baraka 2010: 205; Baker 1987: 15). Baker has critiqued common assumptions about modernism and the modern as generally accepted as making claims about "scientific mastery" where a "bare chronology makes modernists of us all" (Baker 1987: 1-2). His concern is most pointedly in regard to an assumed all encompassing temporality of modernism, both in the manner of an instantiation of the "latest moment's production" and an ongoingness of "modernism's allowable tomorrows" that combine to posit a totalising belief that "the movement is unending" (Baker 1987: 2). Further, Baker has suggested that within "Anglo-American and British traditions...there is a tenuous agreement that some names and works *must* be included in any putatively comprehensive account of modern writing and art" and that this 'listing' of the canon "began to predominate... on or about December 1910" (Baker 1987: 2-3 emphasis in original).

The names and techniques of the "modern" that are generally set forth constitute a descriptive catalog resembling a natural philosopher's curiosity cabinet. In such cabinets disparate and seemingly discontinuous objects share space because that is the very function of the cabinet - to house or give order to varied things in what appears a rational, scientific manner. Picasso and Pound, Joyce and Kandinsky, Stravinsky and Klee, Brancusi and H. D. are made to form a series (Baker 1987: 3).

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<sup>24</sup> Baker 1987: 2

<sup>25</sup> I am aware here of the implications for feminism and queerness that using Baraka's theory could potentially represent. Instead, following Muñoz and Fred Moten, I read Baraka's theory as a queer negation (Munoz 2007; Moten 2003).

Baker calls this practice “naming rituals” that “substitute a myth of unified purpose and intention for definitional certainty” (Baker 1987: 3), which is certainly a trope of ‘enlightened’ modernity - to categorise and classify in the name of universality. Baker’s main critique then stems from the generally held belief that the onset of modernity is thought to occur from around 1910, where authors such as T.S Eliot, Virginia Woolf and F. Scott Fitzgerald have been heralded as marking the birth of a new temporal totality (grand narrative) in the face of a “changed condition of human kind” as representative of “a profound shift in what could be taken as unquestionable assumptions about the meaning of human life” (Baker 1987: 3-4). Similarly, Holland has asserted that "in racist ordering, relation is defined as those who shape time and those who stand outside it, as those who belong to your people and those who do not" (Holland 2012: 18). The series then, that Baker critiques and that dominant historical modernisms and narratives seek to reproduce through formalism and canonisation, clearly mark who belongs and who does not belong and order time by manipulating space.

Within this schema, the focus of modernist formalism remains upon supposedly objective and universal compositional elements, such as sound’s fundamental parameters or “colour, line, shape and texture rather than realism, context, and content” (Jansen 2014<sup>26</sup>) - rather than taking account of historical and social contexts within the making of cultural artefacts, be they literary, visual, musical or sonic. Formalism not only assumes that everything necessary for comprehending a work of art is contained within the work of art but also operates within a dialectic of real/unreal, human/non-

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26 [http://www.essentialvermeer.com/glossary/glossary\\_d\\_i.html#formalism](http://www.essentialvermeer.com/glossary/glossary_d_i.html#formalism) - Accessed online [December 2014]



human, natural/cultural, terms that are assumed to be mutually exclusive. Such an exclusive and hierarchical focus upon form - art for art's sake, sound for sound's sake - is one in which the context of a work, the reason for its creation and its historical background are rendered not only less important but irrelevant. Baker's critical deconstruction of Western modernism sought to de-centre such totalising and universal narratives of modernist form by not only refusing the secondary status of historical context to formal structure, but more prominently by developing processual and performative strategies that sought to redefine timeless and ahistorical conceptions of form. Assumptions of timelessness and ahistoricity through Baker's modernist intervention have been reorganised as particular socio-historical processes specific to an expanded notion of modernism as one that maintains a stubborn connection to a political past of specifically African-American cultural production (Baker 1987).

As a counter to common (mis)conceptions about the birth and form of modernity, Baker resignified modernist form as an interstitial process through a specificity of Afro-American modernism. Baker read this specificity through an assemblage of the "intellectual history, music, graphic design, stage presence, oratory, etc" that commenced at the time of Booker T. Washington's public delivery of the "Atlanta Compromise"<sup>27</sup> in 1895 and which culminated in the 'Harlem Renaissance' of the 1920s as one of Afro-American modernism's most "seminal moments" (Baker 1987: 8).

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27 The Atlanta Compromise of 1895 was one in which Booker T. Washington as the then president of the Tuskegee Institute, a private black university founded in 1881 in Alabama USA, cemented the post-emancipation agreement that would see Southern African American populations as accepting unequal white political rule in return for the granting of limited educational and legal rights. W.E.B Du Bois famously disagreed with this agreement which he claimed foreclosed the possibility of engaging in the struggle for civil rights. Thus the agreement became known as a 'compromise' and may also be appreciated as a precursor for the separate but equal euphemism and Jim Crow laws that followed in the USA.

Further Baker has suggested that a reconceptualisation of the question of Afro-American modernism, symbolised for Baker through dominant perceptions of the failure of the Harlem Renaissance to achieve the goals and aspirations that typified the movement, can productively be reconsidered through Amiri Baraka's concept of the "changing same" as a "designation for the interplay between tradition and the individual talent in Afro-American music" (Baker 1987: 14-15). Baker has embodied the concept of the "changing same" with the strategies "*the mastery of form*" and "*the deformation of mastery*" (Baker 1987: 14-15), terms which I will elaborate upon throughout the following analyses. Explaining the use of the term 'form', Baker has written,

When I use the word "form", I do not want to invoke a distinction between form and content and spring the metaphysical trap privileging a primary order of form as an abiding and stabilising *presence*. For me, "form" has the force of a designated space - presumably, that between traditionally formulated dichotomies such as self and other. A substitute for the term might be *ellipsis*, or *trope* or *poetic image*. What I have in mind is not a single, easily identifiable structure, or even an easily described spatial apperception (Baker 1987: 16 emphasis in original).

For Baker, 'form' may be understood as process, as inherently transitory and fluid, as a space *between*, a "symbolising fluidity" as "a family of concepts or a momentary and changing same array" (Baker 1987: 17). This always fluid form or array for Baker was critically embedded in the concept of the *mask* which, as an inherently multivalent form, provided a fluid "metaphor of concealment and revelation" (Blackmer 1993: 233). The mask, as a form that constantly oscillates "between traditionally formulated dichotomies such as self and other" provides a means by which to connect ideas of gestalt-like activity embedded in the *Devotional Wallpaper* with Boyce's *Good Morning Freedom* print, which I explain shortly, through a continued de-centring of hegemonic norms. The "form, array, mask" deciphered through Baker's scholarship are both the "*minstrel*

*mask*” and the *Dan mask*<sup>28</sup>, both of which provide the necessary keys to unpack the performative strategy both culturally and sonically, as a productive “spirit of denial” that I perceive to be evident throughout the *Devotional Series* (Baker 1987: 16). For the *Devotional Wallpaper* can be read as exhibiting a similar formal process as one that Baker has suggested “has the force of a designated space”, as the space that oscillates between dichotomies. Form is aligned in Baker’s analysis as process, which he suggests can be substituted with the terms “ellipsis or trope or poetic image” or with what Berlant has designated as the specific spatio-temporality of the impasse (Berlant 2011: 4-5). The form of the wallpaper, as a wall of silent sound, then, can be perceived as sounding out the auditory thresholds of a particular mnemonic ritualistic device through a logics of performative silence, which I shall return to momentarily.

### **The Dialect of Dialectics**

Whilst this analysis so far has sought to address the oscillations of the *Devotional Wallpaper* through theories and philosophies of modernist art and music, I want to try to understand the ways in which these logics may be perceived to be at work within the auditory realm, in the relay between speaking and listening so as to try to deduce some ways in which these logics can be appreciated as organising auditory perception. To do this, I want to return to the oscillations of the mask that Baker has based his deconstruction of modernist form upon, which may be heard as playing out through Boyce’s *Good Morning Freedom* print.

When minstrelsy was still an acceptable form of supposed entertainment, what was

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<sup>28</sup> The Dan Mask occupies an important ritualistic art form emerging from Liberia.

ascribed as the spoken dialect of the minstrel for a racist white audience was seemingly nonsensical noise (Baker 1987: 43). Baker has suggested,

...the *sound* emanating from the mask reverberates through a white American discursive universe as the sound of the Negro. If it is true that myth is the detritus of ritual, then the most clearly identifiable atavistic remains of minstrelsy are narratives or stories of ignorant and pathetically comic brutes who speak nonsense syllables (Baker 1987: 22 emphasis in original).

Baker has addressed this supposed ‘minstrel dialect’ from various angles. When spoken by a “white body” in place of a “black body”, for example in historical white plantation texts such as *Satanstoe* (Cooper 1845) and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Stowe 1852), the trade in “syllabic idiocies” attributed to the white authors’ black characters are what Baker has called “*white dada* at its most obscene” (Baker 1987: 22 emphasis in original). These syllabic idiocies, uttered *by* white authors *for their* black characters, have, historically and hegemonically been assigned the status of nonsensical noise through the intentional narrative function of this particular speech act through a dialectics of domination/subordination. In this regard, the “*white dada*” as the master discourse can be perceived as an attempt at a “total speech situation” (Butler 1997: 3) embedded with an implicit intention to invoke at the moment of the utterance certain asymmetrical effects. The intention in this speech act is to set the limits of intelligibility, of what such a sound can and should mean, should signify as, by asymmetrically aligning the syllabic utterances as nonsense in a dialectical relation of sense/nonsense. In this way the syllabic utterance, the “*sound* emanating from the mask” (Baker 1987: 22), is historically stripped of any linguistic agency or potency. Historically, such an inscription as ‘nonsensical noise’ has then often been assumed as an essential

characteristic, as Baker has explained, “through a white American discursive universe as the sound of the Negro” (Baker 1987: 22). In this way, asymmetrical constructions of black/white and time/space can be heard as the dialectical relations of lord and bondsman embedded in historical performances of the minstrel mask. Whiteness is reinforced as the sensible, abstracted and superior ideal through the appropriation of “the *sound* emanating from the mask” as one whose meaning is inscribed through “narratives or stories of ignorant and pathetically comic brutes who speak nonsense syllables” (Baker 1987: 22 emphasis in original). Within this historical apparatus of racialised thinking, the dominant construction of whiteness is hierarchically dependent upon the subordinate performance of blackness, a relation which can be heard to play out through the sound of the minstrel mask whose parameters of noise, sense and nonsense have been inscribed by a dominant order intent upon denying any form of self-definition or agency for African-American culture. The mask is an ideal trope for such a dialectical relation in its ability to both expose and hide the meanings contained within its spheres of operation.

The dialectics of the mask that Baker’s theorising sought to expose - which may also be perceived as a critical oscillation in Boyce’s *Good Morning Freedom* print - can be appreciated as pre-cursors to the concepts and processes embedded within what Sterne has analysed as “predictive coding, based on speech models” (Sterne 2012: 113-4). As Sterne has explained, the elements of speech that were to be reproduced through technologies such as the telephone, vocoder and gramophone that “turned out to be too noisy” (Sterne 2012: 113-4), were eliminated from technological sound reproduction through the application of theories of auditory masking, which I expand upon more

throughout this chapter. This reflects one of the historical evaluations of noise as “unwanted sound”, as noise to be silenced, which as Sterne has suggested when considered “at its extreme could be a threat to the social order, often because it was tied to unwanted populations, or to the discomfort of relative elites” (Sterne 2012: 108). In this way the valuation and therefore possible elimination of technological noise can be appreciated as being linked with the definition and control of social noise. Both ideas are based upon technologies of masking that have sought to demarcate the parameters for “whose noise matters, whose immediacy-pressures rule the tendency of the situation - who controls the zoning” (Berlant 2011: 230).

### ***Good Morning Freedom and the Changing Same***

As an alternative strategy, Baker hears a “deep and intensive recoding of form” in the “mnemonic *sounds*, nonsense syllables, so defining of “the Negro” in American life” that he has read as being trans-coded in Charles Waddell Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman*, written in 1899 (Baker 1987: 41 emphasis in original). Baker has called this historical text “a drama of transformation” (Baker 1987: 41) in a way that correlates with Berlant’s assessment of “melodrama after trauma” (Berlant 2011: 152). What Baker has deciphered through *The Conjure Woman* and which he then re-inscribes as the hidden dialect of the mask, may be appreciated as a form of double-speak and triple-speak. Here intended meaning shifts but, importantly remains within a code, at once both hidden and exposed. In this way (non/)meaning circulates within the soundspace of the impasse as a way of articulating Baker’s re-ordering of modernist form as “*ellipsis*, or *trope* or *poetic image*”, as *Dan Mask* (Baker 1987: 16 emphasis in original). Here the oscillation of the minstrel/Dan mask is put into production for the masking/unmasking

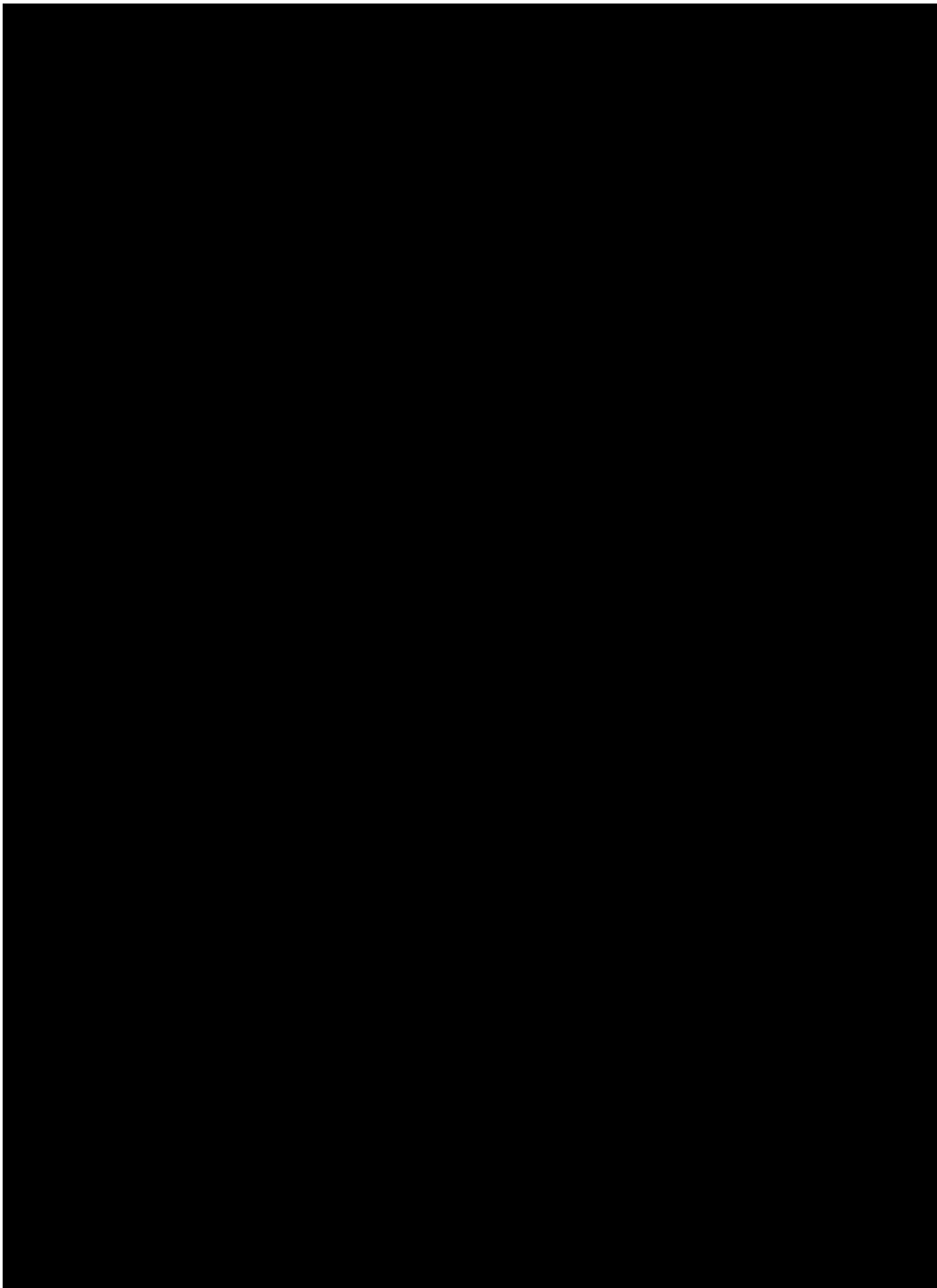


Fig. 5 Sonia Boyce *Good Morning Freedom* installed at Rivington Place 2013

of subordinated knowledges in which the mastery of minstrelsy and its deformation is enacted through the carrying of a coded signal disguised within the noise of subjugated knowledges. It is in this manner that Baker's formal performativity sought to both expose and exceed the dialectical limits of noise and silence through an insistence upon a *radical difference*<sup>29</sup>. Baker has stated,

The *difference* is conjure. For conjure is a power of transformation that causes definitions of "form" as fixed and comprehensible "thing" to dissolve (Baker 1987: 44 emphasis in original).

"*Conjure*" Baker has asserted, "is the transatlantic religion of diasporic and Afro-American masses in the New World" (Baker 1987: 43). What springs to mind are phrases such as 'the conjuror's tricks' - where the conjuror is usually considered to be some kind of magician and often a witch. But as Baker has explained, *conjure* is a descendant of *vodun*, "an African religion in which the priestess holds supreme power, conjure's name in Haiti and the Caribbean is *voodoo*" (Baker 1987: 43-4). Further, in considering a discursive aesthetics of the performance of 'scat' singing, the development and decipherment of its code has been addressed as a "viper language" (Edwards 2002: 627). An example of the use of this strategy, similarly as in the installation *For you, only you* which is addressed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis, this 'viper language' as a mastery of form and deformation of mastery assumes simultaneously a 'phaneric' and 'cryptic' appearance. A phaneric appearance is one that is as assumed to be clearly visible to the naked eye or in this case audible to the 'natural' ear and cryptic is that which is simultaneously hidden. These processes

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29 The term "radical" has a particular history of significance in Boyce's practice, which is explored further in chapter five. My use of the term is also intended as a reclamation from its current usage in the conflation, TERF (Trans-exclusionary Radical Feminism) which, in my opinion, is merely reactionary and misguided rather than suggesting any radicality at all.



oscillate throughout Boyce's *Good Morning Freedom* print, produced specifically for the exhibition of the *Devotional Archive* at Rivington Place.

In Boyce's *Good Morning Freedom* print, the transformation of discourse is evident in the scat singing *A-Bee Baw Baw Ba-Ba Ba-Ba Baw* as these "mnemonic sounds" perform the "deep and intensive recoding" (Baker 1987: 41) that evidences the performance of the mastery of form and the deformation of mastery that travels throughout the *Devotional Archive* and which embody and articulate an historical emancipatory impulse of freedom. The song, *Good Morning Freedom* by Blue Mink, in which both of these lyrics occur, transposes one language/code into another, signifying a coded discourse of history, survival and thriving. This engages Boyce's concern with sound, memory and history where her recoding of 'nonsense' as a very specific form of coded 'sense' undoes the hierarchical reliance of assumptions of sense as an 'original' and 'authentic' meaning inscribed by the Western rationalism of lordship and bondage, of mastery and deformation. These two analyses so far, the wallpaper and the print, lay some of the ground work for deducing the frequency of the *Devotional Archive*. Yet it is the foundational placement of Shirley Bassey as a question of representation in the display of the archive at Rivington Place that may best sound out the specific feminist frequency of this work.

### **3.2 A Question of Representation**

During the 2013 exhibition of the *Devotional Archive*, Shirley Bassey was displayed as the most prominent figure in the archive. Her records were arranged on a wall of their

own, and importantly, were the only recorded music that could be played, accessed by a record player placed in the lounge in which the archive was situated. In effect, Bassey's voice was the *only* voice that could be directly accessed and heard out of all the artists, of which there are over two-hundred in the entire archive. One reading of this aesthetic arrangement by Boyce might consider that Bassey has been pedestaled as a validation of her success, for she represents one of the most enduring and successful black British female performers of all time, whose exceptionality perhaps has transcended boundaries constructed through discourses of racialised sexual difference. A second and more critical reading of this, is one in which Bassey's individual prominence within the archive might be considered as one that has the capacity to silence others. Such a reading could enable the hearing of Bassey's performances as embodying an intention to uncritically assimilate to ideals of whiteness and femininity and thus to assimilate into established hegemonic discourses of domination/subordination as the kind of internalised racism that Frantz Fanon critiqued in "Black Skin, White Masks" (Fanon 1967). These two readings though, of either exceptionalism or assimilation, keep us firmly within the double bind and double consciousness of both racial and sexual difference, which I believe Bassey's placement in the archive is intended specifically to provoke, challenge and transform.

In discussing the process of collaborative development by which the *Devotional Archive* originated, Sonia Boyce, on several occasions, has addressed what she has called an 'embarrassed amnesia',

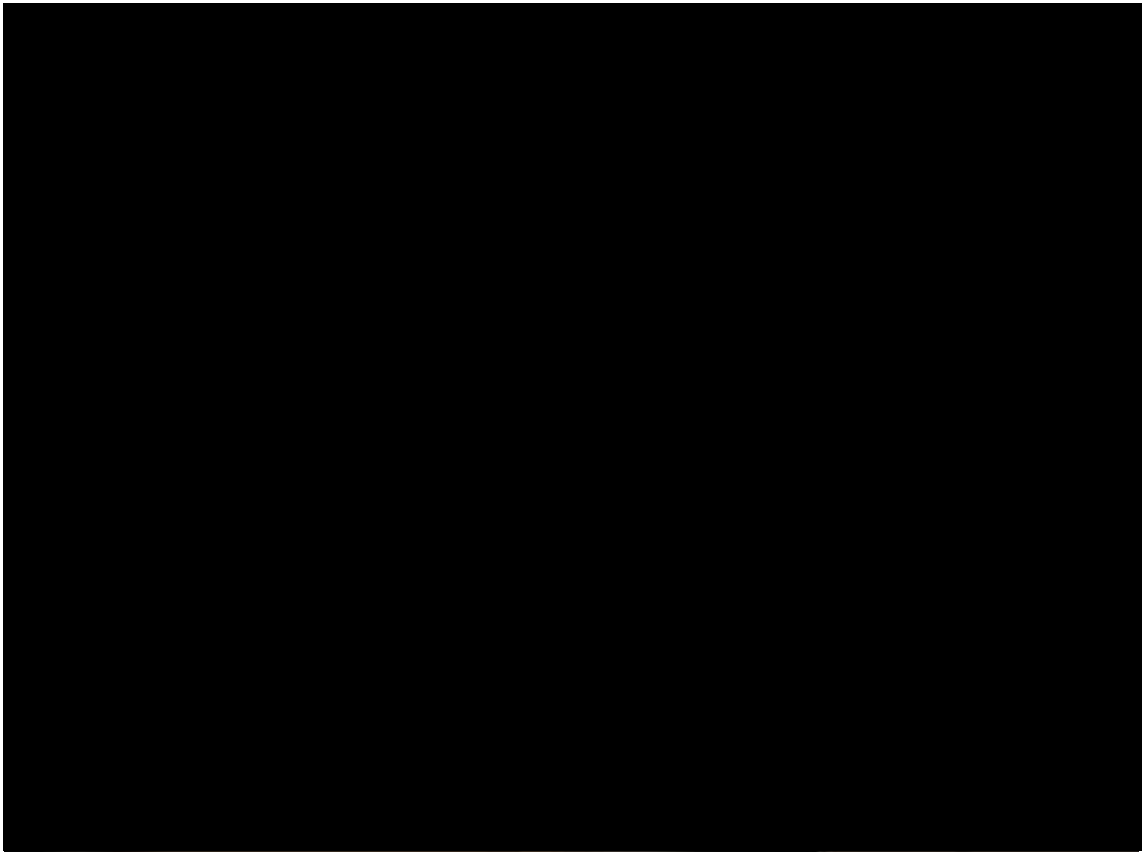


Fig. 6 Sonia Boyce *Shirley Bassey @ Devotional Archive*, in situ at Rivington Place, Iniva 2013

My aim was to get the women to do some research on black British female singers they'd grown up with. However, on asking the women in our very first session to name a singer, it took ten minutes before we could remember anyone. After our protracted silence, we eventually remembered Shirley Bassey, who became the first name to make it onto the list. Embarrassed by our amnesia, the women went off and asked friends, family and colleagues the same question. Thus began *Devotional*, a project that has lasted for over a decade (transcribed Boyce HNS-2012).

I want to suggest that this embarrassed amnesia relates to a field of culture that has not only been erased but that also has been misrepresented and thus rendered historically invisible and inaudible based upon the very visibility, *hypervisibility* and *hyperaudibility* of the cultural producers whose work makes up this archive (Ellison 1952; Fanon 1967; Gilroy 1993; Spillers 2003; Collins 2004; Gordon 2008, 17; Eng 2010; Stein 2012: 134; Hesford 2013: 15). Daniel Stein has discussed 'hyperaudibility'

as similar to ‘hypervisibility’, the latter which has historically been “linked specifically to a double dimension of racial invisibility (being seen only as lacking) and racial hypervisibility (being seen as excessively Other)” (Stein 2012: 134). “Being hypervisible and hyperaudible”, Stein has explained, is an effect of being recognised as “as an artist of color but invisible and inaudible as a black social being” (Stein 2012: 134). Ideas of hyperaudibility then are infused with both an excess and lack of meaning which is not always instantly ‘knowable’, as these meanings often trespass assumed limits of intelligibility. Embarrassment, similarly to guilt and shame, is an affective key that can be used to tune into signals that trespass normative limits of what is assumed as intelligible as an as-yet-not-fully-realised emotional knowledge that has often been experienced as a kind of everyday trauma. This *affective* knowledge is one that, precisely because it often indexes traumatic experience, often remains latent, as something sensed but as yet un-named and often un-namable (Sedgwick 2003).

Subsequently, there are a series of related questions to be asked; why is Bassey’s voice the only voice that can be heard and why has she been separated from the collective of the archive? Is her prominence a critique based upon an idea that she might have uncritically bought into and assimilated with dominant ideals of Britishness<sup>30</sup>, whiteness

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30 A 2005 research study titled “Citizenship and Belonging: What is Britishness” undertaken by the Commission for Racial Equality found that common representations of Britishness were shared by the research participants ranging through beliefs about geography; national symbols, particularly the Union Jack and the royal family; British people, their values and attitudes, including “upholding human rights and freedoms, respect for the rule of law, fairness, tolerance and respect for others, reserve and pride (generally valued by white English participants and criticised by white Scottish and white Welsh participants, as well as those from ethnic minority backgrounds), a strong work ethic, community spirit, mutual help, stoicism and compassion, and drunkenness, hooliganism and yobbishness”; cultural habits and behaviours; citizenship; language; and achievements, particularly “political and historical achievements (the establishment of parliamentary democracy, empire and colonialism); technological and scientific achievements (the industrial revolution, medical discoveries); sporting achievements (the invention of many sports); and ‘pop’ cultural achievements”. Britishness has been “exclusively associated with white English people; and for others still, the British included people of very diverse ethnic origins” (ETHNOS Research Consultancy. 2005: 6-7).

and femininity? Or does her performance subvert dominant stereotypes in which assimilation or exceptionalism would seemingly be the only options? Relatedly, does her individual voice, as the only performance available for our ears, mask the other voices in the collection? Answers to these questions might come not so much from the particular life experiences of Bassey herself which have been sensationally chronicled in numerous biographies and TV dramatisations (such as “Miss Shirley Bassey” by Jon L. Williams and the 2011 BBC TV drama “Shirley”), but rather through Boyce’s application of her as an iconic sign in the archive, as a sign that seemingly has managed to secure a place in the collective memory.

To entangle readings in which assimilation or exceptionalism would seemingly be the only choices, I want to explore Bassey’s placement within the archive as a *question of representation* explored through parameters not of subjective listening, but rather through a politicisation of auditory perception that is engaged in a “shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *process of subjectification* made possible through stereotypical discourse” (Bhabha 1994: 67 emphasis in original). For as Bhabha has articulated, “what does need to be questioned, however, is the *mode of representation of otherness*” particularly so that we might perceive some of the ways in which subject-identity is formed through specific processes of differentiation (Bhabha 1994: 68 emphasis in original).

An analogous way of thinking about the “classic question of representation” can be considered through histories of listening tests in acoustic and psychoacoustic discourses. Sterne has traced the “conditions under which truth-effects can be generated through

listening tests” as they were conducted and compiled to produce the MPEG codec (Sterne 2012: 149). “The classic questions of representation in liberal political theory” writes Sterne, “who speaks for whom to what end, and under what circumstances? - find their sonic counterparts in listening tests” (Sterne 2012: 148). Questions about who seeks to speak for whom, Sterne has asserted, map analogously into questions of “who listens for whom, to what end and under what circumstances” (Sterne 2012: 148). The ways in which these questions have been addressed, tested and answered within psychoacoustic discourses and the perceptual coding by which the MP3 codec was produced, have sought to establish a cross-platform standardisation of listening. This provides one way of thinking about Bassey’s placement in the construction and exhibition of the *Devotional Archive* as a “question of representation”, similarly to Sterne and whereby following Berlant (Berlant 2012: 230), this may provide some means for measuring “who listens for whom, to what end and under what circumstances” (Sterne 2012: 148). Listening to Boyce’s placement of Bassey as a question of representation is intended, similarly to the processes within the listening tests that Sterne has addressed, so as to “explore how particular ways of listening and assumptions about subjects and aesthetics get written into a format” (Sterne 20102: 149). Ideas of standardisation and formatting within sound reproduction histories, as I will expand upon, correlate quite directly with ideas about stereotypes of people and populations within a politics of representation.

Because there has been little interest shown among psychological researchers into these kinds of differences, we know very little about how race, ethnicity, nationality, and class mediate hearing... As it moves to studies of speech, music and aesthetics - all fundamentally cultural materials - hearing research will need to develop better models for how to account for culture and difference in its tests (Sterne 2012: 169).

Sterne's point here echoes Berlant's question about whose noise matters (Berlant 2012: 230). For as Sterne has pointed out, the audio thresholds written into the format of the MP3 not only "provided a political threshold through which all contending coders had to pass, and thereby set the terms through which technics and aesthetics might be negotiated through one another" but were also centred around "the two magnetic poles of universalism and particularism" (Sterne 2012: 149) which quite directly correlates with debates about assimilation and exceptionalism within discourses of racial and sexual difference.

Boyce's prominent placement of Bassey in the *Devotional Archive* can be considered in a similar manner, as performing a socio-technical political threshold through which to measure the "question of representation" (Sterne 2012: 149). This is intended to enable the questioning of which techniques of the self, of self-governing and of governing others "get written into a format" (Sterne 2012: 149) or standard, convention, norm or stereotype. In this sense, Boyce's placement of Bassey can be considered as engaging measuring as "a form of technological performance" within the *Devotional Archive* itself which may in turn be considered as "an elaborate kind of staging and theatre" (Sterne 2012: 150), where Bassey, similarly to the *Devotional Wallpaper* and *Good Morning Freedom* print, can be considered as a sounding out of the assumed limits of audible intelligibility. Listening to sound and noise in this way, through masking technologies of both audio engineering and social organisation, it is hoped, might enable a consideration of how such concepts come "to be implicated in the construction of the self as an aesthetic agent" (De Nora 2000: 46).

## **Auditory and Political Thresholds**

In an effort to address these questions, I want to further consider Bassey's prominence in the archive through theories of auditory masking. It is my hypothesis that the historically shifting parameters of auditory masking may be considered as correlating with Baraka's concept of the *changing same* (Baraka 2010). Absolute thresholds, as I will explain, may be considered through a paradoxical play of the *mastery of form* and masked thresholds through the *deformation of mastery*. The connection and explication of these ideas is intended to uncover some of the unacknowledged connections between ideas embedded within representations of socio-political differences and the ways in which these representations may be perceived to manifest in the historical development of vocoded speech synthesis. The explication of these connections is intended to measure 'who it is that seeks to speak for whom'. Further, this line of conceptual mapping of a possible *devotional performance* that connects socio-political (dis)organisation with audio technologies is produced by the specificity of a legacy of a *culture of dissemblance*, which has historically been lived as *a politics of silence*, both of which I shall return to.

Theories of auditory masking, "a phenomenon where one set of frequencies hides another from the ear" (where historically sounds implicitly embedded with ideals about white supremacy have sought to erase or mask - therefore implicitly attenuating - sounds embedded with ideals of subordinated blackness such as Baker's analysis of the dialect of the minstrel mask sought to expose) point toward what are commonly assumed to be the limits, or thresholds, of audibility. A focus upon the shifting definitions of noise levels and speech frequencies throughout the historical development



of auditory masking technologies though may enable a means by which to measure *affective* rather than systemic listening within a politics of audition (Sterne 2012: 94). In other words, considering Bassey's placement in the *Devotional Archive* through masking technologies enables an examination of the operational forces in the control and production of normative *sense and nonsense* as signal, silence and noise which through daily repetition have become accepted as *common sense*. The everyday reproduction of listening organised through these technologies, often assumed as supposedly 'natural' auditory 'truth-effects' or unacknowledged habits of noise and silence, sense and nonsense, have been established through assumptions about the limits of auditory perception as those that would seek to dictate what counts as a signal to be listened to and what counts as noise to be discarded. As Sterne has pointed out through histories in which noise has been commodified and domesticated, noise within acoustic research into masking phenomena has at various stages been either eliminated, rendered useful or considered as irrelevant (Sterne 2012: 94). Of relevance for this analysis, Sterne has pointed out that through the thinking of computers "imagined as sound-reproduction technologies in their own right" ideas of "perceptual coding" embedded within auditory masking phenomena "could be imagined as a natively digital process" (Sterne 2010: 95), as paradoxically occurring *naturally* through technological processes abstracted from a social realm. This would seem to suggest that technology, as much as listening, has its own timeless nature. But, Bassey's iconic placement in the display of the *Devotional Archive*, considered analogously as a kind of "sound-reproduction technology", can be perceived to materialise these ideas in ways that demonstrates that they are not 'native' to either analogue or digital technologies, but rather spring forth from already established and hierarchical processes of social organisation. As such,

these technologies may be perceived as embodying representational processes that seek to materialise and discipline difference within the auditory domain in a way that then regulates processes of perceptual normalisation. The question is, what “social practices”<sup>31</sup> (Hall 1992: 117) might these processes be perceived as eventuating from and in turn as reproducing?

### **Absolute Thresholds**

To answer this question I will consider Bassey’s placement in the archive through three different processes; as an iconic sign; as a negotiated code; and as a ‘detotalised/retotalised message’ that emerges through an “alternative framework of reference” (Hall 1992: 125-7). Firstly, considering Bassey as an iconic sign is combined with auditory theories of absolute thresholds so as to provide a way in which to decipher how certain ideas about race and sexuality have solidified into an idea of Bassey as a particular kind of “communicative event” (Hall 1992: 118). One ‘story’ of Bassey as an icon, as a “communicative event” can be told through discourses of racialised sexual difference, through theories of absolute thresholds in auditory masking technologies and the intersections that result between auditory perception and assumed ideas of embodied difference. Following Stuart Hall’s deconstructions in *Encoding/decoding* (1992), the first telling in this ‘story’ is narrated through a “dominant-hegemonic position” (Hall 1992: 125) which I want to suggest may be perceived as the dominant discourse within historical constructions of ideas about auditory ‘absolute thresholds’ (Sterne 2012: 105). Within a history of auditory masking

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31 As Hall has explained, “it is in the discursive form that the circulation of the product takes place, as well as its distribution to different audiences. Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated - transformed, again - into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective” (Hall 1992: 117).

technologies an absolute threshold has been defined as “the point at which a sound becomes audible or inaudible” (Sterne 2012: 105), as one means for defining the limits of human hearing - what simply can and cannot be heard. In this ideal auditory scenario either a sound can be heard or not and one sound, such as Bassey in the *Devotional Archive* may be perceived as completely masking all other sounds, in this case the music of the other artists in the archive.

The listener in this ‘test’ scenario may be understood to be “operating within the dominant code” as an “ideal-typical case of ‘perfectly transparent communication’” (Hall 1992: 126) which in the audio domain Sterne has explained through the concept of “perfect fidelity” (Sterne 2003: 218). For Sterne, an assumed ontology of mediation exists in sound recording and the possibility of its reproducibility that holds that a loss of being occurs between what has commonly become to be understood as *live* sound and its copying onto recording media. In essence, a live sound is considered to be more *real* than its copy, to have more immediate presence. Sound reproduction is normatively deemed to be of a higher quality when the mediation that apparently takes place is most transparent, when there is no apparent loss, when there is *perfect fidelity* between the “original” sound and its “copy” (Sterne 2003: 218). For an ontology of mediation in sound requires that a *live*, original, untouched, ‘natural’ sound exists as an authentic expression of *being* and that it is through the technological mediation of recording that the original, hi-fi, pure communication and self-presence of that live sound loses its absolute essence. It signals a “loss of being” (Sterne 2003: 218) or loss of *fidelity*, becoming a simulacra of the original and therefore not as valuable as the *real* thing. But rather than essentialising mediation through an ontology of being or a metaphysics of

presence, Sterne has suggested that the idea of mediation - read representation - may be better addressed as a specifically historical and cultural problem (Sterne 2003: 218).

In a manner that pre-dates Sterne's concerns of representational politics implicitly embedded within the MP3 codec, Stuart Hall has discussed the idea of mediation as a transmission between sender and receiver in which the message that is sent within a dominant-code should, ideally, be faithfully received without any loss of intended meaning occurring during the process of transmission. What this points to are ideas embodied within what constitutes a live sound and a 'true' or authentic message. Transposed into the register of the *Devotional Archive*, in this scenario Bassey's musical performance should be heard to embody some idea of a 'natural truth' as a "transparent representation of the 'real'" (Hall 1992: 121), as an expression of her 'essential' identity. What is assumed to be 'real' within this transmission that operates "inside the dominant code" when thought through discourses of racial and sexual difference are 'authentic' ideals of black and white, male and female, masculine and feminine and certainly not their intermixture. In other words, the message transmitted within the code of the dominant-hegemonic discourse is the stereotype of a racially and sexually coherent body which within supremacist, heterosexist and colonial discourses is the sound of Bassey as an exotic sex symbol, one that marks the "presence of illicit sexual activity" (Gilman 1985: 209) as a form of always available and essentially commodifiable sexuality and musicality (Sterne 2012: 149, 97; Hall 1992: 118; Bhabha 1994: 66).

Patricia Hill Collins has traced an assumed lineage from Sarah Baartman as the 'Hottentot Venus' through to Beyoncé Knowles in which the stereotype of black female sexuality is one of a racially sexualised hypervisibility, which I mentioned earlier<sup>32</sup> (Hill Collins 2004: 25-30). As the excessive Other, 'deviant' and 'overt' black female sexuality is produced in conjunction with and in necessary contrast to 'wholesome' and 'pure' ideals of white female sexuality. As Sander Gilman has explained, the "sexuality of the black, both male and female, becomes an *icon* for deviant sexuality in general" (Gilman 1985: 209 emphasis added). Such an iconic representation of deviancy is one that is simultaneously intended to implicitly "indicate the covert sexuality of the white woman" and to clearly mark an essential difference from white Western masculine heterosexuality, what Gilman has sardonically called "the white man's burden"<sup>33</sup> (Gilman 1985: 237). In a performative oscillation of noise, silence and signal as analogous to ideas about absolute thresholds of what simply can and cannot be heard, the historical body of black female sexuality here is used as the noise that is disciplined to carry each of these signals. Sonic constructions of black female sexuality within this dominant-hegemonic relay of meaning then sound alternately as noise, silence and signal, where either noise (i.e., ideas about racial impurity, miscegenation and assimilation) silences and masks the signal (i.e., ideals of racial purity and exceptionalism) or the signal masks the noise as a correlate of absolute ideals of either exceptionalism or assimilation as the only possible identifications and audible 'truths'.

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32 'Hottentot' was a derogatory name, in imitation of the sound of the Khoekhoe language, given to the Khoi people of Southwestern Africa by Dutch settlers in the 1600s. Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman, (1789-1815) was a Khoikhoi woman who was "sold" and "exhibited" in nineteenth century Europe as the "Hottentot Venus", whose assumed physical "difference", as Collins has explained, was one of the primary sites upon which were inscribed racist ideas about "Black female sexuality that became central to the construction of White racism itself" (Collins 2004: 129).

33 The "white man's burden", Gilman has explained "thus becomes his sexuality and its control, and it is this which is transferred into the need to control the sexuality of the Other, the Other as sexualized female" (Gilman 1985: 237).

Any sonic portrayal then that does not meet these ideals within such a hegemonic discourse, as absolute thresholds of wanton availability, coveted sexuality or sexual mastery assumed to be essential racial and sexual characteristics falls outside dominantly constructed limits of intelligibility and thus audible perception. What exceeds the intended signal in this sender/receiver relay then is deemed as noise to be eliminated, erased from memory and history within this “first hypothetical position” as “that of the dominant-hegemonic position” (Hall 1992: 125). Each of the positions within this dominant discourse, deviant sexuality, covert sexuality and “the white man’s burden” (Gilman 1985: 209, 237) are assumed as absolute thresholds of social organisation that can be appreciated as mapping to ideals implicitly embedded in absolute thresholds of hearing drawn along lines of assumed racial and sexual difference. These signals are the only audibly intelligible possibilities within this socio-auditory system. Transposed into communication theory this would mean that only one signal or message is audibly transmitted and the same message received. Listening in this instance could be perceived of as a ‘*stereotypical listening response*’, one that would maintain a direct connection between sender/receiver within the dominant-hegemonic code in which the message sent is intended to be the same as the message received. In this way it is possible to understand how racist and sexist constructions of absolute difference are implicated in the concept of the absolute threshold. Theories of racial and sexual difference within historically dominant discourses may be perceived as absolute thresholds that would seek to hierarchically delegate bodies that do not conform to these norms as noise within a system to be eliminated.

As a socio-political correlate of auditory absolute thresholds, noise in this instance is the aspect of communication that requires elimination. Noise in this instance may be perceived of as the remaining artists who make up this archive - who have literally been silenced. The sounds of the artists in the archive who apparently do not live up to the ideal, the norms, conventions and conditions that need to be met for recognition and legitimisation within this hegemonic discursive regime of intelligibility simply cannot be heard. They have been absolutely masked by Bassey, who is assumed, within this particular narration, to represent the ideal, the *iconic* manifestation of black, British, female sexuality. Noise in this context meets a social definition as “unwanted sound” - Avril Coleridge Taylor, Janet Kaye and Terri Walker for example, each of whom are represented in the archive, but none of whom can be heard, have all been silenced through Boyce’s politically dominant placement of Bassey who alone remains audibly accessible. This, I suggest, is an intentional and specifically strategic arrangement intended as a pedagogical moment to highlight the ways in which such dominant discursive structures - that often remain hidden or implicit - can be perceived to shape listening perception.

### **Naturalised Codes**

The question arises of how it is that we often do not question what it is that we hear, how these codes come to seem so ‘natural’ that we don’t even register hearing them. We come to hear the stereotype as an embodiment of reality, Hall has suggested, through a discursive collapse between “naturalism and ‘realism’” as “the apparent fidelity of the representation to the thing or concept represented” which is the result of a discursive practice (Hall 1992: 121). ‘Real’ in this instance gains recognition and legitimacy as a

mode of social organisation predicated upon assumptions about “the basis of a natural order” whereby listening should conform with and confirm dominant race and gender norms that seek to “*discipline* us into the supposedly naturally sexed [and raced] bodies we are born with” (James 2014: 142 emphasis added). These codes come to seem so natural, as Butler has explained, through “a constant repetition of their logic” (Butler 1990: 40) that causes these logics, as Hall has stated, to “appear not to be constructed - the effect of an articulation between sign and referent - but to be ‘naturally’ given” (Hall 1992: 121). This points toward a kind of socio-audio threshold in the performance of race, racism and nationality and of sex, sexism and sexuality and their intersection. The absolute threshold then is an ideal construct of an abstracted idea that is expressed by a hegemonic viewpoint as one that seeks to categorically define terms as universals and that attempts to encode these meanings as fixed, natural and inevitable (Hall 1992: 126-7).

### **Masked Thresholds**

Whilst theories of absolute thresholds sought the “elimination of noise” in favour of a universally identifiable signal in a “general theory of communication” (Sterne 2012: 108), the shifting status of noise within psychoacoustics and masked auditory thresholds sought to put noise to use, to render it useful. Whilst Sterne has traced the discrepancy between stimulus and sensation in psychoacoustic listening tests as analogous to psychoanalytical theories of the subjectivity of hearing, the question of why “listeners’ perceptions of noise do not neatly correlate to the intensity of a signal” (Sterne 2012: 108) may be further deduced through an analysis of perception as a product of socio-cultural differences rather than as a product of physiology or, necessarily, psychology.



An alternative interpretation of the “communicative event” within the *Devotional Archive* may be read through a particular performativity of the masked threshold as one that operates within what Hall has identified as a “negotiated code or position” (Hall 1992: 126). This is a position in which dominant norms and conventions can be assumed to have been adequately transmitted yet not fully accepted. As Hall has stated, “negotiated codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained by their differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power” - of class, race, gender etc (Hall 1992: 127). These ‘situated logics’ or norms are ones in which, in this instance, the historical category of black female sexuality is made to represent a willing assimilation (submission) into dominant ideals of whiteness through the historical force of racialised sexual violence (Hartman 1997, 2008; Hine 1989). Whilst historically these codes have been predominantly forced upon the bodies of the category of black women through legacies of slavery, segregation and displacement, the ongoing negotiation of these codes in the historical present may be heard as a latent memory of these violences and ongoing everyday experiences of racism, signalled by the protracted silence of delayed memory in the initial construction of the *Devotional Archive* that Boyce has cited and which I quoted from earlier.

### **Negotiated Code**

An example of Hall’s concept of the negotiated position as understood through masking technologies drawn from the *Devotional Archive* is the ‘story’ of singer and songwriter Terri Walker and her second album L.O.V.E. released in 2005 through Mercury Records. Walker’s ‘story’ can be read through a shift that occurred in masking technologies in which sound-reproduction technologies such as tone generators and

phone equipment are ‘tuned’ “to the environments in which they are heard” (Sterne 2012: 99). The sound-reproduction technology, as a ‘technology of governing self/other’ in this instance may be considered *as* the relationship between Walker and Mercury Records. Walker’s performance is ‘tuned’ by her recording company so as to be ‘heard’ in the environment of British pop music in 2005. She is tuned so as to be heard by a ‘British public’ based upon the assumptions of her record company for how a British public should ideally sound and be heard, through the norms and conventions of colonial, heterosexist, capitalist discourse. Her audibility is judged upon racialised and sexualised characteristics that are ‘re-tuned’ to perform what has been assumed as providing the highest financial return within the economic landscape of British pop. Masking in this instance “prioritises a particular concept of hearing” as a process that is “situated and temporal” and that “spatialises hearing” (Sterne 2012: 99). In this process of the masked threshold, “hearing changes depending on where it happens and in relation to sounds out in the world” (Sterne 2012: 99).

Instead of considering noise as a problem that masked other wanted sounds, engineers began to imagine they could move noise underneath more desirable kinds of sounds. Noise could be masked and put in its place; it did not have to be eliminated (Sterne 2012: 94-5).

Within a masked threshold noise can be “rendered useful” rather than eliminated and thus manipulated to attenuate and mitigate certain desired and undesired frequencies. Instead of eliminating noise, ambient or background noise is put to work. For instance, Walker is made to straighten her hair to sell records - the noise of inferior blackness here is not eliminated or silenced but is put to use to carry another message, that of superior whiteness. Walker submits to this, “doing the whole weave thing”, but for her

it is an artifice, a negotiation, not a lived reality (Walker [online<sup>34</sup>]). Whilst absolute thresholds seek to represent absolutes of sameness and universality, masked thresholds, mapped and interpreted through curves and lines (kinks and weaves), seek to produce differences and particularities so that they may be regulated in a way that still enables the ‘right’ message to be transmitted (Sterne 2012: 106).

This presents a socio-auditory example of Hall’s concept of a “negotiated code” where Walker’s performance must negotiate between demands to identify as black, as British and as female (Hall 1992: 126). The negotiated code may be deciphered in this instance in that it is the norm which governs the response of the artist - Walker - to the idea put forward by her management company - Mercury - to “do the whole weave thing because that’s what the label thought would sell” (Walker [online<sup>35</sup>]). In this way, Walker is coerced to conform to the ideals of the market, what Hall has called “corporate positions” (Hall 1992: 127) which are formed through and which seek to preserve ideals of clearly defined and hierarchically deployed constructions of dominant whiteness and subordinated blackness that can be heard as a particularly standardised and normalised sound.

Similarly to the ways in which listeners in the MPEG codec listening tests were required to “calibrate their internal rating scale” to the “reproduction system and measurement apparatus” used in the test scenario, Walker can be appreciated as being required to calibrate her performance - both sonically and visually - to the

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34 <http://www.catchavibe.co.uk/terri-walker-if-this-is-the-last-album-i-want-it-to-be-one-i-can-feel-proud-of> [accessed June 2013]

35 *ibid*

“reproduction system and measurement apparatus” (Sterne 2012: 162) of neo-colonial and neoliberal market economics - in other words, the British hit parade. In this sense, from the perspective of Mercury in the dominant position, the outcome of Walker’s performance should be pre-determined - money should be made and British values should be upheld<sup>36</sup>. Walker needed to be ‘calibrated’, racially ‘de/re-tuned’ and ‘feminised’, before being ‘used’ to reproduce a transmission of difference as sameness, of ‘business as usual’. As Sterne has explained, “in the testing scenario a series of political modulations occur: subjects become acclimatised both to the peculiar scenario and to the peculiarities of the technology” (Sterne 2012: 163).

Hall’s ‘negotiated code’ here though enables an exposé of Walker’s unwillingness to fully accept the dominant code, whilst yet still having to adapt or assimilate her performance to the parameters outlined by Mercury as a kind of “aesthetic acclimatisation” at the same time (Sterne 2012: 166). What happens between Walker and Mercury is a case of cultural differences being tacitly acknowledged by the ‘establishment’ but specifically by being simultaneously negated (Sterne 2012: 168). Yet this performance may have little or no relation to Walker’s actual willingness to ‘adapt’ (assimilate) or oppose (exceptionalise) and the fact that Walker’s second album didn’t sell, which resulted in her being dropped by the label, demonstrates the double bind - damned if you do and damned if you don’t - embedded within dominant discourses of power/knowledge. This discrepancy between what Walker desired and what her record company demanded signals what Hall has identified as a “so-called

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36 For general consensus of what constitutes British values see ETHNOS Research Consultancy. 2005. *Citizenship and Belonging: What Is Britishness?* Research study. London: Commission for Racial Equality. [www.ethnos.co.uk](http://www.ethnos.co.uk).

misunderstanding” that arises from “the contradictions and disjunctures between hegemonic-dominant encodings and negotiated-corporate decodings” (Hall 1992: 127). These ‘mismatches’ read through a discourse of neoliberal economics “most provoke defining elites and professionals to identify a ‘failure in communications’” (Hall 1992: 127) rather than what queer political theorist Sharon Winnubst has considered as a “failure to admit the structural deleterious effects of neoliberal practices, principles and cultures as specifically ethical” (Winnubst 2012: 80).

### **Thresholds of Violence**

A work through of the position of the negotiated code requires an awareness of the dominant-hegemonic code whose message within discourses of colonialism and heterosexism is one of commodifiable sexuality by which the historical construction of black female sexuality has been coded as excessive noise to be either eliminated, appropriated or tamed and put to work. This message though, passing through a negotiated code of historical black female resistance, has been deconstructed *as a noise to be masked* by a politics of self-imposed silence. As a masked threshold, a strategy of silence as resistance sought to re-appropriate the classification of ‘excessive sexuality as noise’ so as to then decode the dominant signal through an alternative political performance. The historical feminist frequency of this work may be fine tuned through what Darlene Clark Hine, as a leading historian of African American experience and black feminist author Evelyn M. Hammonds have each addressed specifically as a ‘culture of dissemblance’ (Hine 1989; Hammonds 1997). This is a historical political strategy which references the “behaviour and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives

and selves from their oppressors” as deployed most prominently in the United States in the era dominated by the “separate but equal” laws of Jim Crow segregation (Hine 1989: 912; Hammonds 1997). A culture of dissemblance as a socio-political strategy developed predominantly through the political organising of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACW) founded in 1896 in the United States. As a specifically historical political strategy, a culture of dissemblance was established and deployed by African American women throughout America with the intention of “creating positive images of Black women’s sexuality” to counter the proliferation of violently negative stereotypes where “many Black women felt compelled to downplay, even deny, sexual expression” (Hine 1989: 918).

In response to the “ever increasing “scientific” evidence that the black female embodied the notion of “uncontrolled sexuality” that has been in circulation since at least the mid-seventeenth century and which has been represented within musical histories as an excess that has proceeded from the figure of Sarah Baartman as the Hottentot Venus through to J-Lo and Beyoncé Knowles among others (Collins 2004: 25-7), Hammonds has written that a "culture of dissemblance" and "politics of silence" became the dominant strategies for many black women to counteract these negative constructions in the post antebellum states of America (Hammonds 1997: 172, 174-5). African American women during this period and through the founding of the NACW “organised themselves politically” to “retrieve and reconstruct a notion of womanhood” that sought to promote “a public silence about sexuality” (Hammonds 1997: 174-5). In this process of counter-social organisation, silence, as a self-imposed inaudibility, was assumed in an effort to mask the noise of a subordinating culture and to carry an alternatively

encoded message of “racial uplift” (Blackmer 1993: 232). This concealment of the self in an era typified by Victorian moralism affected a “self-imposed invisibility” as a specific political performance intended to destabilise subordinating discourses by projecting an image of the “super moral” black woman by which it was hoped to “garner greater respect, justice and opportunity for all black Americans” (Hammonds 1997: 174-5). It is important to point out here that invisibility in this instance was performed as an act of defiance against subordinating norms and to make clear that “a ‘quest for invisibility’ and being assigned insignificance” are definitely “two different realities” (Milian Arias 2002: 356).

Yet one of the problems within this strategy that Hine has addressed is that a politics of self-imposed “secrecy or invisibility” remains within the structures of the dominant discourse and thus the possibility that “stereotypes, negative images, and debilitating assumptions” may remain in the spaces “left empty due to inadequate and erroneous information about the true contributions, capabilities, and identities of Black women” (Hine 1989: 915). For whilst “black women, especially those of the middle class, reconstructed and represented their sexuality through its absence - through silence, secrecy, and invisibility” (Higginbotham 1992: 266), as both Hammonds and sociologist Elizabeth Higginbotham have noted, this strategy “did not achieve its goal of ending the negative stereotyping of black women” (Hammonds 1997: 175) whilst it also conversely grouped all black women into another homogenous category that erased differences of colour and that antagonised unacknowledged differences between middle-class and poor and working-class women. Importantly, as Hammonds has explained, “the most enduring and problematic aspect of this “politics of silence” is that

in choosing silence, black women have also lost the ability to articulate any conception of their sexuality” (Hammonds 1997: 175). Additionally I would add, this doesn’t point out the ways in which discourses of racial and sexual difference and related notions of authenticity and the ‘real’ may be the very processes by which lived experiences of race and sexuality that ascribe either silence or noise, either assimilation or separatism are produced and maintained.

A culture of dissemblance may be further elucidated through the notion of a crafting of the “veil of secrecy” which Corrine E. Blackmer has similarly addressed in her analysis of the intertextuality between Nella Larsen’s and Gertrude Stein’s literary fictions as one that “alludes to “the Veil” (Blackmer 1993: 235). The ‘Veil’ is the central metaphor in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) which Blackmer understood through her reading of Larsen and Stein as the “Veil of racial and sexual self-division” (Blackmer 1993: 235) as one that both covers and exposes the sexualised and racialised bodies that have been violently disciplined by legacies of slavery and segregation. A culture of dissemblance considered as a particular performance of the crafting of the veil of secrecy - itself a process of masking and passing - then means that these historical women assumed the self-silencing that the imposition of the colour line imposed upon them in an effort to frustrate and delegitimate subordinating discourse and to disseminate subjugated knowledges through coded forms. Such self-silencing can be perceived as an historical strategy that sought to measure and subvert the assumed limits of noise and silence - as thresholds of audible intelligibility - that indexed socio-cultural constructions of sexuality through exposing and attempting to shift the boundaries of racialised sexuality as representation. This was achieved through



a re-appropriation of Victorian moralism that on one hand sounded supposedly negative images of black female sexuality as ‘noise’ and on the other sounded supposedly positive images of white female sexuality ideally as ‘silence’.

### **Politics of Silence**

Hammonds has extended Hine’s analysis of a culture of dissemblance more thoroughly through a politics of silence in which the erasure of black female sexuality is “often described in metaphors of speechlessness, space, or vision; as a "void" or empty space that is simultaneously ever-visible (exposed) and invisible, where black women's bodies are always already colonised” (Hammonds 1997: 171). So there are two metaphors embodied in this historical strategy of a politics of silence, the veil as mentioned above, and the void, both of which are “simultaneously ever-visible (exposed) and invisible” (Hammonds 1997: 171) and simultaneously ever audible and inaudible.

Practiced as a politics of silence, this political strategy emerged through the organisation of “black women reformers who hoped by their silence and by the promotion of proper Victorian morality to demonstrate the lie of the image of the sexually immoral black woman” (Hammonds 1997: 175). What this engages is the metaphysics of absence/presence that has provided an ongoing concern in Boyce’s work. Yet this discourse, as already mentioned, is still caught within the metaphysical trap that Victorian moralism exemplifies where the downplaying and denial of sexual expression is re-appropriated by a dominant discourse that sets the limits of and controls for women’s sexuality in a way in which patriarchy would seem inevitably to be “psychoanalytically rather than biologically—a woman’s necessary and irreversible

destiny” (Hall 1992: 152). The strategy as a reverse discourse remains within the dialectical system where power produces resistance and resistance reproduces power. With the ‘luxury’ of hindsight, we are able to recognise that an aim to replace negative stereotypes with positive images does little to disable the ongoing appropriation and commodification of the ‘body’, re-shaped again into a new kind of product under the regime of an old, yet enduring kind of violence. Both Blackmer and Hine have addressed this historical instance of the ‘double-bind’ and ‘double-consciousness’ as being caught between on the one hand the demand to represent the advancement of the race and the elevation of black womanhood and on the other the negation and self-sacrifice of one’s sexuality where such sacrifice enables respect and recognition within a community as the binary signposts of universalism and particularism. As Sterne has explained, “the two magnetic listening poles of universalism and particularism orient debates around the listening tests, the interpretation of psychoacoustic data, and how we think about the composite listening subject written into the MP3 - or the ideal audience of any sonic technology” (Sterne 2012: 149) which can be perceived as a dialectic that has also been played out upon the historical colonisation of the body of “black womanhood” (Hine 1989: 919; Blackmer 1993).

How then, might a redeployment of this strategy in the historical present of the *Devotional Archive* measure the noise of the political in the contemporary moment? What might it mean to take an historical strategy that has embodied an element of failure and to redeploy it in the historical present? What kind of temporal crossings might this “collision between bodies past and present, but this time in spaces ghosted by bygone political moments” perform or produce (Freeman 2010: 59)? In revisiting this

strategy in the historical present, the politics of silence within a culture of dissemblance stands as a fore-runner of the noisy affectivity of performative silence in a way that pre-dates the institutionalisation of John Cage's *Silence* (1961) and that further addresses and questions the historical limits of "the function of silence as a privileged aesthetic category in electronic music discourses" (Rodgers 2010a: 10). Rodgers, writing about the legacy of Cage's *4'33"* has acknowledged that "this piece troubled notions of absolute silence and arguably helped to open Western music to a wider range of sounds", but and importantly she has noted, the institutionalisation of Cage as representative "of "experimental" music in the broadest sense" has "worked to deny the influence of comparatively innovative music practices by women and people of color" (Rodgers 2010a: 10). The canonisation of Cage and his work "has often had the effect of silencing others" (Rodgers 2010a: 10), as I suggest, a specifically *ahistorical* kind of silence. Subsequently, Cage's silence has become a litmus test of noise and silence in experimental musics and sound arts, but the ways in which his theories and practices may have actually aided socio-musical normalisation within an episteme of liberalism rather than merely expanding the palette of possible sounds have not as yet been fully explored (James 2014: 142). As Hazel V. Carby, Angela Y. Davis and Houston Baker Jr. in particular have all noted, early blues singers such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith among other notable men and women, similarly enacted a performative displacement of hegemonic norms through the paradox of their music and thus offer an alternative history through which to measure the audible limits of what has come to stand as an absolute threshold (Baker 1987; Carby 1999; Davis 1999).

### 3.3 *Devotional Archive* as Threshold of Modernity

The *Devotional Archive* listened to through the rubrics outlined in this chapter can be appreciated as a technological performance of limits, not only of auditory thresholds and limits of audible intelligibility, but more intimately of “what can never be recovered” (Dillon 2012: 120). As a masked threshold *Devotional* can be considered as measuring the conditions by which the subject within this archive may be audible or inaudible in the presence of other sounds, within a wider culture. As an absolute threshold the *Devotional* subject can be heard to point out the limits of audibility established through dominant-hegemonic discourses, colonialism, heterosexism, patriarchy and liberalism to make audible the ever present limits of racism and sexism.

Yet a more radical reading of Boyce’s silencing of the general population of the *Devotional Archive* is one in which the archive “functions as a type of prison<sup>37</sup>” (Dillon 2012: 118). In this reading, the redeployment of historical political strategies such as a politics of silence conjures the spirit of slavery and its ongoing claims upon our historical present. The enigma of Bassey is summoned through the archive as a spirit of memory and imagination “in order to recall histories of “fierce determination” and struggle” as a specific recourse to the “legacies of slavery’s regimes” of “epistemological, corporeal and psychological violence” whose ongoing legacy is “the absence of memory” (Dillon 2012: 121). As political queer theorist Stephen Dillon has

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37 Addressing the intensification of the Prison Industrial Complex in America, Ladelle McWhorter has noted “the vast expansion of the carceral system in the US since the 1970s...As Bernard Harcourt and many others have noted, the number of Americans incarcerated in 1970 was about 200,000, but by 2001 the number was close to 2 million, an increase much greater than the increase in the US population. Michelle Alexander puts the number by 2008 at 2.3 million, with another 5.1 million in “community correctional supervision,” either probation or parole. If we assume that incarceration, probation, and parole are essentially disciplinary mechanisms, then disciplinary normalisation would surely be expanding rather than contracting” (McWhorter 2012: 69-70).

explained, “many black feminists have used the fictions of memory and the memories buried in fiction in order to compose an archive of what can never be recovered” (Dillon 2012: 112). This presents an absolute threshold of memory and forgetting that perhaps, as the word ‘devotion’ seems to suggest, should not be transgressed by noise. For as Dillon has explained “slavery lives on in what we can see and feel, but also in what feels like nothing, in the absence left by the millions who lie at the bottom of the ocean or under rows of cotton and rice” (Dillon 2012: 112). Political absence here is felt within the silence of the archive that, as Paul Gilroy writing about what he has called the “slave sublime” has explained, “exists on a lower frequency where it is played, danced, and acted, as well as sung and sung about, because words, even words stretched by melisma and supplemented or mutated by the screams which still index the conspicuous power of the slave sublime, will never be enough to communicate its unsayable claims to truth” (Gilroy 1993: 37). Allowing for the silence as an affective *devotional silence*, enables one to hear what is not there, not as a silence in which the noises of the concert hall become the musical performance or “a music which is like furniture” (Cage quoted in Attali 1985: 112), but a silence which makes audible the disappeared and the destroyed and the unknowable. Silence becomes the affective “trace of a form of power that cannot be named” and a way to “remember what was never written down” (Dillon 2012: 112). Yet, this is not just a devotional dedication to all lives that have been erased and forgotten. It is also a warning dedicated to us in the historical present. Silence here is the affective key that “continually forces the past to open directly onto the present” (Dillon 2012: 114). The past that is opened in the *Devotional Archive* is one of “neoliberalism at the very moment of its emergence” (Dillon 2012: 114).

Anne Laura Stoler, expanding Foucault's thesis of sexuality so as to account for the interplay between sexuality and colonialism beyond Euro-American borders has explained that "the disciplining of individual bodies and the regulations of the life processes of aggregate human populations 'constituted the two poles around which the organisation of power over life was deployed'" (Foucault quoted in Stoler 1995: 4). Here "the two magnetic poles of universalism and particularism" (Sterne 2012: 149) that structured Sterne's analysis of the standardisation of listening through the development of the MP3 codec are transposed into the discipline of the individual and the regulation of the population as the two main technologies that Foucault has theorised as biopower and biopolitics (Foucault 2003: 249). Foucault's analysis has placed biopower as founded upon the disciplining of the body particularly through the deployment of sexuality within a fairly Euro-centric framework (Foucault 1990). But black feminist, post-colonial and critical race scholarship has critiqued and extended his Euro-centric view as one that misses important modes of discipline and regulation that have been developed, as critical theorist Craig Willse has explained, "in relation to the centrality of the colony as the testing lab for disciplinary mechanisms imported back to the metropole, or the obvious biopoliticisation of Black life in the transatlantic slave trade" (Willse 2013: 1; Stoler 1995; Chow 2002; Gilroy 1993b; Davis 2003).

What the *Devotional Archive* enables is a consideration of histories in which enslaved African bodies were one of the primary sites through which the optimisation of human capital was produced in a manner that speaks to the disciplining and regulation of life in the historical present. Both Rey Chow's and Jasbir Puar's readings of Foucault have reconsidered the 'History of Sexuality' as the "ascendancy of whiteness" in a way that

connects the reproduction of sexuality with the reproduction of race (Chow 2003; Puar 2007: 24; Foucault 1990). What the silence of the archive refuses is a particular “performance of damage and its overcoming” (James 2014b: 17). A refusal to overcome the damages of historical and ongoing, intensified social violences, to turn damage into product (silence into signal) is a strategy that insists upon a memory in which histories of violence remain inseparable to music, audio and the regulation of populations of the present. In this way, a hearing of the reproductions of race and sexuality not only emerges from the silence, but also engages an entanglement of the primary, foundational terms of race, sexuality, noise, silence and signal and specifically the ways in which these categories have been coded. Insisting upon a devotional silence, as a refusal to speak and sound within the recognised limits of audible intelligibility, is a strategy to deny the neoliberal demand for the production of novelty predicated upon an erasure of legacies of ongoing pain and damage re-packaged, amplified and intensified as eternal novelty for the market economy. For a close listening to the *Devotional Archive* evidences the ways in which “race and white supremacy” have “carried slavery’s chattel logic into the future” (Dillon 2012: 119) through deployments of racialised sexuality in which all are implicated.

### **Neoliberalism Turns on an Erasure of History**

Political queer theorist Shannon Winnubst has emphasised that the “formalising process” of neoliberalism as “an intensification of classical liberalism’s values, practices and categories... turns on an erasure of history” (Winnubst 2012: 95). The *Devotional Archive* refuses the erasure of the violences of the past that would enable a numbed, flattened and docile body of “global capitalism, white supremacy, and

institutionalised sexism” in the present and stubbornly circulates in “slavery’s afterlife” as the “surfaces in the gaps between the recorded, the forgotten, and the never will be” to reforge and re-imagine the “connections between past and present, connections that have been lost or that will never be remembered” (Dillon 2012: 120). For whiteness to maintain its position of hegemonic supremacy, which is taken up more thoroughly in the following chapter, by necessity requires the abolition of its ancestors in a refusal of a past “haunted by the dead shipped as commodities, starved, infected, worked to death, and so on” (Black 2014: 12). Instead this history must be erased through the very process of turning damage into a commodity, into a resource within neoliberal economics.

Neoliberalism, within Foucault’s theory of biopower is intensified through the production and quantification of difference, “neoliberalism’s non-normative rationality is the quantifiable: how many fungible units are increased or decreased?” (Winnubst 2012: 94). The silence of the archive refuses to quantify the bodies within, refuses to turn lives into data, refuses the production of a new subjectivity produced no longer merely as a commodification but now as an intensification of difference as pure competition. Winnubst has explained that “difference is thus not so much commodified, as bell hooks’ analysis from the 1990s argues; nor is it simply to be erased in the name of globalised homogeneity, as early critics of neoliberalism have argued. Rather, difference must be intensified, multiplied and fractured in the ongoing stimulation of competition” (Winnubst 2012: 93). The *Devotional Archive* refuses to map and embody systemic difference, refusing distinctions between “the public and private, and the economic, political, and social” as illusory fabrications constructed precisely so that



“the market could transform a human being into an object and test the limits of that object’s biological life” (Dillon 2012: 119). Instead the limits of the supremacist patri-Archive, Victorian moralism and a metaphysics of presence and the life these forms seek to impose are tested to enable a transgression of their boundaries.

In listening to Bassey’s re-performance in the *Devotional Archive* in terms of masking, as an enigmatic ambivalence between sign/tone/signal, her placement can be perceived on one hand as “at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity” (Bhabha 1994: 67), which as Bhabha, writing about the paradoxical and *productive* ambivalence embedded within colonial discourse, has asserted. It is in this way that the icon of Bassey is productively deployed as an oscillating auditory threshold. The frequency of her performance (frequency as in both concepts of continuity and discontinuity which are expanded upon in the following chapter) measures the limits of silence - either she can be heard or she cannot be heard - *and* simultaneously produces a masked threshold - as a coded discourse that seeks to build an alternative collective memory in sites of historical amnesia. In this sense (within this ‘auditory matrix’) it is possible to discern the process by which Bassey is audibly produced as a sign, as a representation, but where the form and idea of Bassey as both signifier and signified combine through memory and imagination in *Devotional* as a Signifyin(g) practice (Gates Jr. 1988) that instantiates the production of alternative meanings through a *changing same* that is transmitted specifically along a *feminist frequency* - shifting between private and public modes of address. Bassey deciphered in this way then, may be understood as a specific point, the moment of shifting signification in this archive at which the normatively ascribed

*character* of a sound emerges through historical racialised, sexualised and gendered norms and thus exposes the assumed thresholds of audible intelligibility as constructed through historic discourses of racialised, sexualised and gendered difference. The archive deployed as a measure of the threshold of modernity exposes the moment which the “ascendancy of whiteness” emerges as predicated upon the production of race but specifically stripped of “any historical residue” (Winnubst 2012: 94). By maintaining a stubborn attachment with the violent histories of the middle passage and diasporan displacement, the archive undoes the idea of the subject as a sign regulated through “the careful management of difference: of difference within sameness, and of difference containing sameness” (Puar 2007: 25) and instead enables a collective listening as historical and political. It resignifies as listening that which has predominantly been assumed as “individual subjective experience” (Sterne 2012: 104) as a listening that is socially produced through historical processes of socio-political subjection within a politics of audition.

By operating within an “*oppositional code*” Hall has suggested that it is possible for a receiver/listener to “understand both the literal and connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a *globally* contrary way” (Hall 1992: 127 emphasis in original). The literal and connotative inflections have thus far been addressed as firstly the dominant-hegemonic position which would fix an historical identity of inferiority for the ‘black British female subject’ and secondly as the accepted/refused position of the negotiated code as a “connotative inflection” which would seek to negate the dominant classification whilst still circulating within the codes of the dominant discourse. This second strategy was evidenced through the example of

Terri Walker's experience with Mercury which remained caught within the double-bind of racialised sexual difference as a "theory of the universal 'contradictory' subject" (Hall 1992: 150). For at the basis of this negotiated code is not only a recognition and rejection of a dominant-hegemonic position, but a theory of the subject itself as "always already inside patriarchal language/ideology" (Hall 1992: 151), as already within a prescribed auditory and economic system predicated upon a "natural" order. Hall has suggested though, that it is through an oppositional code that a detotalisation of "the message in the preferred code" can occur "in order to retotalise the message within some alternative framework of reference" (Hall 1992: 127).

As such, I suggest that Bassey has been placed in juxtaposition with the collective of artists in the *Devotional Archive* who in the space of the installation have been positioned so as to re-perform an historical politics of silence. As a culture of dissemblance for the historical present, the silenced archive is made to engage "performative acts of vocal negation" which Lauren Berlant, reading through similar contemporary "radically identified art" practices has claimed are specifically "pedagogical, singular moments inflated to embody something generally awry in the social" (Berlant 2011: 231). Such acts of self-negation are extreme, but a deployment of this strategy in the historical present seeks to re-open the space that would equate the failures of history as a "failure in communication" so as to erase the real danger of the past in the present moment. This re-calibration of collective memory suggests that "the past does not merely haunt the present; it composes the present" precisely through "slavery's haunting possession of neoliberalism" (Dillon 2012: 114).



## 4 FUNDAMENTALS OF DESIRE

This chapter will present an analysis of the installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* by Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether within a wider discussion of issues surrounding sonic fidelity in audio discourse. A denaturalisation of fidelity, as suggested by Jonathan Sterne and Tara Rodgers, may be considered analogously with the denaturalisations of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality that have occurred in cultural studies particularly within post-colonial, queer and critical race theory (Rubin 1975; Butler 1990; Dyer 1994; Bhabha 1994; Sterne 2003, 2012; Rodgers 2010b; Freeman 2010; Martinot 2010). Specifically, this chapter seeks to consider some of the ways in which auditory perception may be perceived to have been organised through a re-visiting of the fundamental parameters of sound and music, specifically through pitch and timbre. The chapter begins by re-considering debates about the definition of tone, particularly through the Ohm/Seebeck debate so as to appreciate some of the ways in which these foundational discourses in sound and music may be perceived to be organised through gendered, sexualised and racialised discourses. The chapter then proceeds through a critique of the construction of timbre as sound's assumed materiality and further reads this deconstruction of pitch and timbre through the installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*. By deploying a post-Foucauldian notion of reverse discourse, this installation enables a re-questioning of originality and its supposed derivative copy in ways that echo both Butler and Sterne in relation to gender constructions and sound reproduction (Butler 1990; Sterne 2010). This is combined

with a consideration of duration toward the end of the chapter read through the alternative timespace of Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag' (Freeman 2010). The concept of 'temporal drag' incorporates a greater complexity in regard to notions of originals and copies through a specifically reparative ethics that seeks to reconnect the de-disciplining of the individual body with forgotten and erased histories for the creation of alternative collective memories of the historical present. This, it is intended, will continue a thread throughout all of the works addressed within the research for deciphering creative strategies that challenge the effects of historical amnesia through alternative forms of performative and historical enquiry, such as queer temporalities that emphasise an affective and alternative relation between past, present and future.

***Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* Jutta Koether & Kim Gordon (2005)**

The installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* by Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon was one of the five installations commissioned and exhibited at the South London Gallery for the *Her Noise Project* in 2005. Kim Gordon is an American musician and artist, perhaps most well known for her involvement in the band Sonic Youth<sup>38</sup>. Jutta Koether is known as a visual artist originally from Cologne currently living and working predominantly in New York. Both Koether's and Gordon's practises each span sonic, musical and visual art terrains. Their collaborative installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, centred around a traditional mongolian yurt, consists of three main parts; a basic PA set-up inside the yurt consisting of guitars, a drum-kit

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38 Sonic Youth is the band most commonly associated with Kim Gordon on bass guitar, vocals and guitar along with Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley and Mark Ibold. Gordon has formed many other bands such as (her first band here), Free Kitten and more recently Body/Head with Bill Nace.

and a microphone; a ‘craft’ area directly adjacent to the yurt; and a lo-fi ‘studio desk’ also in the surrounding area. The three parts combine as an “automatic music tent” that comes to life when participants pick up and play the instruments inside the tent accompanied by a pre-recorded vocal track by Kim Gordon written, performed and recorded specifically for this installation. Once activated, the performance, which is routed to the lo-fi studio-desk, is recorded where upon the completed act is burned onto two CDs. Upon emerging from their performance within the membrane of the installation, participants are directed to the craft table where they create two 12” record covers to accompany the CDs of their performance. One decorated CD and cover is ‘gifted’ to the participants, whilst the other is entered into the *Her Noise Archive*<sup>39</sup>.

The following analysis aims to investigate the politicisation of auditory perception through shifting understandings of pitch and timbre as produced through the performances of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*. It will commence through an archaeological excavation of the concept of pitch through the theories of Hermann von Helmholtz and the Ohm/Seebeck debate (Rodgers 2010b). This trajectory is further situated within a context of parrēsia, which cultural theorist Lauri Siisiäinen has read through Foucault’s final *Collège de France* lectures and which I will expand more upon momentarily (Siisiäinen 2010a, 2010b).

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39 *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* was commissioned by Electra for the *Her Noise* exhibition which took place at the South London Gallery in 2005. Since 2005 the installation has toured to: Magasin-CNAC, Grenoble, France, 2006; MAK, Vienna, Austria, 2007; Galleria Enrico Fornello, Prato, Italy, 2007; LiFE, St Nazaire, France, 2008; Museion, Bolzano, Italy, 2008 – 2009; Kunsthall Dusseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany, 2009; Malmo Kunsthall, Malmo, Sweden, 2009; C2AM, Madrid, Spain, 2010; Soundworx Festival, Birmingham UK, 2011; Wysing Arts Centre, Wysing UK, 2013



Fig. 7 Jutta Koether & Kim Gordon *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* @ Magasin-CNAC, Grenoble, France, June – August 2006. Images courtesy of *Electra* and *Her Noise Archive*.



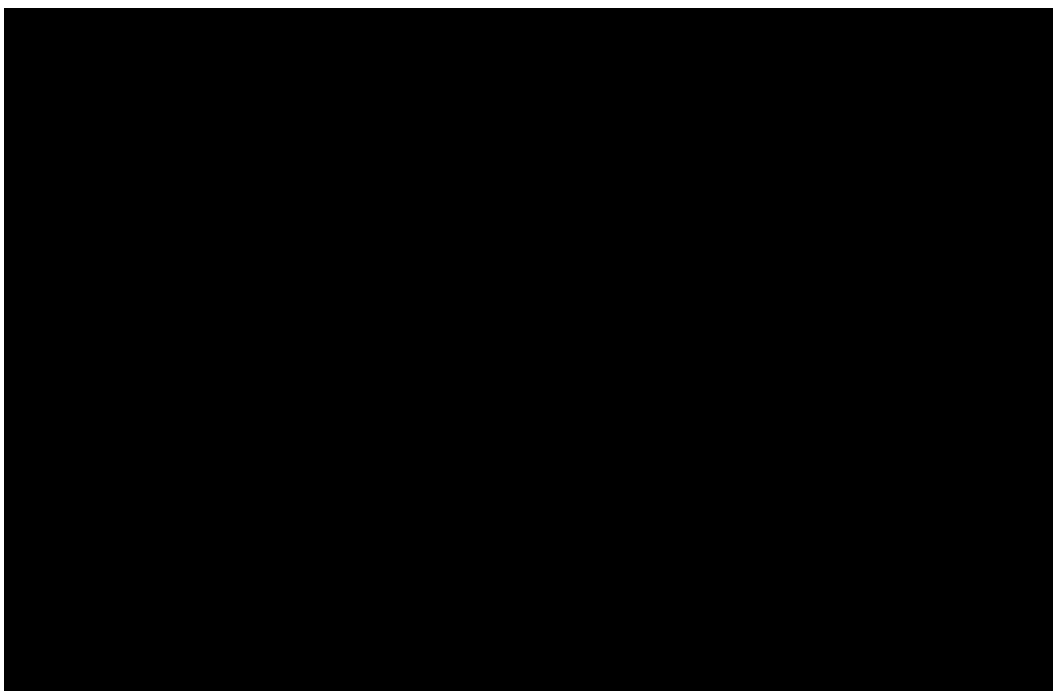
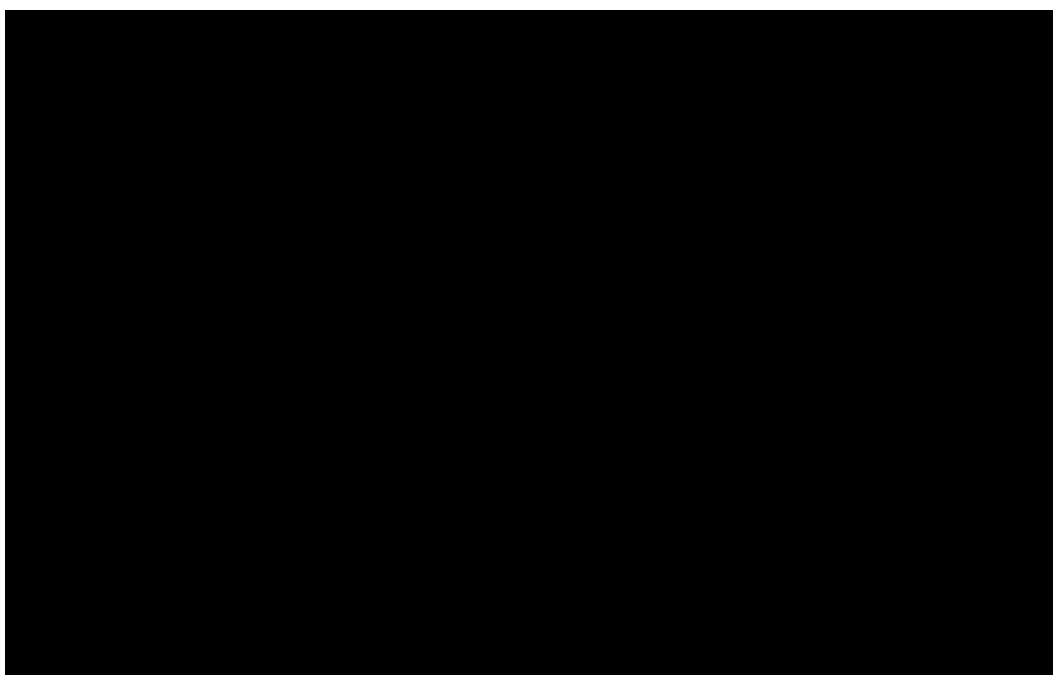


Fig. 8 Jutta Koether & Kim Gordon *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* @ *Her Noise* Exhibition, South London Gallery 2005, photography Holly Rose Wood; lower - at Magasin-CNAC, Grenoble, France, June – August 2006. Images courtesy of *Electra* and *Her Noise Archive*.

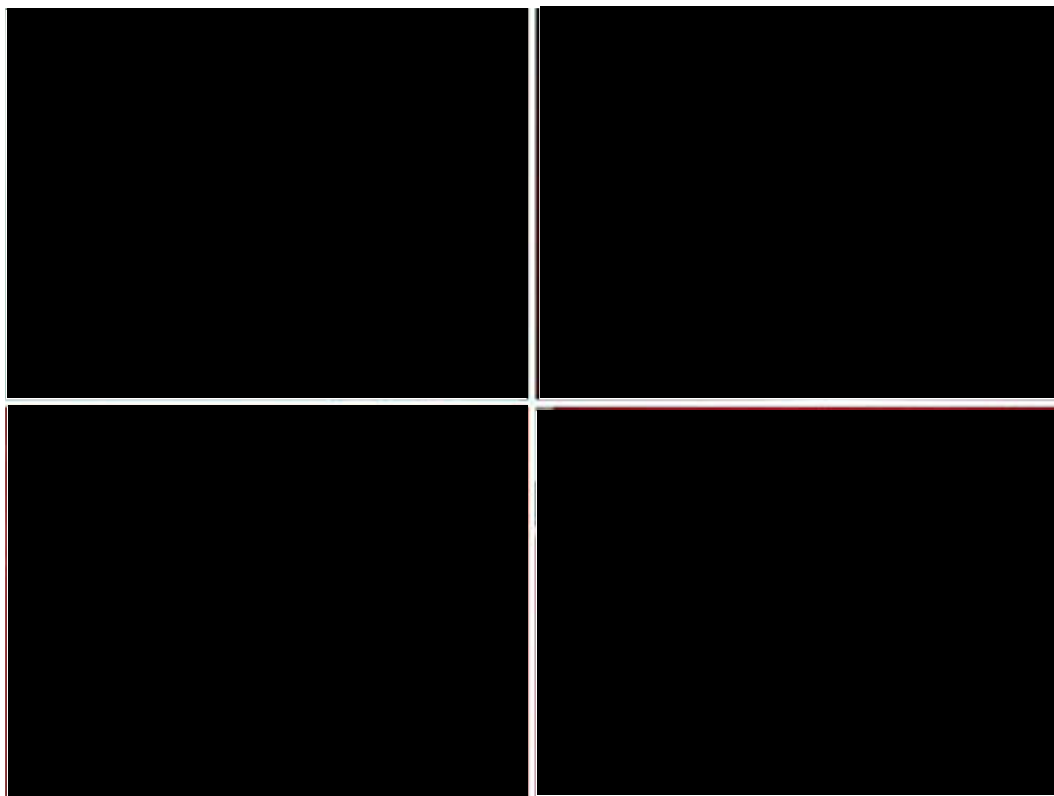
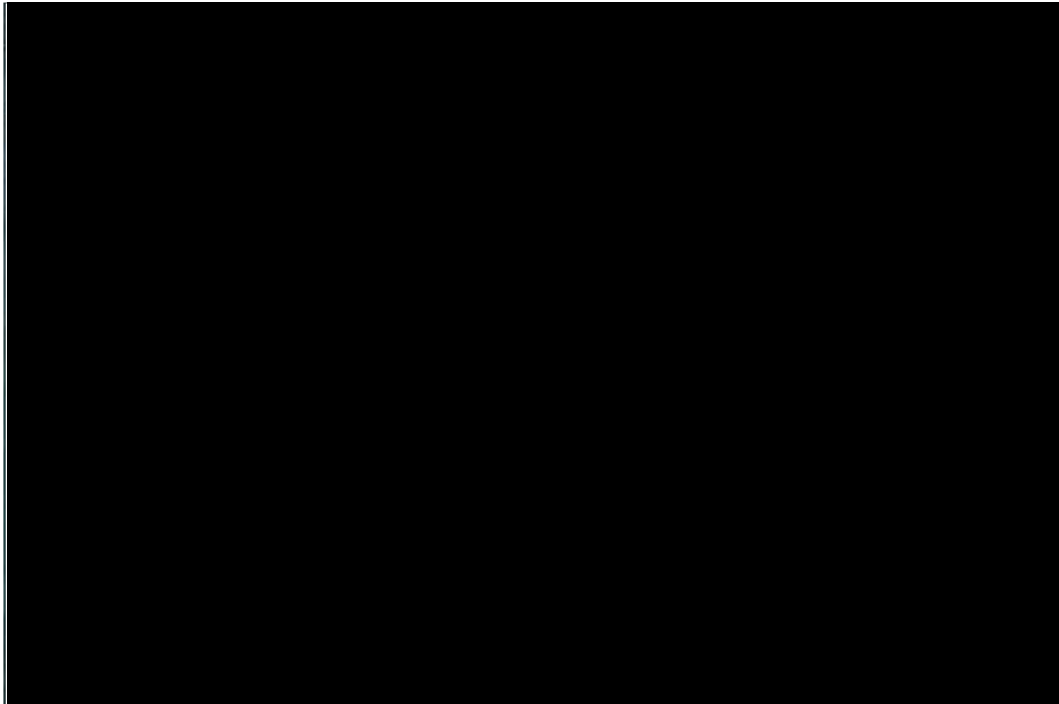


Fig. 9 Jutta Koether & Kim Gordon *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent @ Her Noise* Exhibition, South London Gallery 2005, photography Holly Rose Wood; lower - *Reverse Karaoke* record covers. Images courtesy of *Electra* and *Her Noise Archive*.

The analysis will focus primarily on the performance of voice in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* but considered as an assemblage/apparatus as applied largely throughout this research. In this instance this includes “voice, sound, audition and listening” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 33) specifically as Kim Gordon’s vocal delivery, the instrumentation in the installation, the multiple participatory performances of the song and the lyrics of the song. What I hope to show is how the “voice” of the installation, considered as combining all these elements, “relates audition and voice explicitly not only to power, but also to *events and practices of resistance*” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 36 emphasis in original).

#### **4.1 Fundamental Frequencies**

Cultural theorist Lauri Siisiäinen in a paper titled *The Noisy Crowd: The Politics of Voice in Michel Foucault’s Final Collège de France Lectures* (2010b) has addressed Foucault as a “thinker of the *sonorous-auditory*”, an apparatus which she identifies as “voice, sound, audition and listening” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 33 emphasis in original).

Through a close reading of Foucault’s own analysis of Euripides’ tragedy *Ion*, Siisiäinen has demonstrated “how hearing and voice occupy a significant place in power, knowledge and resistance” as can be read, she has claimed, throughout Foucault’s oeuvre (Siisiäinen 2010b: 34).

In Foucault’s knowledge-archaeology work of the 1960s, what should be noticed is the *politicisation of auditory perception* (“the politicisation of our ears”), which means locating auditory perception in the historical field of struggles over knowledge, over the limits and possibilities of knowledge, which is intrinsically related to the struggle over living bodies as such (Siisiäinen 2010b: 35).

Siisiäinen's focus upon the "politicisation of auditory perception" (Siisiäinen 2010b: 35) provides a method for both extending the concerns addressed in the previous chapter and for extending Rodgers' historical tracing of the construction of the fundamental parameters of pitch, timbre, amplitude and the ADSR standard<sup>40</sup> as a means of measuring "the limits and possibilities of knowledge" developed within histories of audio-technical discourse (Rodgers 2010b: 1-33, 111). Rodgers' own "knowledge-archaeology" (Rodgers 2010b: 35) of audio-technical discourse has addressed Helmholtz in particular, and the Ohm/Seebeck debate, which I will expand upon shortly, as a pivotal moment in the definition of a tone which may be read as demonstrable of "struggles over knowledge, over the limits and possibilities of knowledge...related to the struggle over living bodies" (Siisiäinen 2010b: 35) within audio-technical discourses. In particular, Rodgers has uncovered the historical processes informed by neo-classical philosophies and aesthetics that sought a universal currency through the physiological acoustics of Helmholtz and Georg Simon Ohm that have, over time, come to stand as acoustic norms, conventions and laws and which through their repetition have seemingly naturalised the notion of auditory perception. What both Siisiäinen's and Rodgers' theses that each follow Foucauldian archaeological processes enable is a linking of the "politicisation of auditory perception" (Siisiäinen 2010b: 35) with an understanding of how the norms, conventions and laws common to audio-technical discourse and thus auditory perception have not only been constructed but have also been produced as common sense understandings and reproductions of a particularly 'normal' performing and listening body.

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40 Amplitude and the ADSR standard are taken up in more detail in the following chapter.

## Authority and Sovereignty

At the heart of the nineteenth century debate between physicists Georg Simon Ohm and August Seebeck is the classical distinction between music and noise perceived as an “antagonistic setting” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 47). Siisiäinen has analysed this setting as also occurring in Euripides’ tragedy *Ion* through “the framework of Foucault’s own analysis of the modes of parrēsia” and applied “more broadly to the context of Greek mythology as well as musical history, the analysis of the principles and practices discriminating between music and non-musical sound” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 47). Siisiäinen’s analysis has focused upon three modes of parrēsia, as modalities of truth speaking, truth saying and speaking frankly within Euripides’ tragedy which are elucidated in the following forms;

- 1) *Divine* parrēsia “enigmatic signs of the oracle, related to the superior power and knowledge of, primarily, the god Apollo” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 37-8)
- 2) *Political* parrēsia, “referring to the speech, discourse, or *logos* through which the city state is governed” and relating primarily to the mortal figure of Marsyas as the first *aulos* player (Siisiäinen 2010b: 37; Peraino 2006: 34)
- 3) *Blasphemous* parrēsia, the bare or brute voice “that is neither speech nor music” and which, claims Siisiäinen, is “*confessional*, but of a rather extraordinary kind” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38-40 emphasis added).

I will expand upon the third modality, *blasphemous* parrēsia, toward the end of this chapter, but firstly I will explain Siisiäinen’s conceptualisation of *divine* and *political* parrēsia through the Seebeck/Ohm debate.

## Seebeck/Ohm Debate

Rodgers has identified a pivotal moment in the history of acoustics in the “1830s and 1840s with the emergence of the siren as an important investigative instrument” as one that “witnessed an important debate on the definition of tone” (Rodgers 2010b: 123) between the nineteenth century physicists Georg Simon Ohm and August Seebeck (Vogel 1993: 259). This debate centred around whether the definition of a tone should be universally perceived as constituted by continuous sinusoidal (simple) tones as Ohm believed or whether “only periodicity was constitutive of a tone” as Seebeck would maintain (Rodgers 2010b: 123). What is important here is the binary distinction between continuity and periodicity (discontinuity) within historically dominant definitions of pitch and harmony at this point, which I will expand upon momentarily. This distinction connects with dialectical debates about sameness and difference and abstract and concrete, as played out through the Enlightenment thinking embedded within the materialisation of the ideal individual and the “rights of man” that were also circulating in Europe at this time (Scott 1999). Up until the Ohm/Seebeck debate as Stephan Vogel has explained, “a tone had been regarded as being produced through the vibrations of solid bodies (for example strings, rods or plates) or air columns (for example, those in organ pipes or wind instruments)” which were thought to be *continuous*, sinusoidal forms and which have been represented graphically as the continuous squiggly line that itself has become a ubiquitous sign in the field of acoustics (Vogel 1993: 263).

In this way the definition of tone as frequency was historically restricted to the sinusoidal form, i.e. a sound could not be considered as tonal, as having a pitch if it did

not behave sinusoidally (Vogel 1993: 264-5). The invention of the polyphonic siren though, through Seebeck's experiments in the 1800s, "inspired a new definition of tone" in which "a quick succession of single sounds...*produced the sensation* of a continuous sound, the pitch being determined by the frequency of the pulses" - i.e. by the periodicity of discrete impulses rather than by continuous vibration (Vogel 1993: 264-5 emphasis added). By Seebeck's account then, discontinuity or 'difference' and periodicity, as a temporal theory of hearing, is constitutive of a tone in which the sensation of pitch is perceived in the absence of a definite physical correlation between the stimulus and the perceived frequency. Because of this lack of direct physical correlation between the sounding object and the hearing of pitch, Seebeck's theory has been commonly thought of as a theory of the 'missing' or subjective fundamental. A graphical representation of the siren, as Rodgers has pointed out, would be better constituted as a distribution of "dots or lines at various intervals to mark the frequency of distinct pulses" (Rodgers 2010b: 124) rather than the continuous line that graphically represents the sinusoidal waveform.

This historical debate gathered pace when Seebeck's 1841 experiments with the siren were reinterpreted by Ohm in 1843 so as to "rehabilitate the old definition of tone as the basis of acoustics" (Vogel 1993: 264). But Ohm's own calculations were marred by an "unnoticed mathematical error" and were also based upon sinusoidal "assumptions about the form of pulses" (Vogel 1993: 264). Seebeck, after successfully re-repeating Ohm's calculations without the mathematical error that marred Ohm's own results maintained that "the definition of a tone should not be restricted to the sinusoidal form" (Vogel 1993: 264-5). Seebeck's idea was "the reinforcement of the fundamental tone by

higher harmonics” in which lower frequencies determine pitch and upper harmonics determine timbre (Vogel 1993: 265). This theory gained a particularly nuanced expression through both jazz, avant-garde, rock and post-punk musics of the twentieth century and contributed in particular to the sound of Sonic Youth’s guitar tunings, use of power chords and distortion.

Whether continuous or discontinuous, the terms of this historical debate remained firmly within an either/or situation, either a tone should be defined as universal, objective and continuous or its opposite, as particular, discrete and subjective. Seebeck’s work with the siren certainly highlighted a moment when the dominant orthodoxy of tonality as pitch continuity could have taken a different turn, indeed was taken up in timbral and post-tonal musics. But the question of the primacy of a *fundamental* frequency, whether assumed to be a universally measurable result of place theory - in which pitch perception occurs internally along the basilar membrane - or as a subjective fundamental - and thus potentially different for each listener - the insistence upon the fundamental itself as the defining attribute of a tone and its associated in/stability of pitch perception still remains within a binary paradigm.

### **Sovereignty and Self-expression**

What actually appears to be fundamental to the notion of pitch in both accounts of continuity of vibration and discontinuity of discrete pulses is not so much an objective or subjective characteristic of hearing, but rather a discursive and *fundamental* production of sovereignty through listening. This takes the form of either an exertion of sovereignty over another’s auditory perception or as a form of self-sovereignty over



one's own individual auditory perceptions. Both of these approaches can be perceived as a materialisation of the sovereign subject, either one that seeks to govern others or one that seeks to govern the self as forms of sonic subjectivation through the norms and conventions within a regime of auditory intelligibility. Such a regime of auditory intelligibility operates “by positioning the subject as the *subject of perception*, as the *sensory subject*” through the institution of these norms (Siisiäinen 2010b: 35 emphasis in original). Both forms of sovereignty, over another and of the self, which in themselves date back to debates about governance and citizenship in classical philosophy, can be traced in these debates between Ohm and Seebeck, where each physicist proffered their own theory against the other in competition for the authority to define what constitutes a tone.

Leaving the perception of timbre aside for the moment, the struggle signified between Seebeck and Ohm, as I have implied, can be read through Foucault's analysis of *parrēsia* “in its different forms, and its relation to governing, that is to the government of the self and the government of others” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 37). For the Helmholtz/Ohm definition of a tone as sinusoidal and as embodying ideal Pythagorean proportions can be read as a *desire* for sovereignty, a “superior power and knowledge” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 37) in particular through Ohm's own miscalculations which he sought to hide;

Seebeck's paper disturbed Ohm less because it rejected his definition of tone than because it revealed his calculating errors. While he accepted Seebeck's idea of the reinforcement of the fundamental tone by the higher harmonics, he asked whether or not the 4th, 6th, 8th, . . . , harmonics will reinforce the 2nd, and, equally, the 6th, 9th, . . . , the 3rd, and so on. All terms in the harmonic series would thereby be reinforced, he argued, hence leading to new difficulties. Ohm thus boldly introduced his own hypothesis: "All contradictions, Seebeck sees, depend on an acoustical illusion. . . . I assume, namely, that our ear involuntarily regards the fundamental tone as stronger than

it really is, and the partials fainter than they really are. . . ." Ohm pointed to contrast effects in the case of color perception to illustrate his point. He insisted that his definition of tone included everything needed to explain all sound phenomena (Vogel 1993: 265).

This can be further appreciated through the institution of Ohm's acoustic law, validated as it was by Helmholtz, as a musical subjectivation of sovereignty over the perception of others, intent upon defining the parameters by which sound, and specifically music and noise, should be universally, 'naturally', perceived. On the other hand, Seebeck's experiments with the polyphonic siren that would expand and redefine what can possibly be heard to include a 'missing fundamental' has occupied "narrow avant-garde values" (Sterne 2012: 244) that have exploited the possibilities of timbre, through jazz, serialism, spectromorphology, algorithmic composition as well as the noise distortions of rock and punk (Walser 1993: 43). Yet this second approach, whilst certainly expanding auditory intelligibility to a certain extent, remains within the realms of self-expression and self-knowledge and thus within the cult of the individual. These two forms of sovereignty which map to abstracted commonalities and concrete differences, as Scott has demonstrated, are fused in the paradoxical interplay that has combined in the ideal of the "prototypical human individual" (Scott 1996: 5) historically embodied through romantic conceptions of form constituted through the harmonious resolution of "part-whole relations" (Rodgers 2010b: 23) as those through which the universal as masculine have been defined.

A reading of the different modes of *parrēsia* through the debate on the definition of tone, I suggest, would attribute the voice of *divine* *parrēsia* to Ohm, Helmholtz and their commonly accepted 'laws' of auditory perception that necessarily hide their desire for

sovereignty, a desire to control and govern the perceptions of others, through their attempt to universalise sensation and perception based upon abstracted ideals within a 'natural order'. Seebeck's theories and 'invention' of the siren may be considered as assuming the articulation of *political* parrēsia, periodic, discrete and discontinuous but still as a mode of individual self-expression intent upon musical subjectivity as a "cultivation of the self" (De Nora 2000: 46) which was, as Stoler has explained, is "a defining feature of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie" (Stoler 1995: 5). This can perhaps be further appreciated through a consideration of the mechanics of psychoanalysis and 'confession' which have combined in Foucault's scholarship as the "main organs of sexuality...the mouth and the ear" within the "site of the construction of sexuality" (Berlant 2012: 66-7). These two forms, sovereignty - heeding the word of god - and self-expression - hearing oneself - as fundamental forms are not merely exchangeable metaphors but are directly analogous to the alternating communicative structures of from mouth-to-ear and from ear-to-mouth by which the subject has historically been racialised and sexualised.

### **The Purity of Pitch**

The dominant definition of pitch as an ideal manifestation of the sine wave is commonly assumed as being "a pure tone with no body behind it" (Evens 2005: 4). Rodgers has written that the sine tone from Helmholtz's time, who was born in 1821, until the present "has been figured in audio-technical discourse as the most pure tone, articulated to metaphoric concepts of being without colour or lacking "body"" and that these beliefs were "articulated to cultural valuations of whiteness and scientific objectivity" (Rodgers 2010b: 124; 118). Helmholtz's neo-classical aesthetics that

figured the sign wave as a pure and disembodied form are aligned with Sterne's critique of the audio-visual litany that he has placed at the centre of the dialectically opposed phenomenologies of *musique concrète* and acoustic ecology (Sterne 2003: 20-21).

These two historical schools of sound, Sterne has suggested, implicitly express a "Christian doctrine" in which the quest for an authentic and original sound references a "transcendental subject of sensation", pure, abstracted from a social realm and from the temptations of the flesh, so as to enable an experience "closest to divinity" (Sterne 2003: 14-19). Through these analyses it is possible to conceive of the concept of pitch as produced through and productive of ideas about purity as whiteness, controlled sexuality and a belief in sovereignty as closest to divinity, as a "lexicon of bourgeois civility, self-control, self-discipline and self-determination" (Stoler 1995: 8). Ideas about pitch as disembodied and as ideally expressive of tonal purity in ways that seek to provide a sense of musical coherence and continuity within both dominant Western music discourses and discourses of perfect fidelity, the latter which was addressed in the previous chapter, connect quite clearly with historical ideals bound in notions of racial purity and heterosexuality as a supposedly 'natural order'. These disembodied, pure and coherent acoustic norms bound in the notion of pitch when mapped to the social norms of historical ideals of white masculinity and white femininity, although played out differently for each, can be considered as a kind of acoustic "colonial management" (Stoler 1995: viii) of race that travels through sexuality and Imperialism bound in the ideal of perfect fidelity. Considered in this way, pitch as a disembodied, pure and coherent ideal suggests a line along which racial membership in a history of acoustics and audio-technical discourse has been drawn through a fundamental frequency of heteronormal whiteness.

## **The Fundamental Frequency of Heteronormal Whiteness**

Both Rodgers' and Sterne's historiographies of acoustic and audio-technical discourses move through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries predominantly throughout Europe and America (Sterne 2003; Rodgers 2010b). The nineteenth century is the "twilight" of the "monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie" that Foucault opens *The History of Sexuality Vol I* with (1978). Foucault's intervention through the technologies and proliferations of sexuality is infamous for claiming the emergence of a homosexual identity precisely in 1870<sup>41</sup> (Foucault 1978: 43). Throughout the feminist, gender, queer and post-colonial scholarship that ensued in part from Foucault's interrogation into the production and reproduction of sexuality, the relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality as dialectically fixed essential truths and relationally dependent identities has been thoroughly destabilised as a social convention (Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1990; Grosz 1994; Bhabha 1994; Stoler 1995; Halberstam and Livingston 1995; Dyer 1997; Scott 1999; Spargo 1999; Foster 2003; Chow 2002; Puar 2007; Huffer 2010; Berlant 2012; Winnubst 2012; McWhorter 2012, 2013). Judith Butler in particular has demonstrated the ways in which a hegemony of heterosexual legibility has been dependent upon a specific legibility of homosexuality as subordinate and perverse for its own place of dominance within regimes of compulsory heterosexuality (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997). The point is that the normativity of the heterosexual ideal

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41 Lynne Huffer has critiqued the dominance within queer theory that has taken this assertion by Foucault at face value as "repeated mis-readings" and as a "drastic simplification of what Foucault is actually saying in the paragraph" (Huffer 2010: 67-72). Further, in a way that provides a moment of recognition with the legacies of fascism and futurism that provide a fundamental origin story in histories of avant-garde musics as well as the eugenics at the basis of Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone, Ann Laura Stoler unveils Foucault's concern with state power; "Foucault's focus on the second half of the nineteenth century has other motivations as well. His concern was with state racism, not its popular forms. Racism is a state affair, confirmed by a set of scientific discourses that bear witness to it... Another issue informs his chronology, a point we can only vaguely discern from *The History of Sexuality*: the principal form of state racism which concerned Foucault was that of the Nazi state and its "Final Solution." As such, there is an implicit teleology to how he treats what racist discourse 'does'" (Stoler 1995: 28)

needs to be reproduced, the materialisation of heterosexuality as a norm of social organisation has been a determined work in progress rather than a timeless and inevitable fact (Butler 1990: 45). As Elizabeth Freeman writing about the concept of “temporal drag”, which I return to towards the end of this chapter, has explained, “gender itself is a labour, a painstaking process of organising the details of the voice, gesture, and clothing that is supposed to look like an effortless emanation” (Freeman 2011: 1978). Crucially, one of the ideal means for a norm of ‘whiteness’ to reproduce itself is through the norm of heterosexuality. As Richard Dyer has explained “race and gender are ineluctably intertwined through the primacy of heterosexuality in reproducing the former and defining the latter” (Dyer 1997: 30). For the disembodied and often historically silenced pitch that has been attributed to idealised representations of virtuous historical white femininity when combined with normative representations of the ‘pure tone’ of virile dominant white masculinity, both as said to be “lacking body”, can be heard as an implicit intention to reproduce ideals embedded within notions of white heterosexuality as the norm. Dyer has also explained that “whites must reproduce themselves, yet they must also control and transcend their bodies” (Dyer 1997: 30) where the ideals of pitch as “pure” and “lacking body”, as transcendent, provides one of the keys to link “the history of sexuality to the construction of race” (Stoler 1995: 19) through the fundamental parameters of sound and music.

As it stands then, the fundamental frequency of hegemonically and historically recognised forms of experimental and avant-garde musics may still be heard to reference discipline and desire, which Susan McClary in 1991 considered one of the foundational forces of Western music as being “very often concerned with the arousing

and channeling of desire, with mapping patterns through the medium of sound that resemble those of sexuality” (McClary 1991: 8). Rodgers has similarly ‘mapped the patterns’ of McClary’s paradigm shifting feminist musicology as they re-appear in audio-technical discourse,

In audio-technical discourse, material aspects of electronic sound and the technologies for its generation and control can be figured as narratives of sexual desire and fulfilment, much as Susan McClary has argued regarding the tonal organisation and compositional structures of Western music (McClary 1991, 7-19). (Rodgers 2010b: 27).

So far this chapter has addressed notions of pitch perception through discourses of race and sexuality so as to perceive the ways in which those discourses materialise in common understandings and uses of sound and music. The remainder of this chapter will extend these concerns through an analysis of timbre and will seek to connect both pitch and timbre through discourses of race and sexuality to further interrogate the ways in which “narratives of sexual desire and fulfilment” may be perceived to materialise as a specific criticality in the “organisation and compositional structures” (Rodgers 2010b: 27) of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*.

## **4.2 Timbre and Body: as the Inherent Body of Sound**

The debate over the definition of a tone which maintained that pitch, either continuous or discontinuous, exhibits a fundamental frequency as an essential and timeless audio ‘truth’ that can be heard to implicitly represent a norm of heteronormal whiteness has impacted profoundly upon definitions of timbre understood hegemonically as the body and colour of sound. In effect, the relationship between pitch and timbre may be

understood as one of discipline and desire. Similarly to hegemonically normative understandings of race, sex and gender whereby, historically, as Butler has demonstrated, gender has been assumed to be determined by an a priori and stable sex (Butler 1990: 23) and where as Dyer has explained, race and gender are intertwined through a primacy of heterosexuality that reproduces race and defines gender (Dyer 1997: 30), *pitch and timbre can be appreciated as being intertwined through the notion of perfect fidelity, where perfect fidelity reproduces pitch and defines timbre*. Normative understandings of pitch can be understood as instituting a “stable point of reference on which, or in relation to which” (Butler 1993: xi) ideas about timbre have proceeded. Rodgers has explained this asymmetrically dependent relation as one in which the sine wave is considered as “a mathematical and technological ideal - the only “pure” waveform said to be lacking timbre - against which timbral variations are compared” (Rodgers 2010b: 117-8). Further, if pitch has come to stand as assuming a defining point of reference, as an identificatory *norm* for the sovereignty of tonality as ideally disembodied, then timbre may be appreciated as embodying certain ideals about the materiality of sound and subjective experiences of listening as a kind of “physical training for the body” (Peraino 2006: 33; 35). As Rodgers has explained, theories of timbre are best identified as dialectically expressing particular ideas about the purity of the sine wave as ideally without body in relational contrast to timbre, which predominantly through Helmholtz’s physiological acoustics, “came to signify marked forms of material embodiment (e.g. raced, gendered, classed) and transgressive pleasures” (Rodgers 2010b: 118).



Rodgers has analysed the dominant norms and ideals bound within the neo-classical narratives that influenced Helmholtz's acoustic theories and through which the concept of the sine tone as a pure form was produced “as an ideal manifestation of harmony and order [that] signified cultural markers of *beauty* [desire] *and restraint* [discipline] associated in audio-technical discourse with whiteness and scientific objectivity” (Rodgers 2010b: 128 emphasis added). This hegemonic understanding of pitch as the “comparatively disembodied ideal” (Rodgers 2010b: 128) is the norm against which timbral variations, at once desired and disciplined, have been contrasted. Timbre, as sound’s body, devalued through ideals of disembodiment and represented as “unruly waves” in need of discipline and control, as Rodgers has demonstrated, have been constituted through Helmholtz’s physiological acoustics built upon metaphors that index colonialist ideologies of “maritime voyage and discovery” with “racialised signs and associated claims to cultural value” (Rodgers 2010b: 56-7, 127). For if dominant understandings of pitch as produced by sinusoidal waves are understood as “pure” and “lacking body”- as a specific idealised manifestation of a universal norm of disembodied heteronormal whiteness - then timbre may be perceived as a relational concept produced through discourses of difference. These assumed differences, as I will explain throughout the following pages, can be understood as mediating and materialising perceptions about assumed bodily differences. In effect, assumptions of timbre as sound’s inherent body can be appreciated as materialising assumptions of timbre as the inherent sound of a body.

Considered in this way, both pitch and timbre may be perceived as asymmetrical, relationally dependent categories, as much as race and sexuality. Within a history of

acoustics pitch and timbre have been dialectically deployed in the manner of Foucauldian regulatory ideals, where pitch “not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs” (Butler 1993b: xi). Within audio-technical discourses and practices, that governed and regulated body is timbre, a ‘body/materiality’ of sound that is at once summoned and claimed, desired and devalued, controlled, and disciplined. Historical notions of pitch as an abstracted ideal (mind) and timbre as concrete matter (body) represent the ideal of Pythagorean proportions representative of beliefs about the origin and nature of the physical world harmonically resolved as a symbolisation of the eternal ‘world soul’ - the ideal of the harmony of opposites as a ‘natural order’. Further, what this asymmetrically relational categorisation indexes when linked with historical discourses of racial and sexual difference is what feminist musicologist Robin James has considered as the “most over-worn and over-analysed Western racial stereotype, the association of blacks with embodiment and whites with intellect” (James 2007: xi). Both of these stereotypes are, as James rightly explains, “empirically false and politically problematic” (James 2007: ix). It is possible to begin to acknowledge and hear whiteness, then, as signifying within dominant-hegemonic discourses through the alignment with ideals of disembodiment as ideals in which “whites” must transcend themselves (Dyer 1997: 30). Timbral variations, produced and regulated by this dominant norm are then necessarily aligned with “raced, gendered and classed forms of material embodiment” (Rodgers 2010: 118) within this framework. The body as the marker of difference is, in the classic Cartesian mind/body split of Western philosophy, a body that is at once desired, devalued and in need of discipline, regulation and control. As queer feminist musicologist Judith Peraino has explained, “within this balance of discipline and desire is the blueprint for

the maintenance of the Western social order, at the service of the elites” (Peraino 2006: 33). In a similar way in which, as Butler has explained, the “materiality of sex...[is] constructed through a repetition of norms” (Butler 1993: x), the assumed materiality of sound as timbre has been “constructed through a repetition of norms” evident within avant-garde computer music practices which Bob Ostertag echoing Barry Truax has identified as having “an even greater uniformity of sound among them” (Ostertag 2001: 2; Truax 2003).

### **The Subjectivity of Listening**

The timbral is about sound in its physicality, rather than about its symbolic meaning of a musical or vocal sound...The timbral voice is vivid with the resonance of the lungs, throat, saliva, teeth and skull; the grain of the voice, as Barthes called it. Far from the transcendental “Voice” of Derridean theory, the voice does not edit out its materiality (Morton 2007: 39-40).

Timbre, as considered in the above quotation by Timothy Morton - as materiality - relates to the “subjectivity of listening” where subjectivity is considered an inherent property of a “phenomenologically coherent”, singular and a priori ‘natural’ body (Sterne 2012: 94; 2003: 21). As Sterne has explained, “the problem of the ‘adjective’” in Roland Barthes’s essay that Morton refers to in the above quotation links psychoanalytic and psychoacoustic languages through a shared goal, “to get *beyond* conscious experience as it is perceived to consider instead a preconscious level of sound that transcends - or subtends - individual subjective experience” (Sterne 2012: 104 emphasis added). The above quotation from Morton assumes essential connections between sound, materiality and subjectivity that are based upon fundamentally romantic

assumptions of matter as pre-discursive, natural and ‘subjective’. For in effect the ‘problem of the adjective’ is a problem of subjectivity and the body, both categories which are fixed in Morton’s assertion as an essentialisation of materiality, voice and difference. The dialectical pattern between continuous and discontinuous definitions of tone identified earlier in this chapter can then be perceived to repeat through the hegemonic relationships between pitch and timbre where pitch represents universality, transcendence and objectivity and timbre particularity, materiality and subjectivity. And they are repeated again in understandings of timbre as, on the one hand a universal materiality and on the other, a uniquely subjective experience. Drawing the focus back out to a macro-structural relation between pitch and timbre, this schema, tone with continuity of pitch and difference embedded through notions of timbre, again, maps the “discourses of individualism” as both “abstract prototype” and “unique being” (Scott 1996: 3-5), as the ideal prototypical individual, as *the subject*, constituted through the harmonic resolution of part-whole relations, or in audio-technical discourse, the resolution of complex partials into simpler sinusoidal forms. Further, I suggest that what (hearing) timbre as “vivid with the resonance of the lungs, throat, saliva, teeth and skull; the grain of the voice” that Morton asserts in the above quotation signifies (Morton 2007: 39-40) is the stereotype of a feminised material embodiment as an *object* of desire for the stereotypically disembodied white masculine subject which I will return to and expand upon further in this chapter.

In returning to *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, pitch perception and timbral inflection as considered through the hegemonic rubric addressed so far would imply that Gordon’s vocalisations, heard as essentially “feminine”, are representative of an

expression of a necessary, indeed essential disembodiment, as a presence occupied by an enforced absence or lack<sup>42</sup>. Gordon's vocal delivery sits within the lower frequency ranges of what have been attributed to 'women's voices'. It is a flat, monotone, almost 'simple-tone' vocal delivery of lyrics about desire, body and sensation delivered in a manner in which the timbral inflection of the voice, what little there is, is very tightly regulated. Considered through a dominant-hegemonic discourse of pitch as pure and lacking body and of timbre as sound's body and colour, Gordon's vocal delivery in the installation can be interpreted as a particular performance representative of white feminine disembodiment. Timbral variation is limited, there is not much body or colour to be heard within this hegemonically encoded discourse. Quite literally, her voice sounds flat, as if it 'lacks body', 'lacks colour'. Such a stereotypical interpretation, which is based upon hegemonic ideals about white female sexuality as 'lacking', as implicitly disembodied, is one which is intended to enable such a body to be colonised as an object of 'heterosexual masculine' desire. I want to suggest that hearing her performance in this way would signify a desire *for* Gordon as an iconic image to embody hegemonic ideals of whiteness and heterosexuality. She is 'present' in the installation through the playback of her 'disembodied' recorded voice which within the discourse of a metaphysics of presence would signify a transcendental, immaterial, universal subject, the "thin feminine voice" (Halberstam 2007: 55) as an 'essential' timbral characteristic. This is a discourse that would seek to secure a fixed identity of feminine whiteness through the norm of "acting out of purity and moral virtue"

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42 The concepts that connect 'woman' with lack have a long and contentious history addressed in particular as Lacanian lack, Kristevan abjection, woman as the embodiment of lack and loss, Freudian female sexuality based on lack; "She is left with a *void*, a *lack* of all representation, re-presentation, and even strictly speaking of all mimesis of her desire for origin. That desire will hence forth pass through the discourse-desire-law of man's desire" (Irigaray 1985: 41-2).

(Williams quoted in Foster 2003: 78) - basically sexless - imposed upon bodies that are supposed to coherently align as white, female and heterosexual. Yet Gordon's performance of disembodiment can be 'read' as an intentionally ironic and subversive performance of the demand that 'women' must "disavow or elaborately redefine their sexualities in order to secure credibility and voice" (McClary 1991: 38), which I shall return to shortly.

### **Timbre as the Inherent Sound of a Body**

In the following analysis I aim to examine the ways in which the ideologies identified above, understood as productive of hegemonic understandings of timbre as the natural exhibition of sound's embodied materiality, or where it is lacking as emphasising ideals of disembodiment, have in turn been productive of the ways in which perceptions of socio-cultural differences, in particular assumptions of racial and sexual difference, are assumed to be in/audible in the voice as markers of assumed essential bodily differences. Vocal timbre, similarly to musical timbre is often assumed to be an essential characteristic or quality of a person's voice, whether a voice sounds 'thick' or 'thin', 'light' or 'dark', 'hard' or 'soft' etc (again the 'problem of the adjective'). Timbre is assumed to be the characteristic of sound that distinguishes tone or pitch and is put into service to 'help' identify the type of instrument or person producing the sound/voice. Timbre is supposedly the essential characteristic of a sound/voice that helps to identify what class the sound/voice belongs to, as a way of differentiating between 'species' of humans as much as a way of differentiating between instruments in an orchestra. It would be foolish to suggest that socially constructed differences are not

heard through the inflection, or gestures, of the voice or even a genre. But my point is that these differences and the ways in which they are perceived are due to enculturation rather than being “immanent to individual bodies” (Eidsheim 2009: 1). Certain socio-cultural experiences, as I will explain, encourage sounding and hearing through organisational systems that categorise through parameters of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender and sexuality among other axes of socio-political difference.

In a way that extends Rodgers’ analysis of the constructed relationship between timbre and the body which largely remains within the realms of audio-technical discourse, musicologist and vocalist Nina Eidsheim has interrogated assumed relations between race, timbre and voice through a socio-cultural analysis of sound synthesis software and musical pedagogy addressing the ways in which timbre has come to be perceived as an immanent attribute of a body (Eidsheim 2009). Yet whilst Eidsheim’s focus in *Synthesizing Race: Towards an Analysis of the Performativity of Vocal Timbre* (2009) is valuably directed toward destabilising assumed essential connections between ideas about blackness, vocal timbre and genre, I want to use her analysis try to understand some of the assumed connections between whiteness and timbre through the genres in which *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* circulates. At first this is difficult, because historically, whiteness, as a particular racial marking has been constructed as implicitly disembodied and uncoloured, as “neutral and unsituated” (Dyer 1997: 4). As Dyer has explained, “there is something especially white in this non-located and disembodied position of knowledge” (Dyer 1997: 4). What is especially white in such positions are notions of white superiority and racial purity, which, because white is the dominant norm, in music and sound the norm of whiteness is often difficult to hear by

‘white’ people. In this sense whiteness can be appreciated as being emitted as a dominant and hegemonically *silent* frequency. As already addressed, pitch as ‘uncoloured’, thus as “neutral and unsituated” (Dyer 1997: 4), *as* whiteness, signifies as pure and lacking body; whiteness is supposedly invisible, uncoloured and inaudible whilst timbre, which is supposed to be one way of identifying the class, race or sex of a speaker/body/instrument, is assumed to be not only sound’s body but also sound’s colour. It would seem then that when it comes to whiteness and race there is another logic of invisibility/inaudibility at work. Rather than a dialectics of hyperaudibility historically constructed for racialised ‘non-white’ bodies as addressed in the previous chapter, whiteness seems to pass by most silently as a total and timeless *hyper-inaudibility*. Whilst whiteness is certainly a “location of structural advantage, of race privilege” as Ruth Frankenberg has explained, it also “refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” precisely because whiteness is the dominant norm that would seem to be *beyond* race (Frankenberg 1994: 1 emphasis added). Barbara J. Flagg has addressed the apparent invisibility of whiteness as the “*transparency* phenomenon”, whereby she has suggested that “the most striking characteristic of whites’ consciousness of whiteness is that most of the time we don’t have any” (Flag 1997: 629 emphasis in original). The question arises then, how can a frequency of whiteness be heard if it so often passes as inaudible, as supposedly transparent? One way whiteness may be tuned into is precisely at the point at which it would seemingly not be there. A dialectics of race as whiteness signifies as the dominant norm through its assumed absence. As Dyer has explained, “the sense of whites as non-raced is most evident in the absence of reference to whiteness in the habitual speech and writing of white people in the West” (Dyer 1997: 2). This “absence



of reference”, I suggest, is also evident in the habitual music and sound of “white people in the West” (Dyer 1997: 2) which I aim to explain and complicate through the following analysis.

Eidsheim’s research on the Vocaloid software synthesis program and its users provides a further means to unpack analyses of timbre and associated assumptions about race and gender (Eidsheim 2009). Vocaloid software is a voice synthesis program whose makers intended to produce “the world’s first virtual male and female soul vocalists” materialised in the virtual singing figures of ‘Leon’ and ‘Lola’ (Eidsheim 2009: 3). The makers of the software produced what they assumed to be an archetypal ‘soul vocal’ by defining soul as a “black sound” and equating it as belonging to a “black body” (Eidsheim 2009: 3). Many of the users of the software, which Eidsheim tracked through Vocaloid user forums, expressed their frustration over perceived discrepancies between what they expected to hear as an archetypal soul sound and what they actually heard, particularly through the vocal expressions of the virtual figure of ‘Lola’. Through the actual use of the software “many of Lola’s users did not hear her voice as a soul voice, and/or as black” (Eidsheim 2009: 3). Eidsheim developed a theory of **performed articulation** through the writings of Stuart Hall (1980), which I shall expand more upon shortly, to explain this discrepancy between what the users of the software expected to hear and what they appeared to actually have heard (Eidsheim 2009: 3). Through this discursive framework Eidsheim also analysed the site of musical pedagogy itself as one productive of racial, ethnic, national and I would add, sexualised and gendered assumptions that materialise through musical performance. Eidsheim then combined the concept of ‘performed articulations’ with an investigation into ‘performative listening’

practices, again which I elaborate more upon momentarily, where both theories, performed articulations and performative listening as simultaneous events can be understood as materialising hegemonic perceptions about the timbre of both the speaking and singing voice through racial, national, gendered and sexual categories as well as through genre.

### **Performed Articulations**

Eidsheim has developed Stuart Hall's concept of *articulation* as one which "describes a point of connection between *two independent parts*", such as a connection between ideas about sound and ideas about race (Eidsheim 2009: 5, emphasis in original).

Importantly, Eidsheim has asserted, this is a "a connection that can be broken and established" (Eidsheim 2009: 5). Further she has explained that "there is no direct correlation between the two; the articulative connection is forged in a listener's mind between two independent parts such as a sound and a racialised body" (Eidsheim 2009: 6) or in the case of whiteness and timbre, a sound and a supposedly racially 'unmarked' body. A 'performed articulation' occurs, not primarily and only through the actual musical performance, of either Kim Gordon, Shirley Bassey, or through Eidsheim's critique of the essentialisation inherent in connecting a soul singer with a black body, but in particular through the social relations embodied in the sender/message/receiver relay of a performance. As Eidsheim has explained, "when the black body is assumed to be synonymous with a soul vocal timbre a *performed articulation* (rather than an inherent meaning of that vocal timbre) takes place" (Eidsheim 2009: 5 emphasis in original). Such a performed articulation would seek to connect sound and race as a coherence between ideas about nature and biology rather than as a social, cultural,

economic or political articulation. Similarly, when a ‘white’ body is assumed to be synonymous with a punk or rock vocal timbre, as I expand more upon shortly, another type of performed articulation occurs - but it seems to be an articulation that would implicitly and conveniently disconnect sound and race, a *performed dis-articulation*.

### **Performed Dis-articulation**

By considering Gordon through this installation as an icon in a manner similar to Bassey in the previous chapter, I suggest that it will be possible to further deduce how normative ideas about whiteness have materialised in assumptions about timbre. Thinking of Gordon’s vocal delivery as as ‘thin’ or ‘flat’ provides a way to identify the standardisation of whiteness as an unspoken, unacknowledged and therefore often inaudible but still dominant signal whilst also pointing toward its possible deconstruction and transformation through the performances of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*.

Kim Gordon is most well known through her performances with the band Sonic Youth. Sonic Youth, formed in 1981, have been described on Wikipedia<sup>43</sup> as an alternative American rock band, associated with the No Wave art and music scene in New York City, part of the first wave of American noise rock groups, an interpretation of the hardcore punk ethos, DIY indie, pivotal in the rise of alternative rock and noise-rock pioneers. Gordon as an icon of Sonic Youth in particular can be heard as a performance that resonates within histories of punk, post-punk, and riot grrrl musical communities as

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<sup>43</sup> I use wikipedia here as a reference specifically for its generic, stereotypical, non-specialist information which is often assumed to be unbiased and taken as a kind of ‘truth’.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonic\\_Youth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonic_Youth) [accessed June 2014]

well as emerging through rock, indie, experimental and ‘improv’ music scenes (Stubbs 2009<sup>44</sup>). Most commonly, Sonic Youth are situated through a re-worked legacy of rock which they have been said to have re-embraced and deconstructed (Stubbs 2009). Rock and indie music, in the latter decades of the twentieth century as genres generally, stereotypically, have been assumed to reference particular communities identified through notions of whiteness (James 2007: ix-xii). Rock has become an umbrella term used predominantly to label the bleaching of inter-racial content from Euro-American popular music of the last century (Altschuler, Thomas & Litwin 2003: 35).

Focusing upon the legacy of punk, post-punk and riot grrrl musics, Elizabeth Stinson through a text that seeks to “pull together black feminism and punk scholarship” has asserted that “punk has no one origin, although its genealogies have also been constrained and whitewashed. The overwhelming majority of punk rock musicians are white males and a staggering number of them end up focusing on stale, homogenised social politics and a rote “punk” stance and style” (Stinson 2012: 275-6). And whilst the legacy of riot grrrl certainly amplified the masculine bias and erasure of (white) women from punk, riot grrrl histories have themselves been critiqued “especially where these concerns [about race] did not always surface” (Nguyen 2011, 2012: 174; Stinson 2012: 276). So the *iconic* voice of Gordon, heard as referencing genres of rock, indie, post-rock, post-punk and riot grrrl should, according to the dominant genealogies of these musical forms outlined above, meet up as a sign of “white music” similarly to the way in which a soul voice and soul genre in Vocaloid software would seemingly align as “black music”. Both of these normative ideas about music, race and genre are based

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44 [http://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/essays/the-wire-300\\_david-stubbs-on-sonic-youth-and-the-blast-first-axis](http://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/essays/the-wire-300_david-stubbs-on-sonic-youth-and-the-blast-first-axis) [accessed June 2014]

upon assumptions in which race would seemingly be a natural attribute of a body and of that body's voice and genre (Eidsheim 2009: 4). But, Eidsheim has pointed out, the connection between body and race and between voice and genre and thus between timbre and identity, rather than being considered as essential relationships, arise through processes that are carefully constructed (Eidsheim 2009: 5).

The vocal timbre that arises from a body is a sound that is, whether or not the singer is aware of this process, carefully constructed. Such processes of construction may take place without the singer's awareness, or the process may be very clear. The particular vocal timbre adopted by each person through daily speech and singing activities exemplifies a situation in which the processes of construction can take place unnoticed (Eidsheim 2009: 5).

Eidsheim has asserted that vocal timbre as a performed articulation of a bodily sound that, whether conscious or not, is actually "carefully constructed" through, for instance, "repeated everyday processes, daily music-making, vocal lessons and listening to and imitating the vocal mannerisms of others" is a production of timbre that occurs through interaction within and through a social community (Eidsheim 2009: 5). These "repeated everyday processes" (Eidsheim 2009: 5) are the unacknowledged habits by which norms are solidified and reified. As a result, timbral inflections as performed (dis)articulations that would appear to be essential characteristics of whiteness or blackness, masculinity or femininity inflected through sound are "performative in the sense that the essence or identity that" these performed articulations would "purport to express" as belonging to essential white or black, male or female bodies "are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs" (Butler quoted in Foster 2003: 58). Timbre in this instance, as a *performed disarticulation* is performative, but not by any means subversively so, because it corporealises the sound

of whiteness. It can be understood as the point “where discourse meets corporeality” (Eidsheim 2009: 6) as a connection of the independent and socio-political categories of timbre, body and race. The relationship between these categories has often been considered as “an expression of an essential relationship” in particular because “the choreography that engenders timbre is internal” (Eidsheim 2009: 5). It is through these assumptions that “timbre has historically been considered the inherent sound of a body” (Eidsheim 2009: 5).

### **Performative Listening (the noise in our heads)**

Performed articulations that would reduce complex processes to more easily recognisable and classifiable identities and thus to commodifiable products such as Eidsheim’s example of Vocaloid software, seek to naturalise timbre as an inherently individual property which comes to seem natural in an interaction with “the impact of performative listening” (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Eidsheim has placed listening as occurring between an audience and a performer, as an always socially learned rather than individual, timeless and private processes. It is one in which the audience/listener psychically re-performs or internalises the articulations expressed by a performer, or in the case of musical pedagogy, by a teacher. The relay of meaning-making in this scenario would assume to connect ideas about race and sound as a “performed articulation of the meaning and value of a particular vocal timbre” (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Meaning and value, Eidsheim has asserted, are often shaped by presumptions of difference based upon assumed identificatory markers (characteristics) such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and nationality assumed as a priori and essential bodily differences. These often unconscious beliefs, for example of racialised and gendered

bodies, Eidsheim has suggested, “steer listening” (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Performative listening then is where these often unconscious beliefs provide the co-ordinates for an “aural compass” by which a listener may hear what they expect to, or desire to hear - for example as racialised and sexualised, or un-racialised and un-gendered - timbres that either confirm or confuse listening expectations (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Instead, Eidsheim has suggested, that rather than this ‘aural compass’ providing the co-ordinates for an essential connection between voice and timbre, vocal training within a specific genre is intimately tied with the social context in which it occurs. Eidsheim has given an example of the ways in which unacknowledged assumptions about ethnicity or nationality as ‘essential’ attributes of a voice are assumed to coherently reflect an ethnic or “national school of singing” (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Instead of being ‘natural’ expressions of ‘natural’ singing bodies, Eidsheim has asserted that such a voice is “intimately tied to the geographical area and its people” which it is supposed to ‘inherently’ represent (Eidsheim 2009: 6). The tie that binds geography, body and voice is bound through the performative relationship between articulation and listening, rather than being an expression of an essential sound of, for example Korean, British or Greek national singing styles as essential attributes of Korean or British or Greek bodies (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Rather, what comes to define a sound as “racial or ethnic within a 'national' genre is due to standard vocal” - and instrumental - “training within a particular geographical area” (Eidsheim 2009: 6). Expectations, which may be unconsciously framed by beliefs of racial or sexual difference, can be understood as shaping listening. These beliefs - as listening habits - play a role in the everyday performance of listening. Eidsheim comes to this conclusion through her analysis of perceived listener discrepancies between expectation and ‘reality’ in both Vocaloid

software use and in the musical classroom. The slippage or discrepancy between what one expects to hear and what one actually does appear to hear where race, gender, genre and timbre do not align as one might expect, makes audible the performed articulation - the connection of disparate parts - that occurs as performative listening "between a defined vocal timbre and a racialised body" (Eidsheim 2009: 6). In this way, performed articulations and performative listening combine in the assumption that a body should sound its race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality etc. *as* it's materiality. Further, these assumptions on the part of a teacher within the scene of musical pedagogy, are often internalised by the student in that "a singer can easily, and often does, follow and change according to these perceptions" (Eidsheim 2009: 6). It is this discrepancy between expectation and reality, which a student or singer may attempt to bridge by learning, internalising and performing the desired inflection expected by a teacher as much as by cultural norms which is the point at which the discursive can be heard to impact upon the corporeal.

An audience's listening then, can in itself be understood as performative of socio-cultural norms of the assumption of racial, ethnic and I would add, gendered and sexualised differences among other axes of difference that a singer's, student's or performer's identity is assumed to inherently possess and is thus often coerced to embody. As Eidsheim has explained this learned articulation on the part of the student is in fact a "continuous conditioning of the vocal body" which is "constituted by all aspects of a singer's physicality that are involved in and shaped by vocal engagement" (Eidsheim 2009: 7). The everyday performance of this conditioned vocal (sounding) body "is the point at which the discursive impresses upon the corporeal" and which then



in effect is a performed articulation that “can alter the corporeal” (Eidsheim 2009: 7). In this way the sound of the socio-politically differentiated body - as the body that Rodgers’ thesis has asserted is originally inscribed within the construction of timbre as sound’s own simultaneously devalued and desired materiality - is materialised as a perceptive sounding body so as to provide the necessary point of contrast within the auditory domain by which idealised manifestations of pitch as pure, disembodied and *fundamental* maintains its dominance as a norm (Eidsheim 2009: 7).

### **Vocal Performativity**

Jutta Koether in discussing the developmental process of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* has suggested that the remodelling of the art gallery space in which this installation occurred into a ‘club’ space was intentionally developed through both her and Gordon’s “very specific visual vocabulary and elements that we turned into our signature” (transcribed Koether HNA-Tate-2005). These visual signifying elements included mylar curtains painted in large gestures by Gordon; appropriated posters imprinted with the graphic ink stamps of the installation; the faux zebra carpeting and velvet drapes of the interior space of the tent; and the sweeping painterly gestures by Koether and Gordon on the exterior canvas surface of the tent. These visual signatures as combined creative practices of making marks - gestures - as expressions of movement, growth and feelings were intended to produce and maintain the idea of a social event whilst also insisting upon a recognisable visual *vocabulary* (transcribed Koether HNA-Tate-2005). As Koether has explained, “we liked to maintain this idea that by doing a project that seems to pose as a very social event, an idea that functions socially, [we would] still insist on a visual vocabulary that is recognisable” (transcribed

Koether HNA-Tate-2005). Extending this, I want to consider Gordon's voice in the installation as a kind of *auditory signature*, as a performative auditory gesture. In a way that suggests a connection with Eidsheim's theories of racialised vocal timbres, the use of song as a 'signature' as addressed by Suzanne G. Cusick as performative of sexuality is instructive (Cusick 1999). Cusick's interpretation of song as a "field for performing gender and sex at the body's borders" (Cusick 1999: 29) offers an alternative knowledge production, as Cusick has explained, against phenomenological and metaphysical theories of vocal disembodiment and absence/presence such as those which Derrida and Lacan have proffered (Lacan 2001; Derrida 2010). In a manner similar to Eidsheim's theorising, Cusick has suggested that "voices only stand for the bodily imperatives of biological sex" when thought of as originating inside the body's borders and not on the body's surfaces (Cusick 1999: 29). Cusick has claimed that the physicality of the voice is not just "determined by the site of origin, by the body itself" (Cusick 1999: 28) in which a body determined by an original citationality would normatively connote what Butler has addressed as an assumed "continuity between sex, gender and desire" (Butler 1993: 317). Such a continuity would assume to point ahead in one 'straight' direction. Instead Cusick has suggested that the physicality of the voice is a performance of the negotiation between "the individual vocaliser and the vocaliser's culture" (Cusick 1999: 28) in a manner that reinforces Eidsheim's analysis of performed articulations and performative listening.

### **Timbral Drag**

The concepts of performed (dis)articulation, performative listening and vocal performativity, I suggest, come together through what Nicol Hammond has briefly

termed ‘timbral drag’<sup>45</sup>. The combination of these processes in an idea of ‘timbral drag’ is intended to enable an interplay for what Corrine E. Blackmer has expressed as a “triadic oscillation among the categories of the social, the natural and the artificial” which she has claimed “results in the disruption and confounding of stable binarisms” (Blackmer 1993: 240). This destabilising of binary categorisations, according to Gordon, is a way of “showing the lack of distinction between reality and the artificial” which relates to the binary distinctions of black/white, performer/listener, teacher/student, heterosexual/homosexual, mind/body (Gordon 2014: 68). This idea that connects timbre, voice and performance as social constructions comes together in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* in a way in which the vocal apparatus of the installation is destabilised against normative, stable and clearly demarcated categories of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity or nationality in this instance through *timbre*. Instead ‘timbral drag’ may be understood as an articulation that bears no *fidelity* between timbre and voice any more than a *continuity* between sex, gender and desire or between race, gender and heterosexuality yet is an articulation that still maintains an ambiguous signature as its feminist frequency. Instead this idea puts forward the proposition that timbre and timbral vocal inflection, as articulation, are learned and encultured, where performed articulation, performative listening and vocal performativity combine in ways that are always contingent upon, indeed that drag upon and that are bound to, the social in the production of meaning. Timbre understood in this way is materialised through the discursive norms of audio-technical discourse rather than as providing an a priori and essential key to sound’s assumed material differences.

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45 The term was first mentioned by Nicol Hammond at FTM12 Feminist Theory and Music Conference, FTM 20 to 21 - New Voices in the Millenium. Hammond delivered the paper, “On Lesbian Identity, Corrective Rape and White-Washing in South Africa”.

*Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* considered through these ideas then presents as a site in which the performance is about the ways in which pitch and timbre analogously to political axes of difference as fundamental notions of sovereign propriety and ownership may be performed differently, collectively, collaboratively as an alternative to dominant and normative regimes of racialised sexual difference assumed as inherent to individual bodies. It suggests that these structures are indeed fluid, but more importantly, that these structures of assumed “natural” difference are the means by which the social, and thus understandings of auditory perception, is ordered. It is at this point that Eidsheim’s ideas about the constructed nature between timbre and the voice can be perceived to be put into play as “a connection that can be broken and established” (Eidsheim 2009: 5). A readily drawn conclusion that would correlate “vocal timbre and the singer’s so-called race”, Eidsheim has suggested, “is a symptom of the “standardisation” of the concept of race in a given society” (Eidsheim 2009: 9). It is a conceptualisation that would seek to identify a person as a particular race through the sound of their voice and through the genre (or family) to which they supposedly belong (Eidsheim 2009: 9). Instead what Eidsheim suggests is that “the sound of that voice represents the vocal community to which the singer belongs, or in which she desires to mark herself as a participant, rather than the essential sound of her body” (Eidsheim 2009: 9). Considered in this way, the analytical focus shifts to enable questions about why one might want to associate themselves with a particular community or musical genre to arise. Further, a reification of voice, race and timbre that would correlate “vocal communities with race, ethnicity or class” as inherent can be understood as a “performance of the divisions...that are important in the society” (Eidsheim 2009: 9) in which the (dis)articulation takes place.

### **Gordon Performing Badly: Redefining Property**

There is yet a third (performed) articulation that Siisiäinen has addressed through Foucault as “*confessional*, but of a rather extraordinary kind,” which she has called *blasphemous parrēsia* (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38). This articulation is occupied by the crowd - the actors of *Reverse Karaoke* in this allegory - as an articulation which is not the property of any one individual (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38). It is blasphemous within a history of acoustics because, unlike Ohm, Helmholtz and Seebeck, this “third form of truth-saying” eliminates the fundamental frequency from the notion of pitch entirely, as it is neither a “totalising nor individualising” impulse (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38). Siisiäinen’s reading of Foucault’s third form of parrēsia as “confessional” is relevant for this analysis for several reasons. Firstly, it is a form of truth emission that is uttered as a “public confession” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38; Foucault 2010: 109). Foucault has explained that this “is a double scene of confession that takes place on two levels” composed of a “blasphemous confession” and a “human confession” (Foucault 2010: 109), it is irresolutely hybrid and unstable. Secondly, this confession differs from Foucault’s critique of the ‘talking cure’ manifested through psychoanalysis, the ‘repressive hypothesis’ and the scientification and deployment of sexuality through a particular performance of rebellion against authority (Foucault 1978). This performance of rebellion is “generated in a situation of conflict and struggle” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38), signifying what Stuart Hall has called “the struggle in discourse” (Hall 1992: 127). This particular public confession as one that challenges the “reticence of the authority” for Foucault is focused fundamentally upon “*the theme of the voice*” rather than an “*agonistic play*” between logos and speech (Siisiäinen 2010b: 38). The theme of this

blasphemous voice - which is a public, collective utterance - is “neither song nor speech” but is “now a *cry (le cri)*, noise or the *bare voice*” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 39).

At this point I want to return to the vocal apparatus of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, considered through Gordon’s trademark vocal signature between speaking and singing, the song lyrics and the participatory covering of the song, this last point which I expand more upon toward the end of the chapter. This, I suggest, is an articulation of the apparatus through a performance of the *brute voice* which is “neither song nor speech” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 39), which does not belong to any one individual and which poses a challenge to the fundamental notion of sovereign propriety and individual coherence at the centre of heteronormal whiteness that would seek to reproduce pitch and define timbre within the scene of normative reproduction.

If Gordon, through a dominant hegemonic discourse can be heard as performing a representation of the disembodied white female, how through a negotiated or oppositional code might it be possible to hear her performing the unstable white female body as a pedagogical moment that can alert a listener to the ways in which bodies are “colonised, gendered, raced, classed and socialised” (Foster 2003: 68)? I want to suggest that one way in which *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* can be understood as problematising race, gender, sexuality and in particular the conjunction of feminine whiteness is through a challenge to “the notion of a unified performing self” (Foster 2003: 68) which can be heard in the installation as an always ambivalent and subversive repetition of pitch and timbre as everyday drag.

### **Destabilising Heterosexual Whiteness through the Hybrid Voice**

Gordon's musical performances circulate within the spaces of hybridity. Her vocal signature is one that hovers between speaking and singing, just noticeably off-key at times, almost as 'unpitched' or unmusical. Her delivery for *Reverse Karaoke* as already mentioned is flat, almost monotone, a bit distracted perhaps, definitely sounding a bit bored. It is not a full bodied virtuosic vocal delivery covering a vast octave range, but is rather more in line with the disembodied ideals within the purity of pitch as a performance of disembodiment as mentioned earlier. In fact, by hegemonic standards, it's quite a 'normal' voice, nothing spectacular. I am suggesting though, that there is a radical destabilisation of fundamental acoustic parameters because Gordon performs the idea of historical female whiteness not as silence or noise, not as absence or presence, but as a kind of blasphemous detuning of the fundamental parameters. Gordon performs the expectation of the white female body 'badly', ironically, as a subversive refusal of the historical disembodied figure of white female sexuality. She *seemingly* performs the white body, but there is a determined lack of enthusiasm for this performance that can be heard in the voice. As a parody of the disembodied female performed through dominant definitions of pitch as that which is said to be pure and lacking body and colour and of timbre as bodily excess disciplined and regulated through the rules of harmony, I suggest that it is possible to hear Gordon as faking or parodying the sound of feminine whiteness. It is through a hybrid vocal performance that is neither speech nor song and that poorly imitates a concept of white femininity, as a subversive everyday drag of 'feminine whiteness' that Gordon inserts questions about "realism" and "artifice" so as to destabilise any notion of a 'natural' performance of race and gender. In this way Gordon can be heard as a performance of conscious artificiality, a "melding

of the real and the fantastic” (Foster 2003: 61). The treatment of the “other” in this installation through a hybrid production of noise is one that does not other, but rather is a subversive embodiment of the other that performs a “self-other-shattering” (Halberstam 2008: 152), which, in this instance is intended to destabilise the assumed supremacy of hetero-whiteness. Such a destabilising of the unified-subject as a shattering of the object/subject dualism enables the move toward an intercultural, intergenerational and cross-gender alliance as an “alternative mode of knowledge production” (Halberstam 1998: 9). The hybrid voice within the liminal space of the installation is a performance of blasphemous parrēsia as a voice which is “non-individualised and non-totalised” and “exists only in the transition in-between individualities while unpossessed by any single one” (Siisiäinen 2010: 41). This space of “problematic liminal whiteness” and queer sexualities that traverses generational boundaries through the performance of Gordon as an icon of a feminist post-punk legacy re-presented in the historical present circulates through the space of the impasse, “‘in-between’ times/spaces in which social norms are broken apart, turned upside down, and played with” (Foster 2003: 72).

Gordon’s vocal gestures that sing-speak of desire that are delivered dead-pan, emotionless, flat, low-pitched and lacking timbral variation, I suggest, signifies her ‘failure’ to *be* the ideal of white womanhood. This is a very intentional refusal of ideas about musical perfection and virtuosity which provides the dissonance that betrays that “one does not belong to one’s environment” (Felski in Foster 2003: 80). Hegemonic histories, such as those proffered on Wikipedia as I mentioned earlier, may implicitly seek to claim Gordon as an ideal sign of white femininity, but Gordon’s subversive



performance of these expectations signifies a rejection of such performed articulations. In Gordon's interview for the *Her Noise Archive*, she explained the reaction received upon the release of "Unboxed" which was the first release by *Free Kitten*, her band with Julie Cafritz, Yoshimi P-We and Mark Ibold;

I don't want to say I was making fun of the whole notion, but it was kind of more serious than that. It was also like we're going to make a bunch of noise too, you know and just having fun with it and presenting it in a different context. But people never ever ever got over the impression of that first record and the reviews for *Free Kitten* were always like, "why are they working so hard to make such horrible sounding music?", or like, "You'd think they would be able to do better than that!" you know...and, ahhh, (laughs), nobody really got it, or vey few people did (transcribed Gordon HNI-2005).

For what may be understood as fundamental to the installation, is a redefinition and re-routing of **desire**. Gordon's flat, monotone, almost 'simple-tone' vocal delivery of clichéd lyrics about desire and body suggests a parodic interference with the assumed 'right' pitch and timbre of voice as a performative refusal to the interpellation of the logic of pitch/timbre/fidelity as much as a refusal of the interpellation of the logic of sex/gender/desire and heterosexual/race/gender reproduction. Instead Gordon plays what Hall facetiously called a "failure in communications" (Hall 1992: 127) within this relay of meaning-making to expose this failure *as* the implicitly intended communication within a hegemonic code but which is nothing more than a false distinction between the real and the artificial itself.

### **Struggle in Discourse: You Must Confess**

A re-routing of desire as a particularly blasphemous performance, can be perceived in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* through the lyrics of the installation's song, which can be further understood as a paradoxical kind of original cover song. For the

lyrics are all clichés from popular music forms<sup>46</sup>. The lyrics themselves can be found in many popular songs, pop, RnB, rap, country and western, folk, rock, indie etc. All of the lyrics come from songs that project an ideal (sexist and racist) image of 'woman'. The body in these songs is the othered body, the female body as the object of desire which is at once devalued and claimed through a disciplining of desire. The song of *Reverse Karaoke*, which on one hand is authored by Gordon, is actually itself a kind of cover version, a total hybrid mix or 'mash-up' of already existing songs. The absolute hybridity of the song exposes as a myth the notion of the singular author. Considering the authoring of a song through the concept of the individual, as singularly authored, hides the way in which songs, as vehicles for the transmission of cultural norms, are used to order the social and to materialise identities. Redefining the author function of a song - as much as a text or a composition - as an inherently social process enables one to hear the message of the music in this instance as one that seeks to reproduce 'woman' as an object of desire whilst simultaneously seeking to define the appropriate desire for her as a 'subject'.

Each lyrical line of the song is seemingly drawn from a catalogue of clichés from popular music history. A quick search online reveals that each of the lyrics can either be heard in or as the title of many other songs. For example, it is possible to hear Rachel Proctor, Neil Young, Woodie Guthrie, Bonnie Tyler, Bruno Mars, Billy Joel, Mariah Carey, Britney Spears, The Beatles, Jessie James, W.A.S.P, Bette Middler, Pat Benetar etc etc. All of these songs by these artists are about heterosexual desire and are perhaps best typified through the lyric "roll me over" which is a stock phrase used in traditional

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<sup>46</sup> I am indebted to the invigorating discussions experienced with Cathy Lane and Irene Revell for this valuable insight.

Hey hey	In the shadow	In the dirt
Hey hey	Of the rose	Look at me
Hey hey	In the shadow	I see you
Gonna get you back	In the shadow	Look at me
Gonna follow you down	Of the rose	I see you
Gonna get you back	In the shadow	Through the rain
Gonna follow you down	There you stood	And the colours
Down the road	Where the pebble	Through the rain
Down the road	[Neath their chin]	And the colours
Where you're from	Where the pebble	Roll me over
Where you from	[Neath their chin]	Roll me over
Gonna get you back	Failing down	In the dirt
[The boy you left]	Failing down on your knees	In the dirt
Down the road	Falling down on your knees	Where I found you
Turn around	In the dirt	Where I like you
Down the road	In the dirt	In the dirt
That you left me	Where I like you	On your knees
That you left me	Where I like you	With your blue jeans
Down the road	Throw the water down	Ripped to please
Down the road	Throw the water down	Please me
Down the road		Follow you down
	Throw the water down	Follow you down
	Throw the water down	Follow you down
	Throw the water down	In the water

Fig. 10 Kim Gordon *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* lyrics. 2005

folk songs dating from Victorian times. One version of the words and music of this ballad, which has actually manifested in many different, anonymously authored versions, was copyrighted by Desmond O'Connor in London on May 8, 1944 (O'Connor 1944). This ballad gained a particular popularity in the West through and

after WWII. There are numerous versions of the ballad, some more explicit than others, with the song often being performed as a drinking game by those in the military forces. *Roll me over* is a ‘bawdy ballad’ which ‘counts’ through the stages of heterosexual ‘courtship’; “*Oh this is number one And the fun has just begun*”, eventual intercourse; “*Oh this is number eight, He bent me o’er the garden gate*”, eventual pregnancy, “*Oh this is number nine, And the baby’s doin’ fine*” and the inevitable repeat of this, “*Oh this is number ten, And when he’s through we’ll do it again*<sup>47</sup>”.

The form of ‘truth emission’ that occurs through the construction of the *Reverse Karaoke* song is “confessional” in that by collating these lyrics as ‘public utterances’ the ‘hidden’ intention of the lyrical meaning is exposed, where desire expressed as love is a smokescreen for desire as property. A ‘blasphemous’ confession is forced from the collated lyrics, where the hidden intended meaning, i.e. the reproduction of the category of woman as an object of heterosexual male desire, is transformed through the “struggle in discourse” (Hall 1992: 127) as a “public confession” to instead signify the “anonymous truth of the multitude” (Siisiäinen 2010: 40). Meaning in each of the songs appropriated by Gordon in *Reverse Karaoke* is not produced by an individual desire but is transformed through a collective subversive repetition of the social norms that each lyric represents. Considering the song as a subversive amalgamation of pop clichés, as a very particular kind of public confession exposes the ways in which the dominant norm of womanhood in these songs has been constructed through a matrix of racialised heterosexuality. Instead of transmitting the dominant code embedded in each of the individual lyrics, taken together the lyrics can be heard to interrogate the co-incidental

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47 [http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/lyrics/roll\\_me\\_over.html](http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/lyrics/roll_me_over.html) [accessed November 2014]

production of sexuality and race through a consideration of the construction of the category of woman through what human rights activist Steve Martinot has called a “double objectification of sexuality and motherhood” (Martinot 2012: 54).

Motherhood, within Martinot’s critical history of the constructions of “race”, as a prime signifier of heterosexual reproduction, has historically played out very differently for ‘black’ and ‘white’ ‘women’.

Writing in *The Machinery of Whiteness* (2012), Martinot has traced the instrumentalisation of the female body through the statute of “matrilineal servitude” which, in the mid-seventeenth century English colonies of the Americas was drafted and enforced to “enhance plantation wealth through the transformation of a woman’s childbearing capacity into the production of bond-labourers, with primary attention paid to the children of African women” (Martinot 2012: 40). In effect, this statute “enabled the codification of slavery and the invention of a social process of racialisation” which through the instrumentalisation of sexuality and motherhood “divided “African” and “English” into separate social categories” (Martinot 2012: 40-41). The title of this Act passed in Virginia, America in 1662 was “Negro Women’s Children to Serve According to the Condition of the Mother” and it sought to capitalise upon the reproductive capacities of African women, incorporating “their sexuality and maternal capacities into their chattel status as a form of production, producing labourers who would also be considered commodities” (Martinot 2012: 39-40). Further, this Act validated “the violation of African women as the cultural site of sexuality itself, in the name of and in the interest of plantation wealth” (Martinot 2012: 40). Whilst the wombs of African women were commodified in this way for the reproduction of “free” bond-labor for

plantation owners by law-makers who were often one and the same, African women through this Act were also instrumentally and historically sexualised in ways that, as the previous chapter sought to expose, can be heard to echo through racist and sexist discourses in the historical present. Simultaneously, the passing of this statute in 1662 formalised and instrumentalised the ideal of historical English femininity as purity whereby “sexual being was in the same gesture withheld from English women” (Martinot 2012: 40). As Martinot has explained, sexuality was devalued in English women and instrumentally commodified in African women where “English women became instead the de-sexualised site of validated motherhood as the concomitant of the commodification of African motherhood as capital”, the latter for whom motherhood was appropriated as production (Martinot 2012: 40).

For both English and African women, cultural identity and personhood were transformed. African women were more directly placed in thrall to profitability by the transformation of their labor and their childbearing capacity into property. And English women were placed in thrall to the production of the unblemished heirs to that property. They were both robbed of their womanness as persons and robbed of their personhood as women, dismembered by sexuality turned against motherhood and motherhood turned against sexuality. That differentiation, imposed through motherhood, was the first step toward defining a social as well as juridical separation between bond-labor and free labor that eventually divided “African” and “English” into separate social categories (Martinot 2012: 42).

Race, understood through processes of female sexual commodification and functionalisation, as purity and excess as Martinot has explained “amounted to an artificial cultural separation based on the instrumentalisation of women” (Martinot 2012: 54). This “double objectification of sexuality and motherhood” as an instrumentalisation of heterosexual reproduction as purity and property, as Martinot has asserted, “concretised itself as an invented white racialised identity grounded in a purity

concept essential for the very derivation of all future racial divisions” (Martinot 2012: 54). The construction of a racially divided category of women through a politics of sexuality and motherhood as purity and property, as an object of the state to be either functionalised or commodified, is one element within a regime of heteronormal whiteness, and thus one mode of social ordering, that can be appreciated as implicitly encoded within ideals of perfect fidelity. Both organisational systems, purity of “race” and perfect fidelity, rely upon the same mechanisms of reproduction, what Rodgers has critiqued as an unacknowledged dependence upon “uterine social organisation” (Rodgers 2010b: 27). This pattern repeats through the reproduction of heteronormal whiteness as much as in reproductions of music that are based upon historically hegemonic ideals of “musical quality” upheld by a “musical establishment” which Barry Truax has critiqued as aspiring “to a level of abstraction where issues such as gender or sexual orientation play no role” (Truax 2003: 118). Rodgers has similarly critiqued cultural (re-)production based upon birthing metaphors within discourses of sound whereby she has asserted,

A logic of sound reproduction, which is predicated on fidelity to origins and facilitated by technologies of storage and supply, arguably signifies a normative “uterine social organisation (the arrangement of the world in terms of the reproduction of future generations, where the uterus is the chief agent and means of production)”. By contrast, a logic of synthesis opens up ways of thinking a more radical and non-normative clitoral economy—a social organisation where cultural production is not based on birthing metaphors—in which female and/or non-procreative sexual pleasure may be foregrounded, and patriarchal origins and lineage backgrounded or effaced (Rodgers 2010b: 27).

A “logic of synthesis,” as Rodgers has suggested, can provide a means through which to reconsider norms of social organisation so as to re-rout the logic of the cover song in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* through an alternative “more radical and non-

normative economy” (Rodgers 2010b: 27). This alternative economy is one that not only does not resolve harmonically into a fundamental authority of heteronormal whiteness, but also importantly exposes the very performance of such an “essence or identity” as a construction maintained through “corporal signs” (Butler 1999: 173). These norms of reproduction, the “acts, gestures, enactments” of socio-political and cultural difference, are performative through their impact upon the psyche of the individual *and* the social (Butler 1999:173).

Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Butler 1999: 173).

The very structure of *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* directly engages in a politics of sound and social reproduction, skewing the meaning of originals and copies; the icon of Kim Gordon as an original/copy; participant performances of the original/copy cover song; original/copy recordings entered into *Reverse Karaoke*’s own archive; and original copies of the performances of the installation gifted to participants. All of this copying directly seeks to entangle notions of original and copy as the authoritative and disciplined norms of reproduction, specifically as a challenge to dominant temporal narratives of progress based upon a prior - an *a priori* - of an original, natural and authentic subject whose “voice, sound, audition and listening” (Siisiäinen 2010b: 33) would seemingly be an inherent property of an original and solitary individual.



### 4.3 Covering the Cover Song

As a conclusion for this chapter, I want to return to the debate about continuity and discontinuity that I opened the chapter with, by way of a re-cap of the destabilisation of timbral embodiment mapped out in the latter half of the chapter. These concerns lead me back to the context of song as it may be perceived to play out in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, through notions of originals and copies between generations and a further queering of these foundational forms through Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag' (Freeman 2000; 2010; 2011).

Competing authorities of continuity and discontinuity in the nineteenth century debate about the definition of a tone, I suggest, can be put into a "more complex friction" through a notion of *queer aurality*, but one that is inherently complicated by "feminist concerns about generationality, continuity and history" (Freeman 2000; 729). In a way that returns even more anachronistically to the first chapter in this research, ideas about ruptures and smooth flows in the transmission of ideas and histories from one generation to the next are complicated through the persistent nagging repetition of the question of "where are the women", a question that echoes around the edges like gossip throughout these pages. Whilst in 2001 Džuverović and Neset re-visited this question posed originally in 1971, what happens now, in re-posing this question as we approach 2021? What difference does thirty or twenty or fifty, or one hundred and seventy-three years - since the 'invention' of the siren - make? What happens in such a "shot-by-shot remake" of an earlier question "with the same title" (Freeman 2000: 729)? In particular, what do these past events, the siren, Oliveros' and Nochlin's angry feminist interventions, Džuverović and Neset's ironic post-feminist answer of *Her Noise*, iconic

re-performances of Shirley Bassey and Koether and Gordon's re-staging of their own feminist-activist-music/art-lives afford in the 'present' moment upon the idea of feminism, or sound, or music, or art as a kind of "political utopia" (Freeman 2000: 732) in which the dominations of the past might be undone through a de-disciplining of the subordinated body? For what does point towards a kind of continuity between these 'different' times, is a legacy in the present of political emptiness, in which these 'revolutions' of the past evidence little in the way of successful activism in a numbed, flattened out, institutionalised present. What all this does make clear is that feminism is an uncompleted and contestatory project, one that has not been handed down neatly, as a continuity from one generation to the next. Its very discontinuity is what we have largely inherited, an "incomplete political project" (Freeman 2000: 732). This is the generational import, the feminist frequency that *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, through a queered logic of the cover song, crucially and paradoxically provides a continuity for. For the notion of the original replaced by its copy, as a specific atemporal and very post-modern eclipse, evades the possibility of any focus upon that which falls within the shadow of such an eclipse.

In order to address the eclipse of the past that a rush toward the future encourages, Elizabeth Freeman has put forward the concept of temporal drag as a queered temporality intended to challenge the dominance of linear progressions of "monumental time" in which existence is timeless, static and fixed (Freeman 2010: 4). The intention of this temporality that vacillates between the past and the present is to contribute alternative modes of communication between perceived generations through a "more complicated relay between past and present" (Freeman 2011: 1978) that refuses to

progress, to simply replace, in a march toward the future, an original with its copy. This deformation of the dominant Western narrative of progressive time seeks to bend time away from the forward marching demand of production predicated upon and through the “normalisation of power” and the “power of normalisation” (Stoler 1995, 34) played out on the disciplined bodies of the sexualised and racialised other.

As a return then, I would like to conclude upon the context of song in *Reverse Karaoke*, specifically in terms of the ritual performance involved in the singing of cover songs in standard karaoke set ups, where people who perform karaoke may cover crooner classics, torch songs and popular hits, often to escape a dreary day at the office by embodying a fantasy of song, temporarily singing away the remnants of their reality to become Aretha Franklin, Shirley Bassey or Kim Gordon for a brief moment.

Performances of karaoke and cover songs are already parodic and anachronistic forms, each requiring a certain mimicry, with karaoke especially relying on imitation, mimicry and impersonation to carry-off performed articulations of classic songs like (*You Make Me Feel Like a) Natural Woman*, *I Am What I Am* and *Addicted to Love*.

In the context of the *Her Noise Project*, for which this installation was commissioned, the encouragement of a wider range of people participating in music, the challenge to virtuosity through a collapse between amateur and professional, and the reversal, or resignification, of listeners to that of collaborative performers does signify through Butler’s influential gendering of performativity and the replacement of an original with its copy. Butler’s understanding of gender as an act, an *everyday drag*, sought to insert points of destabilisation and resistance into the notion of fixed gendered identities, understood as being the product of specific socio-cultural norms. In *Reverse Karaoke*:

*Automatic Music Tent*, the norms that would stabilise into fixed categories such as amateur and professional, listener and performer are similarly resignified in ways that challenge notions of virtuosity and ideas about active and passive listening. It could be said, that *potentially*, performative listeners are the new subject-positions that emerge from the automatic music tent.

In taking Butler's theory to its limit in *Reverse Karaoke*, the original song of the installation would need to be entirely replaced by its copy. In line with Butler's theory, this would suggest that there is no original, only copies of copies of copies (simulacra ad infinitum) to reach the realisation that "gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (Butler 1993: 313). So in effect Gordon's voice would need to be completely effaced and replaced, similar to what happens in a normal kind of karaoke set-up in which the original performer is silenced so as to allow for the karaoke performer to take centre stage, to create a new original. But this doesn't happen at all in the installation, and further, nothing really radically new is being created in the repeated performances inside the *Automatic Music Tent*. Although the performances by the participants of the installation surely differ from each other, Kim Gordon's vocal track stays the same, as do the instruments, guitar and percussion in every recording, of which there are around 2000 in the *Her Noise Archive*. The insistence on Gordon's voice and the archiving of recordings suggests to me perhaps a different kind of engagement with history and time than Butler's theories of gender performativity, as "repetitions with a difference" alone would allow (Freeman 2000: 728).

What Freeman's concept of temporal drag does is complicate the original/copy dualism, not by replacing the original with the copy as Butler's early theories sought to do, but by insisting upon a political embodiment that reworks and ultimately seeks to repair overlooked fragments of history that are continuously being erased by progress. This insistence upon a covering of past subject-positions "exteriorised as a mode of embodiment" is specifically re-shaped through an alternative temporality and relation to history compared to the ahistorical progress narrative by which Butler's theories have been (post-)structured. Originals and copies, continuity and discontinuity, are re-worked in ways that can account for, that are reliant upon history, in that they do not erase the "interesting threat that the genuine past-ness of the past sometimes makes to the political present" (Freeman 2000: 728). In *Reverse Karaoke*, the genuine past-ness of the past is that the feminist ideals, ideals that Gordon is known for, can be heard to have largely failed. Gordon's 'feminist frequency' transmitted throughout her musical career, becomes more difficult to tune into as it fades from memory. The *Automatic Music Tent* is one way in which this signal can be re-transmitted to a new audience. An inter-generational connection occurs then, not as a linear progress narrative, but as a warning from the past in that prior utopian yearnings to transform institutionalised and systemic inequality, in complete contradiction with the business-as-normal narrative meted out in mainstream media, have not at all been met. This genuine threat, that a maintained focus upon the 'truth-games' of history enables, is the threat that without awareness of the structures of history, history will, does, reproduce itself through the same relations of domination and subordination. *Ways of knowing* then, "packing", history means knowledge that there is still work to be done in the present (Freeman 2000). Listening to the past in the present enables a reworking of history, of the past, for the present.

Listening out for the past in the present, then, embedded within *Reverse Karaoke* might yet be instructive. For in *Reverse Karaoke*, Gordon's voice as an auditory signature is not entirely effaced, it remains throughout, as a kind of moving reminder, or undertow, travelling through different times, spaces and places of the installation. Like "the undertow of a wave momentarily pulling back a forward motion" Gordon's voice can be heard as a "visceral pull of the past on a supposedly revolutionary present" (Halberstam 2010: 183) to alert us to both the failures of the past and the very unfinished business of feminist, queer and civil rights projects. For if we are to think about Kim Gordon as a figure who has been instrumental in inserting a feminist politics in post-punk, nu-wave and experimental music, and whose voice is already so laden with meaning and history so as to present as an historical signifier (an icon), then what we are being asked to do is to listen closely to this history, and specifically to the gaps and failures of this political project that remains, necessarily, unfinished. This close listening, akin to a close reading, involves listening "out for the past, for the odd detail, the unintelligible or resistant moment" (Freeman 2010: 16-17). This "odd detail" is the moment that Stuart Hall has pin-pointed as a 'mismatch' between levels of signification and their received meaning "which most provoke defining elites and professionals to identify a 'failure in communications'" (Hall 1992: 127). Yet what can be heard is not so much a failure in communication, but more a failure of ethics and a failure of progress in the insistence upon a coherent sovereign subject predicated upon the erasures of history, the failures of feminism to make democracy deliver on its utopian promises which, as cultural theorist Catherine Grant has suggested, may be most productive (transcribed Grant HNS-2012).

Considered then through the concept of temporal drag, *Reverse Karaoke* moves the performers in the tent between moments past and a kind of redemptive or reparative moment in the present. It is a redemptive moment in that a hidden past may be redeemed in the present, in a way that works toward repairing the trauma of and compensating for a refused past. Temporal drag, as a kind of deformation of the mastery of time seeks to reconsider the relationship between history and performativity in the present, combining both continuity and alterity (discontinuity), re-synthesizing notions of originals *and* copies through an alternative temporality that seeks to open up to cross-generational, cross-gender *and* intercultural identifications by which “a subject in one historical moment might actually inhabit the sensibility or set of *desiring* structures of a subject in another historical moment” (Halberstam 2007: 52 emphasis added). This socio-political temporal re-synthesis then lends itself to Rodgers’ assertion within audio-technical discourse that “a logic of synthesis opens up ways of thinking a more radical and non-normative clitoral economy” (Rodgers 2010b: 27). As a feminist intervention that posits an alternative economy to narratives of normative reproduction and generation, the activation of the installation provides a visceral fusion between a single body in the present tense and an experience that has been coded as both public and past: for instance, a sexually dissonant and dissident body might participate in a reenactment of refusal and/or rejection from musical norms that have refused illegible bodies a place as musicians, improvisors, composers or performers, as a way of reliving and thus re-organising anxiety, negation or exclusion - as a way of disorganising everyday trauma through a re-mediation of affect. In this way, *Reverse Karaoke* corporealises an encounter with social and musical histories and thereby contributes to a reparative criticism that takes up the materials of a traumatic past and seeks to remix

them in the interests of alternative possibilities for being, knowing and collaborating. This reworking of memory as a social event is a way to create queer genealogies that are themselves de-generative and de-compositional, in the sense of being about an inheritance of qualities with no value to a dominating culture, played out through the ritual of the cover song that is seemingly at the heart of the installation.

It would seem then that this idea of *temporal drag* is embedded in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* and in fact throughout each of the works addressed within this research. For in the installation you cannot help but hear Gordon's voice - you are invited to play *with/as* her without rejecting or assimilating her voice, which invites a reconsideration of the person singing, her words, her voice and delivery, her time as you do or don't keep up with the 'oddly timed' delivery of the tune. Further, this "drag of voice and instrumental parts" (Peraino 2007: 60) that is called for by participants in *Reverse Karaoke* does not seem to be about calling into question the integrity of either Kim Gordon as an "original", nor does an effort to sing her song appropriate or diminish her accomplishments. Instead the invitation to sing and play *as/with* Gordon offers an insight into ways in which a 'queering of performance' that accesses and reinvests in the past may exceed heteronormal understandings of time, of continuity *and* alterity, of assimilation *and* separation, forcing the present into a more complex relationship "between the now of performance and the "then" of historical time" (Halberstam 2005: 183). For this playing *as/with* Gordon itself enacts a form of time-travelling and creates the odd effect of embodying two time-spaces at once, as "a doubling, a haunting, and a generational negotiation" (Subrin 2006). This way of considering time, as *temporal drag*, seeks to allow for cross-gender, cross-generational



and intercultural identifications that move beyond normative oedipal timeframes of institutionalised power relations, of school, work, children, mortgage, more work and finally retirement if you are lucky, to insert alternative, queered, temporalities, where time does not march forward in one straight line. Thought of in this way, the model of history implied by the reperformance of song in *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* is not the progressive unfolding of a narrative of assimilation, it is perhaps more as Halberstam has suggested, “a jagged story of cathexis and repudiation, identification and disidentification, love and hate” played out through a noisy theatrics of the cover version and it is through this queered song that a “different model of friendship, history, and art sings its song” (Halberstam 2007: 58) leading to both a negation and fulfilment of the self *from elsewhere*, and from *other times*.



## 5 PRACTICES OF FREEDOM

*One takes up freedom as “the ontological condition of ethics”  
and one works one’s own habits, comportment, relationships, and abilities  
so that one becomes increasingly able to exemplify one’s values and  
maintain oneself in one’s freedom.*

Ladelle McWhorter 2013: 71-2

This final chapter seeks to address the changing applications and understandings of amplitude as the last of the fundamental parameters of sound to be addressed in this research through anti-racist, diasporan and queer feminist discourses. Shifting phases of amplitude that reflect shifting historical notions of the mapping of life and death, the management of life and an intensification of life regulated through the reproduction of ‘nature’ as the basis of competition within shifting liberal discourses are addressed in this chapter through an analysis of the installation *For you, only you* as instigated by Sonia Boyce (Boyce 2007). This installation, as described below in more detail, is a collaborative work produced by Boyce with London-based sound artist Mikhail Karikis, and the British early music consort choir Alamire.

Historical uses of amplitude, as will be expanded upon throughout this chapter, have been put into service in the disciplining of a sound in a manner that may be appreciated as correlating with modes of social organisation in which an individual body is disciplined into conforming with social norms. In the shift from classic and neoclassic liberalism to neoliberalism within an era of biopolitics, amplitude, understood as a kind of ‘loudness’ is intensified so as to be distributed through a general population and to

regulate a social order of the historical present. This analysis seeks to connect these related yet shifting discursive patterns addressed throughout *For you, only you*; sameness/difference; emancipation/captivity; classic sovereign power/biopower; classic/neo-classic liberal and neoliberal forms of governmentality; and a revolutionary claim for rights/radical questioning of governmentality, all as culminating through the discourses of domination, oppression and governmentality. Further, connecting feminist and Foucauldian theories of oppression and domination respectively, queer feminist philosopher Ladelles McWhorter through readings of Foucault has focused upon “three levels of force relationships” that provide an over-all structure for this chapter as “strategic relations, techniques of government, and states of domination” (McWhorter 2013: 57). This chapter maps these power forces through the rise of the individual, the interplay between the individual and the collective and proffers an ontology of the social as an ethical practice that maintains a stubborn connection with the politics of the *group*. This chapter will seek to trace both the audibility of and a reworking of these relationships through the composition and performance of *For you, only you*.

***For you, only you* Sonia Boyce, with Mikhail Karikis and Alamire (2007)<sup>48</sup>**

*For you, only you* is a series of performances between sound artist Mikhail Karikis and early music consort choir Alamire directed and initiated by Sonia Boyce who also plays a pivotal role in the performance of the work. The installation, whilst very much a collaborative project, is guided primarily by Boyce, as its initiator, director and somewhat in the manner of a collaboratory ‘open work’, which I expand more upon

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48 For schematic breakdown see appendix 1.b page 344



Fig. 11 Sonia Boyce, Mikhail Karikis, Alamire, *For you, only you* installed at Rivington Place, Iniva 2013

towards the end of this chapter, very much its composer. This analysis will focus upon the audiovisual installation displayed at London's Rivington Place at Iniva in 2013 with a specific focus upon the audio recording that accompanied the catalogue of the work produced in 2007. As the title *For you, only you* intones, the listener is implicated through this work as an individual, where the play between the individual and the collective is crucial. Boyce has explained that the title of the work indicates that the intention is that the work speaks directly to *you* as the audience, spectator, listener, it is dedicated to 'you'. The title itself then places the work initially within a classic scene of interpellation in which the individual as an "I" is materialised through being hailed as "you". The question arises immediately, who is the "you" being interpellated, to whom is this work dedicated? The possible answers to this question consume the following analysis.

## Placement of the Work

Before moving on to an analysis of the composition of *For you, only you*, I want to spend a moment upon the place where *For you, only you* was originally performed, in the Magdalen Chapel at Oxford College in Oxford, England, founded in 1458 and which is a precise element in the work for a number of reasons. The chapel and the college both represent and to this day maintain the historic seat of power of the British establishment<sup>49</sup> with past and present alumni including politicians, civil servants and parliamentarians, British peers and royals, ministers of justice, clergy, academics, sports people and business people. Additionally, the installation re-stages and re-scores the Renaissance motet “*Tu solus qui facis mirabilia*” (*You alone can do wonders*) by the composer Josquin Desprez, composed around 1470, which performs another kind of temporal drag, listening back to the fifteenth century through ears that we assume ‘belong’ to the twenty-first. This situates the work in an historical period of transition from the medieval to the modern. The late fifteenth century sees the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade and the European colonisation of the Americas and as indexed in this work and expanded upon throughout this chapter, equates the birth of modern consciousness and scientific rationalism not with the Enlightenment, but with the commencement of the Atlantic slave trade in the fifteenth century. What this represents in the work, I suggest, can be considered as the birth of modern consciousness, both through the use of the Renaissance Josquin score which symbolises the birth of the author in classical composition and through the institutions of Reformist Christianity, capitalism and the commencement of the scientific revolution as the joint sites of the

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49 The alumni of the college include Conservative foreign secretary William Hague, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne and Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt among other almost exclusively white male politicians, lawyers, bishops and academics.

“modernist invention” of “captivity and emancipation” that have come to typify the modern episteme (Chow 2002: 39).

### **Compositional Structure**

*For you, only you* is a multi-layered work. Initially, it proceeds with three main voices but, due to an inherent movement designed into the very process of the work it is not possible to fix any one identity to any one voice for long. The three voices each take on the modalities of witnessing, testifying and signifying which move through each of the performers, the choir, the sound artist and the audience, the later as a position which Boyce shares, through the play of antiphony. Antiphony as a musical form suggests a means by which to trace the three levels of performativity and their differing modes of communication that operate within this work, all of which I elaborate upon in more detail throughout the chapter.

The meta-structure of the musical composition of *For you, only you* is similarly structured around the triad. There are three main movements within the composition. The first movement is dominated by Alamire, the second by Karikis and the third and final movement is where the “dialogue between two characters” represented in the work as “the voice of an old master and a contemporary, troubled voice” collide and *apparently* resolve (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19). Quite clearly, this presents a re-working of the Hegelian lord and bondsman dialectic, of Kantian notions of beauty, taste and aesthetic judgement and importantly for this analysis, the classic scene of interpellation<sup>50</sup>. As a musical form of performativity, antiphony requires, according to

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<sup>50</sup> The moment of interpellation, I want to suggest, is not only visible but is also audible, even primarily audible as the call of Althusser’s “Hey, you there!”, which is usually heard before being

Paul Gilroy, the shifting of identities through three movements, “individual assertion within and against the group... as individual, as a member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition” (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79).

## 5.1 The Individual

In order to address questions of interpellation that are at play within the antiphonal structure of *For you, only you*, of who the subject of the work might be, who is ‘you’, who is ‘I’ and “who is imitating whom and how agency should be imagined”, cultural theorist Rey Chow’s analysis of interpellation in which there are “at least three levels of mimeticism working in an overlapping, overdetermined manner at all times” is instructive (Chow 2002: 103-4). Mimeticism, of course, is the basis of performativity and elements of Chow’s analysis of mimeticism as interpellation, particularly of the first two levels that she has identified, provide a means by which to consider the levels of antiphonal communication in this work. Her third level though, as will become more apparent throughout the process of this analysis, remains caught within dialectical logics and thus is subsumed within “states of domination” which I return to toward the end of the chapter (McWhorter 2013: 67). Instead, this analysis will depart from Chow’s third and final form of mimeticism which she calls coercive and will consider instead, following Foucault, the emergence of a sociality governed by strategic logics (Foucault 2008: 42). This provides an alternative lens through which the social may be conceived of not only as a teleology of the atomised individual, which is actually the starting point of this installation, but rather as the site of practices of a self that “comes

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seen and is a means for the disciplining of the individual through regimes of discursive intelligibility. The call ‘Hey you!’ is intended to call the subject as an “I” into being (Althusser 2009: 105).



to and continues to be in a network of social and political relations” as a self that does “not exist without others” (McWhorter 2013: 72).

The first level of performativity that Chow has addressed “has to do with the imperative, created by Western imperialism and colonialism of the past few hundred years, of the white man as the original” (Chow 2002: 103-4). This links with Rodgers’ assertion of the archetypal Western white male as the universal subject of sound and the fundamental frequency of heteronormal whiteness that I identified in the previous chapter (Rodgers 2010b: v, 4, 56, 72) as a particular “arrangement of force relations” governed through discourses of classic liberalism (McWhorter 2013: 68). In *For you, only you* in the first movement of the work (up to 2’44”), this frequency of classic liberalism is amplified as “the white coloniser, his language, and his culture [which] stand as the model against which the colonised is judged” (Chow 2002: 103-4). Within this classic colonial scene the first level of antiphony is performed in such a way that the “contemporary troubled voice” (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19) being performed by Karikis must, as Chow has explained, “imitate, to become like her master” so as to be recognised and perceived as intelligible whilst “knowing full well that her efforts at imitation will forever remain unsatisfactory” (Chow 2002: 103-4). In *For you, only you* this can be perceived to play out initially through Karikis’s initiation as the soloist in the work, his hailing into existence by the coloniser, performed here by Alamire, as he stutters toward acquiring an intelligible language. In *For you, only you* Karikis, initially assuming the position of replying in this relation of antiphony is symbolically placed as the testifying confessor<sup>51</sup>, standing beneath the sculpted wall of martyrs in the Magdalen

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51 In a traditional psychoanalytical relation, this represents the power relation of the analysand and the analyst, in a court of law it represents one trying to prove one’s innocence, within religion it

Chapel at Oxford, the place where the preacher would normally testify to the presence of God. The choir, Alamire, takes up the position of calling out to the ‘troubled voice’. Karikis is called forth to testify and Alamire, initially, to bear witness, to hear the testimony and to acknowledge and legitimise the existence of the “contemporary troubled voice” within the specific colonial/subaltern power/knowledge regime (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19).

In the opening moments of *For you, only you*, Karikis initiates the dialogue with noise, by clearing his throat four times, to which Alamire responds with the first line of the Josquin motet, *Tu solus qui facis mirabilia* (you alone can do wonders). Karikis then, at 0’30”, clears his throat twice more followed by a throat mutter of mixed consonant and vowel sounds and breaths the word *εγώ*, “I” in Greek, once, hesitantly. Alamire respond again with the first half of the second line of the motet, *Tu solus Creator* (you alone are the creator). At 0’50” Karikis responds with *εγώ, εγώ*, with voiced and guttural consonant utterances which draw out to a higher, sustained tone. Alamire in turn responds with the first half of the third line of the motet, *Tu solus Redemptor* (you alone are the Redeemer), modulating around the held note of Karikis as the soloist with the choir finishing harmonically and dominantly an octave lower than Karikis. “You alone” - *Tu solus* - is important, this is the hailing of the individual, atomised, as the starting point of the work. This sets up the power dynamic in the first movement, with Alamire in the dominant position of calling into being and validating Karikis’ individual presence in the space and whose response within this primary scene of interpellation can be heard as “providing the very condition of existence and the trajectory of its desire”

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represents the sinner repenting to God.

(Butler 1997: 2). *For you, only you* as a sonic performance of the master/slave dialectic and classic dramaturgy of the primary scene of interpellation can be heard through Alamire's response to the original call through the repeated "you alone" (you alone can do wonders, you alone are the creator, you alone are the Redeemer), calling, hailing the "I" that Karikis struggles to stutter (εγώ) into the regime of intelligibility.

This primary scene sonically replays the hierarchical dialectic between the original and copy, which has been a developing concern throughout this entire research. Karikis, whose performance in the work represents the colonised, is therefore placed in "the position of the inferior, improper copy" (Chow 2002: 104) from the beginning of the piece. The hierarchical values embedded within the original/copy dialectic, as Chow has explained, are structured in such a way as to reinforce the original as the only authentic standard "by which the copy is judged" (Chow 2002: 104). This position of authenticity is performed by Alamire who represent the authoritative position of "the white man, and the white man alone", that of the coloniser (Chow 2002: 104).

Condemned to a permanent inferiority complex, the colonised subject must nonetheless try, in envy, to become that from which she has been excluded in an a priori manner. She is always a bad copy, yet even as she continues to be debased, she has no choice but to continue to mimic. She is damned if she tries; she is damned if she doesn't (Chow 2002: 104).

What is amplified within this scene is the atomisation of individuality that results from the performativity of the original/copy dialectic. As the above quotation from Chow explains, the double bind/double consciousness of 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' is the intended result that arises through the interpellative demand to assert oneself as a recognisable individual, but as one that is already inscribed as inferior,

within this hierarchical regime of intelligibility. The double bind is one in which McWhorter, citing feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye, has addressed as a scene in which, “if we comply, we signal our docility and our acquiescence in our situation... On the other hand, anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous” (Frye quoted in McWhorter 2013: 56). Similarly, the double bind is the cruelty contained within optimism that Berlant has suggested is “apprehensible as an affective event in the form of a beat or a shift in the air that transmits the complexity and threat of relinquishing ties to what’s difficult about the world” (Berlant 2011: 51). I return to the ways in which this ‘shift in the air’ may be heard in the composition toward the end of the chapter.

### **Amplifying classic liberal economies**

This primary scene of interpellation, the hailing of the “I” into existence through the Althusserian interpellation “Hey, you there!” (Althusser 2009: 105) takes place as Foucault has explained within “the classical theory of sovereignty” in which “the right of life and death was one of sovereignty’s basic attributes” (Foucault 2003: 240). Foucault has explained that the self-assumption of inferiority that emerges from this scene is forced through the “social contract” of the particular milieu by which an individual must necessarily “delegate absolute power over them to a sovereign” (Foucault 2003: 241) by force, threat or need, which one does as a means of survival in a hostile environment. “It is in order to live”, Foucault has asserted, that one constitutes and submits to a sovereign power within a classic liberal economy (Foucault 2003: 241).

From the point of view of life and death, the subject is neutral, and it is thanks to the sovereign that the subject has the right to be alive or, possibly, the right to be dead. In any case, the lives and deaths of subjects become rights only as a result of the will of the sovereign (Foucault 2003: 240).

I want to read this primary scene of interpellation in which “the white coloniser” (Chow 2002: 103-4) is the original and authentic fundamental frequency through an episteme of classical liberalism in which this sovereign power was practised as a power over life and death (Foucault 2003: 240). McWhorter, writing of “queer economies” through “expanding neoliberal discourses and institutions” has explained the shifting role of governmentality through the stages of classic liberalism, neo-classic liberalism and neoliberalism (McWhorter 2012: 61). I will return to the latter two forms throughout this analysis but it is the episteme of classic liberalism which, I suggest, may be appreciated as a governing economic discourse in which the primary performative register and first antiphonal movement of this work is situated. “The classical liberals”, McWhorter has explained, “of the eighteenth century had held that economic activity is essentially exchange, existing in primitive form in barter; government should stay out of the way so that free exchange can occur” (McWhorter 2012: 67). Yet the spatio-temporal placement of *For you, only you* within the Magdalen Chapel and through the temporal drag of the Josquin score may be perceived as seeking to connect classic liberal discourses of the eighteenth century as actually occurring throughout the fifteenth century and the commencement of the Atlantic slave trade, which will become clearer throughout the analysis. ‘Free’ exchange or “economic activity” within the period of classic liberalism was typically based upon “the exchange of equivalences” (McWhorter 2012: 67) governed by discourses of sameness, equivalence in representation. Attali writing in *Noise: The political economy of music* (1985) has

connected the “exchange-time” contained within classic liberal economics as the “precondition for representation” (Attali 1985: 101). It is the exchange of “concrete, lived time of negotiation and compromise” transformed into “a supposedly stable sign of equivalence” itself which is constructed “in order to establish and make people believe in the stability of the links between things and in the indisputable harmony of relations” (Attali 1985: 101). In other words, all things within this economic framework are assumed to be as they seem, as they are represented, and all things assumed to be equal then may be exchanged, naturally and harmoniously.

Transposed into acoustic discourse, the ideas of equivalence in exchange that underlie the classic liberal economic system can be further appreciated through understandings and applications of amplitude, mapped as the “life and death” of a sound, as an equivalence which “metaphorically articulated individual sounds to individual life-cycles” (Rodgers 2010b: 111). Rodgers has traced common sense understandings that came together through the parameter of amplitude and its graphical representation mapped through the x/y coordinates of the waveform as signifying “lively matter in motion, held still for analysis” (Rodgers 2010b: 102). This can be considered as an auditory snapshot of life and death, generally accepted as a ‘natural order’ within an era of classic liberalism governed by progressive (monumental) time in which amplification of the sonorous is governed by the forces of representation, of exchange in equivalence. In this sense, the graphical representation of a sine wave mapped across time and space may be considered as an idealised freeze frame image of life and death in sound, as representations of repeated “timeless truths of being” of the ideal and universally transcendental individual (Freeman 2010: 4). The historical mapping of amplitude

across the graphical acoustic waveform window expressed beliefs situated within this milieu about the relationship between time, life and death as the natural growth and decay of a sound - an acoustic sound's assumed natural life-cycle, its 'biorhythm' (Rodgers 2010b: 102-3). As Rodgers has pointed out through John Durham Peters,

Dissipation is the very essence of sound as we know it... Hegel even made the fading of the voice a philosophic principle, a distinguishing mark of human temporality and finitude (Peters quoted in Rodgers 2010b: 109).

The Hegelian fading of the voice as a philosophical principle of finitude, is according to David Link a "prerequisite for progress in a straight line" (Link 2006: 328), reinforcing the monumental modality of time as one that Freeman reading through Nietzsche has considered as a kind of "static existence outside of historical movement" (Freeman 2010: 4). Within this modality of time dominated by Hegelian dialectics "what is voiced by the mouth disappears immediately in the general medium or silences everything - *out of memory*" (Link 2006: 328 emphasis in original). This supposedly 'natural' fading of voice and memory is in fact a kind of phenomenological bracketing aimed towards erasing histories of social violences and embodied pleasures from the present in which "time is zero-dimensional", as Link has explained, "because its expansion is present only in its passing" (Link 2006: 328). This can be heard in the first movement of *For you, only you* once Karikis as the soloist has been hailed into existence in solitude as a moment of silence, at 1'15". The erasure of history is perhaps the one constant across each of the epistemes that will be traced throughout this chapter. This is a particular hegemonic trait that requires a refusal of the past so as to produce the universal "figure of human reason" as the figure addressed by Butler of "'man' as one who is without a childhood; is not a primate and so is relieved of the necessity of eating,

defecating, living and dying; one who is not a slave, but always a property holder; one whose language remains originary and untranslatable” (Butler 1993b: 21). In the 1800s, Hegel’s own time, this is in effect a bracketing of audible intelligibility as “earthly natural life in its finitude”<sup>52</sup>, as an audibility removed from both embodied pleasure and from memories of the past - both considered as interfering with one’s internal focus upon a true transcendental presence as an harmonic and ‘natural order’ (Hegel 1998: 83, 414-5). The performance of this unified harmonic ‘natural order’ can be heard at the point at which the choir, maintaining their position of dominance, deliver first a monophonic rendition of the score (1’18”) and then secondly repeat the score through polyphony (around the two minute mark) signifying the shift in music from the Medieval to the Renaissance.

Ad te solum confugimus, - In you alone we find refuge  
in te solum confidimus - In you alone we trust  
nec alium adoramus - None other do we worship

Ad te preces effundimus - To you we pour out our prayers  
exaudi quod supplicamus - Hear our supplication  
et concede quod petimus - and grant us our request

(The forth line of each verse is omitted, Jesus Christ and O King of kindness)

In the second rendition, these two verses are repeated by Alamire in the musical round (1’58”). What is relevant about this form for the entire performance is the polyphonic mimicking, copying and imitating that the choir members do as a musical performance of performativity. They perform their own call and response but through polyphony as

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52 “First, earthly natural life in its finitude confronts us on one side; but then, secondly, our consciousness makes God its object wherein the difference of objectivity and subjectivity falls away, until, thirdly, and lastly, we advance from God as such to worship by the community, i.e. to God as living and present in subjective consciousness” (Hegel 1998: 83).



per the original Josquin scoring. The three lines and three vocal groups, mezzo-soprano, countertenor, tenor each circle round each other, but their communication whilst suggesting the heterogeneous possibility of more than one voice, through polyphony, of a sonic sociality and of a wider collectivity, stays harmonically within the dominant discourse. Whilst within its own milieu in the fifteenth century Josquin's compositions may have assumed a note of rebellion against the religious dogma of the Reformation era, in hindsight I suggest that it is possible to hear this performance of 'difference' as one that has remained trapped within a dialectical framework. Difference in this scene is performed in reaction to and as a rebellion against the dominance of the church. But, because it is reactionary, this expression of difference is reliant upon a first assumption of inferiority which it must rebel against. As such, the terms by which this difference may be recognised as difference are reliant upon a contrast with the original as the true measure of authenticity. Paradoxically, whilst there certainly is a note of performative rebellion within the original score, this performance of polyphonic alterity by Alamire, in my opinion, has the propensity to reify difference as sameness through the coercion of each of the group members, required to assimilate to a 'new' and 'different' identity. Ultimately, it is questionable if there is really any alterity to be heard here, for this difference has been once again hegemonically resolved as sameness and then presented as a new, progressive discourse. What this does lead to though is the subversion of an 'original' representation through a politics of repetition, which I expand upon next.

## 5.2 Techniques of Governmentality

The second movement of *For you, only you*, commencing around 02'40", may be perceived as measuring force relations as they materialise through differing "techniques of government" as "institutionalised routines" (McWhorter 2013: 57) and forms of social organisation that can be heard to reference nineteenth century theories of neo-classic liberalism, but which again is a temporal order that this work seeks to complicate. As McWhorter has explained,

Nineteenth century neoclassical liberal theorists rejected the classical account of economic activity as essentially the exchange of equivalences, substituting the idea that the essence of economic activity is competition and, therefore, that inequality is a necessary and perennial feature of the economic system. Government should stay out of the way, they held in common with their classical predecessors, but now its non-interference was in order to allow unfettered and, therefore, fair competition to occur (McWhorter 2012: 67).

The neo-classical episteme, I suggest, overlaps with Chow's analysis of the second and more complex level of mimeticism that correlates with subversive forms of performativity, with Attalian 'repetition' and with feminist musicologist Robin James' critique of the avant-garde open work which is relevant for this analysis and which I shall return to (Chow 2002: 128; Attali 1985: 99-105; James 2014). As McWhorter has explained, the era of neo-classic liberalism is one that becomes increasingly governed by the necessary production of difference in which "inequality is a necessary and perennial feature of the economic system" (McWhorter 2012: 67). This is the episteme of *laissez-faire* economics whereby as McWhorter has explained, "government should stay out of the way" so that the processes of competition can occur 'naturally' and 'fairly' without governmental interference as a specifically deregulated form of

governmentality (McWhorter 2012: 67). The deregulation that typifies this economic system can be heard as a form of 'frugality' evident within avant-garde experimental compositional processes that emerged in the Western post-war era, which I shall expand more upon shortly. What this shift between classic and neo-classic liberalism marks, according to Foucault, is "one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century" (Foucault 2003: 241). 'Political right' in this instance refers to a discourse of rights, individual and collective, not to a bifurcation of politics as 'right' or 'left'. The dominant form of classical sovereignty, "sovereignty's old right", under a regime of classic liberalism was "to take life or let live" (Foucault 2003: 241). In the shift between these epistemes the concept of sovereignty itself was transformed. Sovereignty under the new regime of neoclassic liberalism was "complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. This is the right, or rather precisely the opposite right. It is the power to "make" live and "let" die" (Foucault 2003: 241). This shift registers the change of sovereign power that was once invested in death to a sovereign power that is wholly invested in life, in organising, disciplining and regulating the productivity of life forces. This change of sovereign power signals the shift to biopower.

Attali has registered this transformation of power as emerging within Western musical discourses through the shift from music once governed by an economics of representation and harmony to a new use of music governed by discourses of reproduction and repetition heightened through processes of industrialisation (Attali 1985: 47; 87). This signals the shift from a previous episteme governed by representation, exchange and harmony which the "fading of the voice" was a

manifestation of, to an episteme governed by biopolitics, repetition, dissonance and competition, but is an industrialisation and biopolitics that emerged in part in the late fifteenth century. The assumed infinite capacities of electronic sound mapped through the amplitude envelope and the later development of the ADSR standard, speak to an episteme in which the disciplining and regulation of life, of the infinite potential, of the reproduction and repetition of sound rather than its essential finitude, take priority in an age of biopower that echoes the prior commencement of the Atlantic slave trade. The development of electronic sound from the mid 1800s in a history of audio-technical discourse may be perceived as a moment in which the shift from classical sovereign power, exercised as “the right to take life or let live” to an era of biopower, as the “power to make live and let die” (Foucault 2003: 241) becomes audible in part through a changed understanding and application of amplitude within a politics of reproduction and repetition.

### **Auditory Techniques of Governmentality**

The amplitude envelope and the ADSR standard - attack, decay, sustain, release - is as Rodgers has explained “a twentieth-century technology of containment for individual sounds that evolved from waveform representations of sound in the nineteenth century” (Rodgers 2010b: 110). The amplitude envelope, through the ADSR standard, as a statistical instrument for the discipline and regulation of sound, can be understood as the means by which an ‘individual sound event’ is shaped into a legible, audible and productive form. As a way of tracing the techniques of governmentality as the ties that bind the performance of power with the production of subjectivity, Freeman through a reading of Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that “subjectivity emerges in-part through

mastering the cultural norms of withholding, delay, surprise, pause, and knowing when to stop - through mastery over certain forms of time” (Freeman 2010: 4). Such temporal mastery resonates with the spatio-temporal shaping of sound through the standards of attack, decay, sustain and release. Following this line of thinking, the amplitude envelope and the ADSR standard are ideal metaphors that can provide an "ineliminable tie between forms of power and forms of the subject" (Oksala 2013: 40) as they have manifested in the application of electronic sound. The manipulation of sound events through the ADSR standard in particular can be appreciated as a statistical measuring of sound through the “mastery over certain forms of time” in a manner that is analogous with the mapping, manipulation and statistical commodification of subjectivity through “institutionally and culturally enforced rhythms or timings” (Freeman 2010: 4). Fully transposed into a social realm, these cultural timings are intended to “shape flesh into legible, acceptable embodiment” (Oksala 2013: 40) through modes that seek to reproduce atomised and Oedipalised individuals as docile workers, daughters, mothers, wives, students etc. Transposed back into the auditory realm, the amplitude envelope as a statistical “technology of containment” (Rodgers 2010b: 110-1) is designed to discipline and regulate the assumed infinite capabilities - the life - of electronic sound as a form of sonic chrononormativity ordered through the institutionalised time-space of x/y coordinates.

Applications of amplification, the amplitude envelope and the ADSR standard within audio-technical discourse can be understood as manifesting increasing forms of biopower. Amplitude as power, the amplitude envelope as a disciplinary containment of power and the ADSR standard as a regulation of power are produced with the intention

of normalising and standardising sound so that it not only functions as a useful and universally commodifiable form, but importantly so that standardised ideas of sound and listening gain a universal recognition as original, true and authentic. This correlates with notions of the subject as stratified through the relations of the original as the only true authority and its copy as an always inferior reproduction. This hierarchical relation of original/copy, sameness/difference, is reproduced and intensified specifically to regulate a ‘normalised’ population through norms of progressive reproduction and intensified economic growth. These are the disciplinary and regulatory techniques of governmentality within an era of biopower, where life, as power, is harnessed for maximum productivity. Rodgers has connected this understanding of sound, as an inherently statistical process, with Foucauldian theories of the disciplining of individuals so as to regulate populations whereby,

Sound offered “a means of access both to *the life of the body* and *the life of the species*” through the isolation of *individual waveforms* and their sorting into groups by aesthetic properties (Foucault 1990: 146). This way of conceptualising sounds as *differentiated individuals* was consistent with manifestations of biopower, and indicative of how the *discursive management of life* infiltrated acoustical research and modernist music (Rodgers 2010b: 95 emphasis added).

Both of these processes, particularity mapped as “individual waveforms” that correlate with “differentiated individuals” as “the life of the body” and universalism as waveforms “grouped by aesthetic properties” transubstantiated as “the life of the species” within “the discursive management of life” (Rodgers 2010b: 95) and within audio-technical discourse are the process of biopolitical governmentality predicated upon the disciplining of bodies and the regulation of populations which, as Foucault has

explained, “constituted the two poles around which the organisation of power over life was deployed” (Foucault 1990: 139).

The point is that neo-classic liberalism is normatively understood as the episteme in which *biopower* emerges in the shift from representation to repetition and is a power that seeks to discipline the individual on the micro-level and, with the emergence of *biopolitics*, to regulate the population on the macro-level. Regulation is managed through a proliferation of difference and inequality so as to stimulate competition as “the essence of economic activity” (McWhorter 2012: 67). But, as *For you, only you* seeks to make audible, both biopower and biopolitics which I expand more upon in a moment and which in themselves are not in dispute, may be better perceived as being operative in the fifteenth century with the commencement of the Atlantic slave trade rather than commencing, as Foucault has suggested, at the start of the seventeenth century primarily within a European context. *Biopower*, as one of the discursive forms of power over life, sought to produce the individual “body as machine” through, as Foucault has demonstrated, the “disciplining, the optimisation of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault 1990: 139). The second form of discursive power over life that Foucault identified as *biopolitics* “focused on the species of the body” measured through the statistical mapping of a population’s biological functions, of “propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” with an intent focus upon statistically measuring the demographic variations that occurred between and within populations (Foucault 1990: 139). Foucault has cited the first form of power over life, biopower, leveraged

through the disciplining of the individual body as emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Foucault 1990: 139; 2003: 241-2). The second form of power over life, biopolitics, according to Foucault emerged in the late eighteenth century and intensified throughout the nineteenth (Foucault 2003: 242). This second form of power over life, focused upon the population, is regulatory rather than purely disciplinary. Biopolitics, as a means for measuring the “illness prevalent in a population” through statistical mapping intended to ascertain and control the maximum levels of social productivity, emerged in part, Foucault has claimed, through the “control over relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are a species” (Foucault 2003: 243; 245). Foucault has asserted that biopower, emerging through the shifting forms of sovereign power, as the shift from a power over death to the power over life, was intensified through biopolitical regulation “throughout practically the whole of the eighteenth century, as a war between races” (Foucault 2003: 239-40). The “war between races” eventuates in what Foucault has called “state control of the biological”, which is in other words the production of sexuality as a form of “state racism” (Foucault 2003: 239-40). This Foucault has claimed, gained a heightened intensity throughout the nineteenth century (Foucault 2003: 239-40). In *For you, only you*, this “war between races” that leads to “state control of the biological” (Foucault 2003: 239-40) is heard as emerging in the fifteenth century through the wholesale theft of African and Caribbean populations and the violent disciplining that slavery and indentured servitude enforced upon all bodies and populations entrapped within its sphere.

To articulate the ways in which these techniques of governmentality can be heard to be critically operative within *For you, only you* it is necessary to address both the micro-



and macro-levels, the biopower and the biopolitics, in the work. I will address the micro-level as the techniques of governmentality that seek to discipline the individual through Chow's analysis of the second level of mimeticism (Chow 2002: 104) which combines Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry (Bhabha 1994: 111-21) and Butler's concept of gender performativity as subversive repetition (Butler 1999: 42, 101). I will address the macro-level of the work through an analysis of the deregulatory impulse that James has identified at the heart of the avant-garde open work (James 2014). In *For you, only you* this compositional approach may be further perceived as critically indexing "the colonisation of black music by the American industrial apparatus" (Attali 1985: 103) through the appropriation of compositional processes of 'frugality' - which I expand upon shortly - evident in both free jazz improvisation and the avant-garde experimental music composition that came after it (James 2014: 139).

### **Reproduction of Irreducible Difference**

The second level of mimeticism that Chow has addressed is one in which a complication of the first level of mimeticism - in which the coloniser is the original and only authentic standard "by which the copy is judged" - occurs through "the existential efforts made by the colonised" (Chow 2002: 104). In other words, the colonised subject begins to challenge the colonisation of subjectivity that colonial discourse has sought to enforce. As Chow has explained, the colonised in this second level of mimeticism, "rather than being dismissed as inadequate, begin[s] to assume a certain complexity" (Chow 2002: 104). In the second movement of *For you, only you*, commencing around 2'40", this increased complexity is embodied by Karikis' performance which dominates

the scene of antiphony as an “individual assertion within and against the group” (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79).

At 2’44” Karikis re-enters the performance with low, tense muttering that gradually increases in intensity, developing into sustained overtone vocalisations accompanied with the low sustained tone of Alamire. Alamire provide a continuum of sound as a basis or bridge from which Karikis gradually emerges until he silences the choir abruptly with a pronounced consonant *ka* plosive. This, I suggest, may be heard as an embodied performance of attack, decay, sustain and release. At around 3’05”, Karikis’ call can be heard as clearly worded as he whispers, *sing to me, sing to me, sing to me* - he has internalised the master’s language and now, crafted as recognisable language rather than as unformed sound, his call, expressed as a recognisable demand, seeks to use the master’s language against him. This point, *sing to me*, marks a movement of positions between Alamire and Karikis. It is a musical ‘aside’ which Paul Gilroy, writing about black vernacular music has described as marking “the rhetoric of spiritual catharsis [which] is retained and used to alert audiences to movement from one mode of address to another, it marks the different types of discourse specified by each” (Gilroy 1987: 213). The two discourses or “modes of address” at this stage may be perceived as the discourse of classic liberalism, of classic sovereignty, as representation and exchange, and the discourse of neo-classic liberalism as repetition and competition, as biopower - sameness and difference. This is expressed at the level of the individual as a struggle in discourse between the division of the self/other in a move toward a more complex psychic landscape.

Sung or spoken asides and questions which appear to reverse the power relations of performance by seemingly submitting the artist to the authority of the audience by soliciting their assent [sing to me, sing to me] - become shifters. They illuminate the transition from one kind of commentary or testimony to another, demonstrating in doing so the relationship between different orders of experience, between public and private spheres (Gilroy 1987: 213-4).

Up until this point, Alamire have maintained their symbolic placement as the listening witness, holding the power and authority required to grant Karikis' 'confession' the intelligence that is required for his political recognition within this musical drama. But the power dynamic of Karikis's demand, *sing to me* at 3'05" and 3'42" reverses and destabilises the power-relation of this scene of confession by "seemingly submitting the artist to the authority of the audience", by as Gilroy has explained, "soliciting their assent" (Gilroy 1987: 213-4). The audience represent the mass or the crowd, not normally bestowed with the authority to pass judgement within this scene. It is this position of auditory witness that Boyce occupies within this drama. This shift of authorial power calls for an active response from the witness - from the audience *and* from the choir. Instead of delivering a testimonial and seeking that testimony's acknowledgement and legitimisation, Karikis calls on the audience/choir to act, to perform, to testify marking a further relational shift between the constituent parts of the work. Normative modes of testimony, particularly of oral histories, are for the one giving the testimony to tell their story or version of events in an effort to 'speak the truth' where confession is "the process and the place wherein the cognisance, the "knowing" of the event is given birth to" (Felman & Laub 1992: 57). But Karikis' gesture calls out for the testimony of others whilst also signifying Karikis' own refusal of this disciplinary scene of interpellation by refusing to answer the original call in the correct, submissive register. This gesture shifts, transforms Karikis from testifier to

witness, where he calls the witness to the stand in a way, thereby inverting and reversing the discourse, calling on the audience and the choir to respond, to perform, to testify, to tell their story, to confess their own ‘truth’. As political theorist Andrew Dilts has explained, “the question of a current neo-liberal order and the possibility of resisting it, must start with a genealogical account of how that order establishes truth, and one which can therefore question the value of such truth” (Dilts 2011: 146). The ‘games of truth’ that emerge through the shifting registers and performances of this confessional scene in *For you, only you* are the means by which the installation seeks to measure the establishment of ‘truth’, what ‘truth’ is, how it has been established, in whose name and in whose favour it has been established and how to challenge its subordinating effects. These games of truth in this work may be appreciated as working through both dialectical and strategic logics, the former as a ‘paranoid’ embodiment and the later as a more ‘reparative’ embodiment. Both forms of embodiment are required to enable “thinking about the subject constituted as practices [that] works *both with and against* neo-liberal subjectivity and neo-liberal conceptions of freedom, truth, and reality” (Dilts 2011: 132) which provide further points of reference in the following analyses.

Further, in this second movement, as Karikis re-enters the soundspace, the overtone singing that he performs seems to signify an embodiment of more than one voice in one body, as a kind of amplified ‘individual’ multiplicity or internalised polyphony, but as a dissonant vocalisation that won’t blend easily with the sustained, harmonised tones of the choir (from 2’44”). His vocalisations, in particular the moments at which he clears his throat throughout the entire work, may be perceived as points of protest, heard as a refusal to assimilate with the group *and* as a demand to be heard. But in this second

movement Karikis asserts his independence from the group, delivering a coded discourse exceeding the assumed limits of language through dadaist vocal utterances that index jazz scat. For as Brent Hayes Edwards has suggested, “the performance of difference in scat is by no means innocent; it is the very point at which the music polices the edges of its territory” (Edwards 2002: 628). This happens in jazz scat, which I expand more upon momentarily, as a musical form that challenges the assumed limits of language, meaning and signification, again, as a game of truth - whose truth, what truth - is intended to create a space in which the rules of the truth-game may be played differently.

### **New Relations of Power/Knowledge**

This second movement of the work, deciphered through a reparative and strategic logic, evidences what Edwards, writing about jazz scat, has considered a "fall of language" which is enacted through "the dropping of words" (Edwards 2002: 629). This second movement of *For you, only you* (2'45" - 4'25") is dominated by Karikis' 'wordless singing', whereby when considered through Edwards' analysis of jazz scat, suggests the formation of “an entirely new singing voice...discovered in the breach” (Edwards 2002: 620). Edwards has explained that the fall from language in scat paradoxically establishes an excess of signification rather than an absence of meaning. Through this excess of signification, a new voice, a new relation of power/knowledge other than coloniser/subaltern is intended to emerge. This presents a similar performative strategy to each of the works addressed in this research, where the ‘voice’ signifies through an excess of signification for a “shifting possibility of a multitude of meanings” (Edwards 2002: 624). The intention of this process is to undo the disciplining of the individual as

the always inferior or bad copy of an original and ‘untranslatable’ authentic figuration of colonial, heteronormal and universally masculine rationality. In jazz scat, Edwards has claimed, “the musical syntax remains constant, but is capable of assuming a wide variety of affective significance” (Edwards 2002: 624). Through an insistence upon an inherent excess of linguistic forms as an always existent multiplicity of meaning - what Foucault called “tactical polyvalence” - hegemonic discursive orthodoxies are challenged (Foucault 1990: 100). Excessive signification performs the multiplicity of meaning through the said as much as the unsaid in a way that aims to create what Berlant has expressed as “registers of reflective political feeling” through representations as “affective significance” (Berlant 2011: 232; Edwards 2002: 624). Such affective significance is intended to enable the listener, performer, audience to *feel* something and to therefore provide the affective resonance by which “distinctive forms of sociality” may be appreciated as being “mediated by music” (Born 2011: 378). As Edwards has explained,

Scat aesthetics thus involve an augmentation of expressive potential rather than an evacuation or a reduction of signification. Words drop away from music so that “the unheard sounds through.” The syntax of scat points at something outside the sayable, something seen where it collapses (Edwards 2002: 649).

Here Edwards provides a crucial key to the puzzle of signification in *For you, only you* where the aesthetics of wordless singing as “something outside the sayable” provides the performative displacement of hegemonic norms performed through the paradox of the music as one that enables the hearing of “unheard sounds” and the exposure of hidden histories as a “perennial recourse to history and collective memory” (Williams 2013: 92). The “fall of language” evoked by wordless singing, by scatting and Karikis’s

dadaist vocalisations, is intended to induce the separation between different systems as one that “formally stages the disjuncture of words and music” (Edwards 2002: 629). As such, the spectral traces of jazz scat that emerge through Karikis’ dadaist performance presents a discourse of alterity and offers a different register of address as a counter-discourse to the discourse of assimilation.

Karikis as the liminal subject, the soloist in the work, further engages this discourse of alterity through his extended vocal techniques. It is through this performance that normative discourses of otherness (alterity) that equate the *Other* with lack and absence, such as Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection sought to affectively entangle, may be perceived to be challenged through a coded excess of signification (Kristeva 1984a; Butler 1999: 101). Signification here is infused with hybridity and multiplicity, Karikis’ performance cannot be resolved to represent one unified voice, instead multiple spectral presences pass through his performance. On one level, this otherness may be appreciated through a fascination with “mock-foreign language” (Edwards 2002: 627), which Edwards has considered as a syntactical element of scat, where Karikis’ utterances that obliquely reference Greek and Hebrew, the voiced and unvoiced *ka-ko-ka* at around 3’50”, seem to play with the multiple meanings of scat, scatology and Σκατά (Gk. ‘shit’). This offers a “shifting possibility of a multitude of meanings” (Edwards 2002: 624) where Karikis has claimed that he is “throwing shit at language” (Karikis presentation at Iniva June 2013) as a means to perform the failure of representation through modes of subversive repetition.

Through these analyses it is possible to appreciate the increasing complexity in the existential efforts made by the colonised through the coded discourses of jazz scat and dadaist vocalisations performed by Karikis in this second movement of the work. Citing Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories of ambivalence, which resonate with Butler's early work on gender performativity as destabilisation, Chow has suggested that these kinds of strategies "tease out an important feature of the colonised's subjectivity that was previously ignored: the ambivalent wishes and resentments embedded in her identitarian plight" (Chow 2002: 104). But Chow would seemingly resolve this plight as a more "complex psychological interiority" (Chow 2002: 104), where the colonised subject psychically re-arranges traumas experienced through the inscription of structural inferiority which are often lived out through marginalisation and under erasure. Such an insistence on the psychology of the subject reifies the subject as an atomised individual, as *one* responsible for the re-organisation of the psyche alone. What I want to suggest occurs in this installation though and in all the works considered within this research is the measurement of "an internal elaboration of governmental practice" (Foucault 2008: 41) rather than a psychological and thus individualised internalisation that is bound by the psychoanalytical interpretations of the confessional scene and that re-invests in the reproduction of the atomised individual. Instead, what occurs is the internalisation of techniques of governmentality - a complex *political* rather than psychological internalisation of power.

As it sounds, this second movement of *For you, only you* is seemingly invested in destabilising the political internalisation of sovereign power and rearranging that power's traumatic effects as historical and political affect. This is re-arranged not



merely as an individual psychological interiority. Instead it is a strategy of destabilisation that seeks to decolonise and depathologise the traumatic effects of discourses of sexualised and racialised difference by re-working unspoken historical connections and commonly received understandings of the ways in which both ‘history’ and ‘nature’ have hegemonically been perceived as given ‘truths’. Theories of gender/queer performativity and colonial mimeticism have sought to mobilise and thus transform the traumatic disciplining of inferiority in which traumatic experience itself is re-appropriated “as elements of a resilient - indeed, mobile - framework for conceptualising dominated selfhood” (Cvetkovich 2003: 7). Yet this rearrangement of the disciplinary forces of biopower is one, I suggest, that is aimed specifically toward “a rejection of the idea of the sovereign, psychological, anthropological, or phenomenological subject” (Dilts 2011: 142) which can only be achieved through a simultaneous rearrangement of force relations that occur on the plane of biopolitics. Unlike biopower invested in the disciplining of the “body as machine”, biopolitics, which is the focus of the following analysis, is leveraged upon a population, as a technique of power that “exists at a different level, on a different scale” (Foucault 2003: 242).

### **Composing Populations**

I want to shift focus now to the compositional framework that may be perceived as governing the second movement of *For you, only you*. Robin James’ critique of the avant-garde open work and post-tonal musics as operating upon a deregulatory impulse offers a way of thinking through the framework of this second movement (James 2014). James has suggested that the avant-garde open work, as an example of what she has

called “Attalian composition” may be perceived as operating analogously to forms of economic deregulation (James 2014: 139). By deregulation James means a symptomatic process governed by “tightly controlled background conditions [that] generate foreground ‘randomness’, which in turn supports and reaffirms the background” (James 2014: 141). In other words, the practice of choice within this system, by James’ account, is not only illusory but is also the necessary ‘statistical’ mechanism that regulates the overall normalisation of a system. Deregulation considered in this way may be further thought of as a kind of ‘matrix’, whether that be a technological, heterosexual, colonial, economic, political or auditory matrix, in other words as a regime of intelligibility (Haraway 1991: 155; Butler 1993b: 23; 2011: 13; Gilroy 1993b: 15; Bhabha 1994: 23; Spillers 2003: 386; Foucault 2008: 298, 303).

The “background epistemic or ideological context” in James’ analysis is neoliberalism (James 2014: 139). Deregulation as James has analysed it does suggest a useful framework by which to think through the avant-garde open work, through processes of experimental music composition and improvisation *and* through histories of jazz. However, I suggest that James has been too quick to situate the open work and deregulation within the episteme of neoliberalism (James 2014: 139). For as already mentioned, neoliberalism as explained by Foucault, is not an episteme governed by *laissez-faire* economics which is in effect a “self-limitation of governmental reason” (Foucault 2008: 21), a limitation which is, after all, crucial to James’ analysis<sup>53</sup> (James

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53 Foucault has established liberal reason “as self-limitation of government on the basis of a ‘naturalness’ of the objects and practices specific to government” What he is interested in deciphering is “what is this naturalness?” (Foucault 2008: 20). Additionally, *laissez-faire* which is deregulation is associated with limited government intervention and a general policy of ‘non- interference’ in the free market economy. In contrast, governmental intervention is intensified within the episteme of neoliberalism associated “with permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention” (Foucault 2008: 132). The issue of either limited or total governmentality between the two epistemes is seemingly an

2014: 142). This seems an important distinction which, if collapsed, may perhaps elude a crucial awareness between “techniques of domination” and “techniques of the self” (Foucault 1987: 284) which if considered carefully, might enable a more nuanced listening out for the possibility of what McWhorter has called an “ontological condition of ethics” (McWhorter 2013: 71) within the historical present as a specific kind of social practice, which I elaborate upon further toward the end of this chapter.

### **Deregulation and the open work - the production of demand**

In her analysis of the avant-garde open work James has critiqued the democratic ideal of ‘openness’ as a kind of false consciousness that would seek to hide the real machinations of this particular compositional structure. What remains unspoken within this democratic ideal of openness is an implicit or unacknowledged intention to produce and intensify difference as ‘individual freedom’ in a way that paradoxically regulates and maintains a dominant norm of systemic uniformity. James’ analysis is situated within a critique of the rise of what Foucault has called “*homo œconomicus*”, that is the rise of entrepreneurial subjectivity (Foucault 2008: 147). Deregulation, as an appearance of choice or element of freedom within an economic market as much as in an open work, operates through the necessary production of random yet countable phenomena which within Foucauldian terminology “are phenomena that are aleatory and unpredictable when taken in themselves or individually” (Foucault 2003: 246). Aleatory and unpredictable phenomena are bio-social phenomena. The open work then, can be understood as operating through a framework of random and chance or “aleatory and unpredictable” encounters on the micro-level between individuals (Foucault 2003: 246).

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important distinction to be aware of.

But the outcome of such ‘chance’ procedures is enforced by the systemic structure of the macro-level which institutes “tightly controlled background conditions” (James 2014: 141). The ‘background conditions’ are the rules, norms, laws and conventions of a specific cultural episteme instituted specifically to produce *predictable* differences and variations within a population that “at the collective level, display constants that are easy, or at least possible, to establish” (Foucault 2003: 246). These differences and variations, within the analysis of this research, may be considered as the effects of discourses of racial and sexual difference.

This biopolitical process, James has suggested, is evident within the structure of the avant-garde open work which, as a form of experimental composition occurring largely in the Euro-American post-war era from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, was conceived precisely to produce difference in opposition to what were perceived to be the dominant norms of a “fixed system of thought or belief” within the milieu in which this form of composition developed (Robey in Eco 1989: XXVII). The form of the avant-garde open work, intent upon producing difference, may be perceived analogously as a “deregulatory structure that generate[s] individual variability” (James 2014: 144). The intention of the open work as much as free jazz improvisation and the polyphony of Josquin’s Renaissance score before it is precisely to produce something new, is to produce variation and difference, whereby “without weakening the logical continuity of the musical process...a new collective sensibility in matters of musical presentation and durations could emerge” (Pousseur quoted in Eco 1989: 2). The production of novelty though, which is where James’ critique perhaps becomes most salient, does not happen merely ‘by chance’, but as James has pointed out, is precisely conditioned to emerge

through the institution of implicit “background conditions” (James 2014: 144) that regulate the overall structure of the work, “without weakening the logical continuity of the musical process” as Pousseur has stipulated (Pousseur quoted in Eco 1989: 2), and further, whereby as Edwards has explained, “the musical syntax remains constant” (Edwards 2002: 624).

The framework of the open work though is not actually unique to this type of composition. Free jazz improvisation presents an earlier manifestation of this kind of collaborative musical endeavour invested in transforming hegemonic orthodoxies. This perhaps extends James’ critique of the commodification of music as much as of subjectivity so as to account for the commodification of ‘black’ music by ‘white’ avant-garde composers as an historical element in the commodification and domestication of ‘noise’.

The compositional framework of *For you, only you* may be perceived to operate in a manner that references free jazz improvisation, similarly to the avant-garde open work as being structured through a ‘semi-open’ and collaborative process put in motion through a set of initial concerns such as the relationship between old and new music, between antiphony and polyphony, through which the work is intended to develop. Through these ‘background conditions’ of classical music, sound art and jazz and between modalities of witnessing, testifying and signifying, the ‘social actors’ of the work, Karikis, Alamire and Boyce are supposedly presented with a “field of possibilities” (Pousseur quoted in Eco 1989: 2) by which to execute the work where as Dilts has explained “freedom is expressed precisely through choice” (Dilts 2011: 143).

The avant-garde open work and free jazz improvisation, based upon a set of prior supposedly ‘open’ instructions, is intended as a form of composition that embodies an ‘essential freedom’ within its structure based upon a utopian and emancipatory idealism. Whether the instructions are derived from the toss of a dice, the *I Ching*, “a series of note groupings” or a text of instructions, the ‘performer’ of this kind of score is presented with a seemingly ‘open’ set of choices by which to complete the work (Eco 1989: 1). In this sense, it is possible to understand that the results of an open work could be appreciated as being “randomly generated”, as assuming a ‘natural’ and spontaneous, even evolutionary outcome but one whose inevitability, whose ‘nature’ and ideas of ‘natural progression’ are actually tightly regulated through the specific politico-musical economy of the compositional structure. This compositional framework that governs the second movement in *For you, only you*, from about 2’40” to 4’20”, is not fully predetermined, is not ‘scored’ from beginning to end but rather the performance is intended to emerge from the collaboration between the actors, but as a social and *mechanical* rather than individual and ‘natural’ process. The second movement of *For you, only you* can be perceived to work on two levels at once as ‘chance operations’ between the individual performers and as a strategic dialectical reproduction of difference that is tightly regulated by the ‘background conditions’ of the work, which I propose, may be heard as an inherent critique of dialectical logics that courses throughout the work.

To articulate this point further, I want to return momentarily to *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*. This installation similarly to *For you, only you* functions with a sense of ‘openness’. Further, both installations can be perceived, similarly to Pauline

Oliveros' 1970 score *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation*, as proceeding from a set of instructions, as semi-determined 'recipes' intended to generate sound practices. Rather than providing a set of instructions though, *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* provides a set of tools to generate experimental music. And similarly to Oliveros' 1970 score and Boyce's *For you, only you*, *Reverse Karaoke* would seem to offer an "explicit invitation to exercise choice" (Pousseur cited in James 2014: 144), what instrument to play, how to play it, whether to sing or not, whether to follow Gordon's lead, or not, whether to perform in the tent alone or with others, how to decorate one's sound in the guise of the record covers.

It is possible to think of each of these works by Boyce, Oliveros, Koether and Gordon as programs or codes to generate sound that once written are left to run their course, either through musical/performative instructions or through enabling access to musical tools, and all through processes of collaboration. In this line of thinking sound is generated as a socially constructed and measurable effect *and* affect of the process of the work, where the 'frugal' composition of the work operates as a kind of 'deregulated' code that once designed and set in motion, can be left to run on its own - such as an *Automatic Music Tent*. Similarly in *For you, only you*, once the background conditions are in place - Alamire and the Renaissance, Boyce and jazz scat as modernism, Karikis and dadaist sound art as a performance on the cusp of modernism and postmodernism - once these 'assumed' background conditions are in place the work seemingly assumes a 'natural' progression. In the case of *Reverse Karaoke*, the invitation for both professional and amateur musical participation, the challenge to ideas of musical virtuosity, the production of performative listeners and socio-musical temporal

destabilisations, would seemingly be not so much a kind of explicitly pre-determined result, but rather all implicitly intended outcomes in an open “field of possibilities” regulated by the background conditions built into the design of the installation (Pousseur cited in Eco 1989: 2; Foucault 2008: 34). But what these works, which I consider to be feminist experiments in governmentality performed through music, seek to demonstrate in a way is that ‘nature’ and ‘difference’ have never been elements that just occur as ‘natural progression’ or as the result of a ‘natural order’. Instead, “nature” as Foucault has explained, “is something that runs under, through, and in the exercise of governmentality” (Foucault 2008: 16). Nature, history, the individual and the collective are socio-technological productions. As James has extrapolated, “nature, in other words, is synthetic” (James 2014: 143). In essence, ‘nature’ *is* what is synthesised through a “field of possibilities” (Foucault 2008: 34). These works then may be understood as feminist experiments in “the exercise of governmentality” as “a sort of general reflection on the organisation, distribution, and limitation of powers in a society” (Foucault 2008: 16, 13) performed through discourses of music and sound.

### **Critique of dialectical logics: Technological Assemblages**

There is a profound critique operating within *For you, only you* which may be deduced within this second movement as an amplification of the rise of the individual. This amplification of individuality is performed, critically and ironically in my opinion, by Karikis as an embodied expression of the competitive impulse commonly understood as the essential trigger that stimulates the political economies of neo-classic liberalism and neoliberalism. Pausing within the episteme of neo-classic liberalism for a moment longer, the distribution of the “field of possibilities” set into motion by the background



conditions of the governing compositional framework, as James has explained through her critique of the avant-garde open work, is the means by which “all the possible outcomes contained within these parameters” are generated thereby “fully realising or optimising the system they constitute” (James 2014: 144). All possible outcomes that are possible within a *dialectical system* of *laissez-faire* governance as the form of compositional frugality that governs this second movement of *For you, only you* are produced as a dissonant difference performed by Karikis and consonant, harmonic sameness performed by Alamire. The hybrid/destabilised and fragmented subject that Karikis performs, as an *atomised individual*, is the differential trigger required to stimulate competition and is a subjectivity whose ‘irreducible’ difference is then re-appropriated so as to regulate and reproduce the norm of *heteronormal-masculine-whiteness* as a universal signifying economy. Understood through dialectical logics on the level of the population, the “ascendancy of whiteness” that feeds off this inequality, considered in this way, is not let off the hook in *For you, only you* (Chow 2002: 3; Puar 2007: 24). There is no absolute move beyond whiteness, *whiteness as it is* as a form of “state racism” through this performance becomes audible (Wiegman 1999; Foucault 2003: 239-40).

The individual in this work may be heard dialectically as a “link in the chain of tradition” that on one hand connects the fifteenth century with Thatcherism and the current state of British governmentality as a critique of the universality of hetero-masculine-whiteness produced specifically as a modal effect to measure the distributions of ‘citizenship’ within populations of the historical present (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79). This is not as James has suggested where individual difference is

the statistical means by which to measure the "index of a well-functioning system" but rather, the individual as a biotechnological 'nature' in the second movement of this work, as an effect of biopolitics, is put into play as an index to measure and sound out the historical levels of inequality within this system, as an index of a poorly-functioning system. Further, this critical interpretation cites chattel slavery, not as a mode specific to a pre-modern age that ended with "enlightened rationality and capitalist industrial production" (Gilroy 1993b: 47-9) but specifically, *For you, only you* cites slavery as the premise of modernity. This emerges through a "temporal dislocation" in which as Freeman has explained, "the slow time of so-called pre-modernity, is not prior to or even resistant to so-called modernity but is the later's condition of existence" (Freeman 2010: 154). Plantation and chattel slavery that commenced in the fifteenth century is, as Gilroy has explained, a "distinctively modern institution of the western hemisphere" (Gilroy 1993b: 47-9). It is one of the primary sites where capitalist demands first fragmented identity, predating Fordism, the construction line, and the rise of entrepreneurial subjectivity as an apex of the commodity form - of the 'body-as-machine' - prior to Western conceptions of the birth of modernity<sup>54</sup>. Yet also within this dialectical scene in *For you, only you* Karikis as the individual performs the "link in the chain of tradition" that, in its insistence upon history and tradition transmits a frequency of 'black vernacular music' and diasporan British culture in the face of its relentless appropriation. Forged through the crucible of chattel slavery, music has traditionally played an important role in the survival of African-American and diasporan culture where music on the plantations emerged specifically as a coded liberational discourse of

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54 As Gilroy has suggested, "Plantation slavery was more than just a system of labour and a distinct mode of racial domination. Whether it encapsulates the inner essence of capitalism or was a vestigial, essentially pre-capitalist element in a dependant relationship to capitalism proper, it provided the foundations for a distinctive network of economic, social and political relations" (Gilroy 1993b: 55).

survival (Gilroy 1993b: 80). Difference, then, may also be heard as an expression of a desire for collective liberation, as a release, as a re-valuing, re-connecting and collective memorialising of the emancipatory impulse embedded within traditions of black vernacular musics. This emancipatory impulse, it would seem to me, is not the same impulse as the ideal of freedom that Chow has suggested is typical of post-Enlightenment modernity (Chow 2002: 113). The difference being that Enlightenment rationalism propagated an idea of freedom as an individuation based upon “the belief that a turn to the self is emancipatory” (Chow 2002: 113). Instead the emancipatory impulse that emerges through *For you, only you*, as I perceive it, is based upon a belief that a re-turn to the collective, as a devotion to the *Other*, may be the only emancipatory hope there is and that music is one way of producing the affective register that can mediate alternative socialities.

The individual that emerges in the second movement of *For you, only you* then may be appreciated as being performed specifically as a multiple effect; the always fragmented subject of a “double consciousness” that is at once inside and outside modernity *and* the subject caught in the double-bind of subordinated identification that must be at once accepted and rejected (DuBois 1903). Measuring the functioning of a system - social, musical, political, economic - through the rise of the individual as structured through dialectical logics enables an evaluation of the games of truth operational throughout each shifting episteme. This enables dialectical structures, once their truth-games have been measured, to be reworked through what Foucault has called a “logic of strategy” (Foucault 2008: 42). Such a logic is “the logic of connections between the heterogeneous and not the logic of the homogenisation of the contradictory” (Foucault

2008: 42). Strategic logic demands the simultaneous performance of multiplicities as always heterogenous in modes that seek to undo the dominance of singularity and the reproduction of homogenous resolution. Both logics, necessarily, are at work in *For you, only you*.

As mentioned earlier, what occurs between the choir, the sound artist and the audience in the second movement of *For you, only you* is not explicitly controlled by the performances of Boyce, Karikis and Alamire but is implicitly regulated by the background conditions which, as already addressed, are “predetermined and invariable” (James 2014: 144). The ‘choices’ - “the aleatory process” - that the actors perform and the music that is produced “is limited by the parameters set out by these conditions” (James 2014: 144). Heard in this way, the impetus that stimulates the neo-classic market economy, which is individual difference and novelty as competition, *as inequality*, is inevitably reproduced through this system. But, paradoxically, when considered through strategic logic, it is precisely in this sense that *For you, only you* does not actually produce anything new. What the composition seems to suggest is that the “voice in the breach” as it turns out, is not new, has been around since the fifteenth century at least. Analysed through dialectical logics *For you, only you* on the micro-level can be heard to reproduce difference as sameness, I suggest, as a warning, *for you*, for us. As Chow has explained “what poststructuralist theory ushered in was the era of difference - to be further *amplified* as both the acts of differing and deferring - which would take the place of sameness as the condition for signification” within a dialectics of coercion and freedom (Chow 2002: 128 emphasis added). Yet analysed through strategic logics *For you, only you* produces the individual on the micro-level so as to de-discipline this body

disciplined as machine *and* to enact the “logic of connections between the heterogeneous” on the macro-level, between historical time, musical time and the time of the collective as “a firm rebuke to the mesmeric idea of history as progress” (Foucault 2008: 42; Gilroy 1993b: 53). The great Western progress narrative of a modernity that has overcome the barbarism of a pre-modern era is rebuked through a refusal to reproduce novelty predicated upon an overcoming of pain, loss and unspeakable terror. Rather, this kind of time-travelling de-composes and re-composes the past for a present, which is not new, but whose radical possibility had been previously negated or erased and regulated out of history.

Further, Boyce’s refusal to embody what Kobena Mercer, writing about the Black British Arts scene of which Boyce played a prominent role in the 1980s, has called the “burden of representation” (Mercer 1990) as a burden that insists upon her visibility as a ‘*black woman*’ is a part of the destabilisation of the politics of both representation and repetition specifically related to the feminist politic of this work. Boyce, interviewed for the exhibition guide that accompanied *For you, only you* at Rivington Place in 2013 has explained that people have always asked her how this installation, in which she is not instantly visible or audible, is *her* work (Boyce quoted in Scat Exhibition Guide 2013: 19). “People always ask me” she has explained, “how I am involved in the piece, how this is my work, as it is classical music and I am not seen in it” (Boyce quoted in Scat Exhibition Guide 2013: 19). Boyce has reframed these question as “well Sonia, you are black and how could you have done this?” and has explained that in her experience people have not been able to comprehend her making *For you, only you* because they do not perceive it to be “about race” (Boyce quoted in Scat Exhibition Guide 2013: 19).

But, the question posed to her ‘how are you in this?’ in this instance *is* a question about race *and* gender. When thought through a metaphysics of presence/absence though, the burden of representation is exposed as one instigated by the interlocutor rather than as an essential embodiment of the interviewee. This serves to shift the interpellative dynamics of a power relation that has endeavoured to frame race-thinking as only being about all that is not ‘white’, gender and feminism as only being about ‘women’ and sexuality as anything but ‘heterosexuality’. The question “well Sonia you are black and how could you have done this?” insists upon an essential and fixed racial identity for Boyce and directly indexes race-thinking implicitly situating the interlocutor as having internalised such discourses (Boyce quoted in Scat Exhibition Guide 2013: 19). The fact that Boyce as a British Afro-Caribbean identified woman has made this work and that this question arises is the point about racialised and sexualised assumptions and stereotypes that coalesce into essentialised identities that this work, as Boyce has explained, seeks to entangle. By remaining within dialectical logics, as a kind of dialectical listening, whiteness as the once inaudible background signal is amplified as noise in this work *as much as blackness* is indexed in its absence through the spectral presence of jazz scat. Jazz scat, as Boyce has asserted, emerged from a “modernist experience and a modernist imperative” (Boyce quoted in Scat Exhibition Guide 2013: 19) as a “*link in the chain of tradition*” (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79) to a modernity that was forged as Gilroy has explained, “in close proximity to the unspeakable terrors of the slave experience” (Gilroy 199b: 73). In this way, *For you, only you* may be perceived, on one hand, to follow the deregulated structure of the open work as an intentional compositional frugality, but specifically to expose the teleology of the games of truth built into, but silenced, within the system of dialectics.

### **Measuring techniques of governmentality**

*For you, only you*, similarly to all of the works addressed in this research, seeks to measure the effects of techniques of domination and oppression, what McWhorter reading processes of oppression through feminism combined with and in comparison to processes of Foucauldian domination has called "*governmentality*" (McWhorter 2013: 67). To measure techniques of governmentality, the analysis of the works within this research has needed to engage "the existence of phenomena, processes, and regularities that necessarily occur as a result of intelligible mechanisms" (Foucault 2008: 15) where intelligible mechanisms as the 'background conditions' that James has written of in this regard relate to capitalist, colonial and hetero-patriarchal forms of 'rationality'. This, I suggest, is where James' analysis of the open work as a deregulatory structure makes more sense. For as an exercise of compositional *frugality*, issues of deregulation and total control directly relate "the question of the frugality of government" as "the question of liberalism" (Foucault 2008: 29-30). The actual composition of an open work that is governed by a compositional frugality as analogous to economic deregulation must then be,

...left to function with the least possible interventions precisely so that it can both formulate its truth and propose it to governmental practice as rule and norm. This site of truth is not in the heads of economists, of course, but is the market (Foucault 2008: 29-30).

To measure and intervene in the production of norms, similarly to neo-classical liberal forms of governmentality, the "distributions around the norm" that are put into the service of regulating the market economy must be produced (Foucault 1990: 144). The "distributions around the norm" that emerge through the compositional framework of

the open work *and* free jazz improvisation as a framework that structures the second movement of *For you, only you*, can be perceived as sounding out the shift from a market economy of exchange and representation to one of competition and repetition. In Foucauldian terms this shift is registered as a move from a “site of jurisdiction” to one of “veridiction” - from law to truth (Foucault 2008: 31). This shift occurs through supposedly “spontaneous mechanisms” that map and measure the “relationship between the cost of production and the extent of demand” (Foucault 2008: 31). In other words, what is being measured is the economic, productive value of the individual to the society. This is one of the factors that indicates the feminist intention within these ‘experiments in governmentality’ - the exposure of the so called ‘truth’ of a system as a fabrication of a colonial, hetero-patriarchal masculine signifying economy which marks all *Other* bodies as raced, sexed and available for use and appropriation. The feminist intent is the ‘experiment’ that measures the discursive production of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and nationality *among other axes of difference* and their coincidental production within these forms of governmentality in the service of a *radical* difference *from* this system in which the ‘law of nature’ is nothing other than capitalism writ large. Specifically, for the market economy, as much as a composition, to operate ‘properly’ through mechanisms of deregulation and frugality the “spontaneous mechanisms” such as the outcomes, or musical subjects if you like, of *For you, only you* and *Reverse Karaoke* for example, must appear to occur *naturally* which occurs by allowing each installation to supposedly “function by itself according to its nature, according to its natural truth” (Foucault 2008: 32). Following Foucault’s logic here, the installation, as an analogue of a neo-classic market economy, means that the installation “must be that which reveals something *like* a truth” (Foucault 2008: 32



emphasis added). But the “games of truth” that occupy each of the works that this research has considered, are not approached, in my opinion, with the intention of establishing a new truth of the subject. Rather, these works seek to establish a “trajectory towards thinking about ethics” as a questioning of what it might mean, as Dilts has expressed, “to be a subject that is not a sovereign subject, not a psychological subject, not an anthropological subject, but one that is produced within a relation of forces, including the forces one practices on oneself” (Dilts 2011: 140). For each of these installations take both the individual and the population as a problem of governmental practice so as to measure what Foucault has addressed as the “terms of the de facto limits that can be set to this governmentality” (Foucault 2008: 40). These experiments in governmentality measure these assumed limits with the intention of developing alternative modes of knowledge production “that traverse, rival, or even displace what is objectionable” in oppressive techniques of governmentality (McWhorter 2013: 69).

### **5.3 Alternative Synthesis**

In the final movement of *For you, only you*, which commences around the 4’20” mark, the compositional structure moves beyond the concept of frugality and *laissez-faire* deregulation and operates through a framework more representative of the episteme of neoliberalism proper. As McWhorter reading the shifting forms of governmentality through Foucault has explained,

Neo-liberals, in turn, follow their nineteenth-century forebears in seeing competition rather than exchange as the primary feature of economic activity, but they depart from

both classical and neoclassical liberalism in their insistence that competition, at least of the sort they endorse, does not occur naturally in the absence of governmental activity. For neoliberals, government is a pre-condition of the free market's very existence and, thus, laissez-faire is nonsense (McWhorter 2012: 67).

This is the point in the composition which shifts from processes of compositional frugality, from aleatory and chance configurations in the collaboration, to a more structured form of compositional governance. This is organised by Karikis' re-scoring of the Josquin score from its original four beats per bar to one of thirteen beats per bar, a specific temporal shift which I elaborate upon more toward the end of the chapter. This signals, I suggest, a shift that heterogeneously extends the revolutionary questioning of rights, civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQI rights and liberational movements, in the previous movement with a more radical assessment of the utility of the institution of total governmentality typical of a neoliberal episteme in the final movement. This shift is not intended to imply that the demand for rights that typified the liberational movements of the late twentieth century have been conclusively met, but rather that the current episteme operates under an altered logic. It is no longer merely a question of original rights and their assertion against a sovereign power but rather, in the historical present, the focus is expanded to simultaneously question the construction and use of the structure of governmentality and sovereignty itself. Thus previous questions about the disciplinary techniques of governmentality become questions about governmental regulation, use and *utility*. In a way that links *For you, only you* with Boyce's entire practice within a history of the British diaspora, what the final movement of this work addresses, in my opinion, "is the radical question, the question of English radicalism; the problem of English radicalism [which] is the problem of utility" (Foucault 2008: 41). Is governmentality useful, is *the* government useful, what is it useful for (Foucault

2008: 41)? These questions are transposed in *For you, only you* into an exercise which asks, is the score useful, for what is it useful? This is enacted through Karikis' re-scoring of the original Josquin composition, which I shall elaborate more upon momentarily. But firstly it is necessary to connect this questioning of the utility of governmentality with McWhorter's critique of the depoliticisation of 'group' oppression "from the perspective of neoliberalism" (McWhorter 2013: 64-5). McWhorter's critique has cited the direct influence of the "Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek, who played a crucial role in the establishment of neoliberal economics" upon "Margaret Thatcher in both her social and economic policies and in her explicit statements in the 1980s" (McWhorter 2013: 64-5) of which her now infamous statement "there is no such thing as society" can be heard as being intensely amplified in the historical present (Thatcher 1987). This destruction of society through neoliberal politics is what I hear the third movement of this work as refuting, rivalling and transforming through a performance that instigates what McWhorter has called an "ontological condition of ethics" as an always social relationality (Fornet-Betancourt et al 1984: 115; McWhorter 2013: 71). This is a social relationality that is predicated upon a paradoxical ethics of non-domination, paradoxical because one is already socialised through relations of domination/subordination.

### **Strategic Logics: Practices of Liberation and Practices of Freedom**

Embedded within the antiphonal structure of this work, as that which Gilroy has stated is embedded within the antiphonal processes that emerged through chattel and plantations slavery, is "a democratic, communitarian moment enshrined in the practice of antiphony which symbolises and anticipates (but does not guarantee) new, non-

dominating social relationships” (Gilroy 1993b: 79). Theories such as Gilroy’s, Bhabha’s and Butler’s, in short ‘post-structuralism’, have come under fire for their destabilising and hybridising of the subject, interpreted itself as a process caught within dialectical logics and by which the ideal neoliberal, entrepreneurial subject as an individuated and fully re-formed “new” and liberal subjectivity supposedly emerges (Chow 2002; James 2014; Freeman 2000; 2010). The emergence of “a democratic, communitarian moment” such as that which Gilroy had hoped for, read through the critiques of the post-structuralist fragmentation of the subject, has seemingly had no real chance to engage in “non-dominating social relationships” (Gilroy 1993b: 79) through the insistence upon an always ‘new’, progressive, future-oriented subjectivity that seemingly has no use for the ‘trappings’ of the past. Such a future oriented subject is one who is always racing, competing with others to get to the front of the line, to be the first, to make the great discovery, to be known above and beyond one’s peers. There is a very limited chance within this scheme focused upon the future only that any relation other than one of domination/subordination might be re-formed.

In returning to Chow’s interpretation of interpellation and the third level of interpellative mimeticism that she has read as a specific form of “self-mimeticism” - as a self that is coerced to conform through a sociality intensified by the norm of a competition always predicated upon producing novelty for the market - is a critique of the “the emergence of the self” as an emancipatory impulse which she has considered is “as old a myth as the Enlightenment” (Chow 2002: 113). But, as I mentioned earlier, emancipatory ideals are not only confined to the Enlightenment project and an emancipatory impulse, whilst its eventuation is certainly not guaranteed, does not have

to be restricted to the reproduction of the atomised individual supposedly coerced through neoliberal economic power relations that would force one to embrace an entrepreneurial subjectivity as a result of a sociality governed by competition. Such a critical interpretation as Chow's can only re-situate the self-sovereign individual who emerges from what she has called a "tormented psychological interiority" through a "coercive social ontology" as a society in which one is forced to re-assume a coherent and hegemonically intelligible identity so as to be recognised as a "global citizen" (Chow 2002: 105). I do not dispute that this is a dominant belief system in an increasingly globalised world, but it is just exactly that, a belief system, *one* belief system. Chow's is an analysis that remains within a *psychological* and dialectical logic and by which, as an inevitable teleology, Chow has resolved "difference...as... sameness as the condition for signification" which she claims results in a subjectivity that is coerced through the social to re-perform difference, racial, sexual etc, as sameness, as a new 'commodified' identity (Chow 2002: 128). In a way that resonates with this dialectical collapse of difference as sameness, of the original replaced by its copy, Gilroy has suggested that "the globalisation of vernacular forms means that our understanding of antiphony will have to change" (Gilroy 1993b: 110). This 'globalised' shift is one in which, as Gilroy has considered, "calls and responses no longer converge in the tidy patterns of secret, ethnically encoded dialogue" where, as he has pronounced, "the original call is becoming harder to locate" (Gilroy 1993b: 110). For the discourse of alterity which was once perhaps a productive means for communicating the terms of inclusion and exclusion within the circulation of a specific (sub)culture or community, *has* been fully appropriated, commodified and redistributed as the necessary aleatory

and random statistical social phenomena that is required to stimulate and regulate the competitive impulse that reproduces entrepreneurial subjectivity.

In returning to the final movement of *For you, only you*, these analyses may be appreciated as emerging in the work within the episteme of neoliberalism structured through an economics of total governmentality and a return to the musical score. As already mentioned, neoclassical *laissez-faire* economics are no longer operative within this episteme. Instead “government is a pre-condition” (McWhorter 2012: 67) for the production of the market in which the social or population, now analysed *as* the market is regulated and normalised through “permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention” (Foucault 2008: 132). The final movement of *For you, only you* (starting at 4’25”) presents Karikis’s re-scoring of the original 1470 Josquin composition. This return to the original musical score *and* its re-scoring by Karikis represents a return to the economies of the original and its copy. But this relation moves through an altered logic that re-works the exchange of the first movement and the emergence of competition as repetition in the second movement, both of which have been identified as the “regimes of veridiction that are in play” (Dilts 2011: 143), or ‘truth-games’, through an altered and *de-intensified* temporal logic in the final movement, which I will return to.

In *For you, only you* where the beat comes in through the rhythmic vocalising of the tenors at 4’25”, the performance can be heard as transposed from the original compositional timing of four beats per bar to an unequal temporality, as considered within classical Western music traditions, of thirteen beats per bar. The introduction of the beat here signals what Berlant, writing about ambient citizenship, has considered as

“a shift in the air” (Berlant 2011: 51), which, like Gilroy’s earlier assessment of the aside, denotes a shift in orders of experience, but through an altered temporality. This altered temporality can be listened to in at least two different ways. It can be heard either as a reproduction and intensification of irreducible difference - difference as sameness - or as the insertion of a more radical kind of difference through which one experiences the work as a *social event*. This second listening of the reorganisation of the score, which I return to shortly, occurs by traveling to the past from the perspective of the present so as to write a more radical future of the past that can then be experienced in the historical present.

The first listening, as a dialectical listening, is one in which the formerly unified and harmonised collective voice of the choir is atomised into its separate and individual voices - tenor, counter-tenor and mezzo-soprano each break away from the group and begin to sound their individuality (4’25” - 4’35”). Ideas of irreducible difference may be interpreted as having been inserted into the original score through both the insistence upon a re-scored unequal temporality that breaks up the harmonic order that governed the performance of the choir in both of the previous movements of *For you, only you* and through the clearly separate and normatively classified vocal timbres of the choir. This temporal re-organisation, commencing at 4’25” can be heard as producing faster and more rhythmic “fragments of sounds” that Karikis has considered as being “loosely organised according to the parts of the body and the resonating cavities where they are produced and reverberate” (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19). Listening through this line of analysis would seemingly connect the individual voice with each individual body, where the new voice “discovered in the breach” (Edwards 2002: 620) that was

addressed earlier in the chapter emerges as individualised *en mass*. This is a listening in which the economy of the copy trumps and replaces the economy of the original, where the idea of the original, the original score and its history is erased through the production of novelty. At 4'25" when the choir members in *For you, only you* no longer sing words, but begin to mime the syllables and consonant utterances that were performed originally by Karikis as the soloist in the previous sections (3'15" - 4'12"), the idea of the copy, as the colonised subject stratified by an inscription of inferiority is now *copied* by the individual members of Alamire in a sonic elaboration of the idea that there is only "a copy of a copy for which there is no original" (Butler 1993: 314). This would suggest an atemporal listening in which the copy emerges as repetition with a difference, always sounding progress, a "new voice in the breach" (Edwards 2002: 620), producing an intensified, faster and more rhythmic communication that is ultimately governed by *competition*, caught up in a race for the survival of the fittest. Yet the destabilisation of the authority of an original truth and the de-disciplining of the subject that does occur through this subversively performative process does not have to be the 'baby that is thrown out with the bath water'. For, whilst it is undisputed that the destabilisation enacted through post-structural theories has enabled a shift in the terms of domination and subordination as a performance, as a "practice of liberation" (McWhorter 2013: 70) that occurs *on the individual level*, this destabilisation has had little effect upon changing the terms of domination/subordination at the level of the population. The question arises then, if the individual subject has been 'liberated' from the disciplining of the original authority through 'practices of liberation' which can be heard to have occurred through the second movement of *For you, only you*, what strategies are available to ensure a "freedom" from being re-captured into the



dominating relations of intensified competition that typify the neoliberal economy at the level of the population? How might the “non-dominating social relations” (Gilroy 1993b: 79) that Gilroy has hoped for be eventuated within this episteme of total governmentality, and how might it be possible to hear this performed in *For you, only you*? To answer this question, a second and more reparative listening is necessary, as one that *is* read through “practices of liberation” such as those of the destabilisation of authorial originality that gender performativity and colonial mimeticism have ‘afforded’ but which are now combined with an analysis of what McWhorter has called “post-liberation feminism and practices of freedom” (McWhorter 2013).

*Practices of liberation*, as necessarily engaged in a critical deconstruction of the discourse of rights within McWhorter’s theory of ‘post-liberation feminism’ are heterogeneously and simultaneously connected with what she has called *practices of freedom* (McWhorter 2013). Practices of freedom are instituted at the level of the population and involve a re-engagement with notions of the original and with history. In *For you, only you*, the mimicking of the “fragments of sounds” (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19) that both Alamire and Karikis perform, particularly between 4’40” and 5’50”, do not have to be heard as sounding in an atemporal vacuum, emerging from an individual body that is governed by a latent, dormant memory of its own erasure. These “fragments of sound” can be appreciated as denoting what Gilroy has called the “neglected modes of signifying practice like mimesis, gesture, kinesis” that have “come to be seen as a bridge from music into other modes of cultural expression, supplying, along with improvisation, montage, and dramaturgy, the hermeneutic keys to the full medley of black artistic practices” (Gilroy 1993b: 78). This is not intended as an overly

celebratory romanticisation of “black artistic practices” in a way that would erase the power-relations inherent within these or indeed in any practices (Gilroy 1993b: 78). Rather it is a way of reconnecting the “fragments of sound” in *For you, only you* with history and the “rules, styles and conventions that are found in the culture” (Foucault 1996: 313). For the “rules, styles and conventions” of the “black artistic practices” (Gilroy 1993b: 78) of which Gilroy has written, as mentioned earlier, have within their history a particular emancipatory impulse that pre-dates the ideals of ‘individual emancipation’ that typified the Enlightenment project. A reparative listening to the re-scored temporality of *For you, only you* is one that might yet provide the necessary bridge between the individual de-disciplined through the violences of ‘practices of liberation’ and that individual’s re-connection with a collective that is governed by practices of freedom as a particularly ethical practice.

Karikis’ re-scored temporality, whilst inserting what can be perceived as an unequal tempo by Western standards, is also typical of Balkan rhythms, particularly of nomadic Roma folk music. This de-centring of the dominance of Western cultural perspectives further correlates with the music of Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* (1993b) as the “shift in the air” (Berlant 2011: 51) that signifies a different movement, one of routes, journeys and migration. This temporality is one which perceives of identity “as a process of movement and mediation” but is one that revisits an idea of history, one’s ‘roots’ for example, which as Gilroy has suggested should be “more appropriately approached via the homonym routes” (Gilroy 1993b: 19). This is an alternative way of hearing movement scored into the final section of *For you, only you*, as a re-listening to the past in the present rather than assuming that one has heard all there is to hear about history.

It is in this way that this movement can be appreciated as not always having to be considered as progressive, as future oriented, but instead can be a movement that listens ‘backwards’ from a position in the historical present. Indeed, as Gilroy reading Ellison before him has explained, this movement, though nomadic and diasporic, is also a movement that acts as a “link in the chain of tradition” (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79). This presents a ‘strategic’ listening as one that insists upon a connection with history, but as a sonic expression of the “future-anterior” which is a temporal and grammatical tense in which an idea of “the past that *will have been*” (Hart 1998: 181 emphasis in original), is reorganised in a way that seeks to transform present experience as an altered sociality. This can be heard in *For you, only you* at 4’46”, when Alamire begin to repeat the melody of the original Josquin score, wordlessly though, mimicking and imitating the wordless vocalisations of the soloist and appropriating the temporal syntax of jazz scat. This is a spectral temporality, a spectral movement, a haunting from the past that connects what English professor and women’s rights advocate Lynda Hart has considered as a reorganisation that “constitutes a bridge across the gap between the past and the future” (Hart 1998: 161) with a temporality that exposes what Berlant has identified as the “perverse relation between ideals of the political and the practice of politics” (Berlant 2011: 229). It is this disjuncture that becomes ‘attunable’ in the suspended animation of the space that delaying in the impasse opens up. This temporal reorganisation then is one that might yet provide the bridge between practices of liberation and practices of freedom. For the present that emerges from this temporal disorganisation is “the past that *will have been*” (Hart 1998: 181 emphasis in original). This is not a past erased through an insistence upon a chrononormativity that, as an always progressive temporality, has erased the violences of history to present a falsely

anodyne present in which the ongoing reproduction of domination and subordination, of business-as-usual, is similarly hidden. Instead what we hear is the *struggle* for political collectivity, as a struggle to eventalise existence as a social event, but as one governed by relations of non-domination rather than the reproduction of domination and subordination. Such a temporal reorganisation experienced as a social event in itself seeks to eventalise a *collective* memory in the spaces of its *individual* erasure.

At 5'50", both 'characters' of the composition, the old master and the troubled contemporary voice, begin to imitate each other, exchanging and repeating each other's phrasing and pitches. This sharing of communicative positions is most evident between the mezzo-sopranos and Karikis. The point at which, operating through a strategic logic, two heterogenous conceptions of freedom, one as the discourse of a radical utilitarianism forges a connection with a second disparate discourse of revolutionary rights is at about 6'13" and 7'10" where the "firework impressions" by the mezzo-sopranos signifies the most 'radical' point of movement in the piece, "at the edges of Alamire's comfort zone of experimentation" (Boyce 2007: 38). This is the moment in which the production of a social, collective memory in the work is most aligned between the different strategic positions of the performers.

The point at which music most radically becomes 'noise' in this work, at 6'13" and 7'10", is a moment of transgression *within* the political, but is yet juxtapolitical. It does not occur "beyond the mechanism of power" (Dilts 2011: 143), but it does shift the mechanism, or dynamics of power. Not all the voices of the piece move irresolutely toward noise or a discourse of alterity, the tenors do not radically shift their register but

return to finish upon the original timing and phrasing of the Josquin score (6'55"). What this does demonstrate though is that "we are always formed in networks of power and cannot directly oppose them" (McWhorter 2013: 55), or rather that directly opposing such networks does little to actually change them. Instead, this is a point in *For you, only you* that seeks to make audible the "perverse relation between ideals of the political and the practice of politics" (Berlant 2011: 229) where the former is exposed as an ideal that is governed by an erasure of history and the latter a belief that a transcendental, sovereign-subject exists as a timeless truth outside and beyond history, prior to social, cultural or political *mediation*. The 'difference/noise' that emerges through the firework impressions by the mezzo-sopranos in *For you only you*, can be interpreted as sounding out a *release*, as a momentary release from bondage. This performance of resistance is necessary, not because once and for all it is a performance that 'undoes power', but rather because it is one of the ways to measure and communicate the limits of power. Taken purely as an expression of sovereign individuality, heard as the noise of irreducible, individual difference, then this would be the 'statistical noise' that drives a neoliberal machine that feeds off the intensification and coercion of individual competition. For such a resistance, as Foucault has adequately explained, is reliant upon power and thus 'statistical noise' that can and will surely be re-appropriated through a subordinating power/resistance regime as a "new" signal, for the "fireworks impressions" may be considered on one hand as a sounding of 'social phenomena', as spikes in the normalised transmission that, once identified, can be equalised and regulated back into a field of normalisation.

But an alternative listening is one in which the firework impressions performed by the mezzo-sopranos signal “the development of ethical practices *within* networks of power rather than as total opposition to them” (McWhorter 2013: 55 emphasis added). The performance between the mezzo-sopranos and Karikis commencing at 6’13” until the end of the work performs a stubborn attachment to the concept of the *group* rather than a forward marching inevitability of the timeless, ahistorical and atomised individual as a universal masculine signifying economy (McWhorter 2013: 55). Instead of a dialectics of coercion, *For you, only you*, in my opinion, proposes strategies of freedom as responsibility, as a social-self-other-responsibility which are performed as paradoxical practices of freedom, performed by the mezzo-sopranos, by Karikis, by Boyce and by the audience.

*For you, only you* moves through discourses of liberation but with an awareness that practices of liberation, that fragment, destabilise and hybridise the subject alone are not enough to ensure ‘freedom’ and an end of oppression or domination. Such a listening, that would only hear this work as signifying blackness *or* whiteness, heterosexuality *or* homosexuality, masculinity *or* femininity, a citizen with rights *or* a non-person, results in a kind of immobilisation, as a coerced and individuated internalisation of neoliberal governmental practice rather than as a collective and cooperative *movement*, as a re-collective movement of juxta-political life. The point is, the discourse of neoliberalism that focuses entirely upon the production of ‘liberal individualism’ does so in a way that fails to perceive of oppression as systemic, as *group* oppression, as the oppression of discourses of social, cultural and political difference. Karikis and the mezzo-sopranos, do not in this strategic reading sound the individual as entrepreneur, but rather sound the

ongoing struggle of group oppression, aligned and allied, but not unified or re-harmonised.

...oppression is the inhibition of a group through a vast network of everyday practices, attitudes, assumptions, behaviours, and institutional rules; it is structural or systemic.” (Young quoted in McWhorter 2013: 59).

Implicit, then, within the work may be heard a critique of the primary status of the individual that “usually fails to perceive oppression...because it does not recognise the reality of groups” (McWhorter 2013: 59) as a direct critique of the neoliberal assertion that there is no such thing as society. As McWhorter has explained, oppression is not always “perpetuated by individuals” but more often is systemic, “oppression is produced and maintained structurally and systemically” and further “individuality itself is a product of networks of power/knowledge” (McWhorter 2013: 61). Any analysis of a power/knowledge regime then, needs to focus upon repeated patterns “of force relations rather than conscious intentions” (McWhorter 2013: 61). All this points to a more nuanced way of thinking about the ‘social’ as an ontological and open field of force relations rather than as a predetermined teleology in which the individual, coerced into an entrepreneurial subjectivity is the final nail in the coffin of collectivity such as Chow’s theories of coercive and ultimately eternal and narcissistic self-mimeticism would imply (Chow 2002: 107). The important performance within all of the works addressed through this research and which is fully operative in *For you, only you* is that oppression is ontologically political and systemic before being experienced as individual and its contemporary manifestation is one that renders oppression, in a neoliberal era, specifically as individual so as to render *any* movement other than “self-interested conduct as personal investment” (Dilts 2011: 139) - which is nothing short of

capitulation to neoliberal domination - totally ineffective, invisible and inaudible. The shift from sovereign to social ontology that has occurred through post-colonial, feminist, queer and critical race thinking in the last forty or so years, seeks first to critique a bourgeois ‘technology of the self’ as a “technology of domination” and then to *move with, possibly even back to* but not certainly not beyond a more radical and reparative ethics of the “care of the self” as an always socio-political relation that embeds a corporealisation of freedom *as responsibility*, as a “critical response to the emergence of neo-liberal subjectivity, governmentality, and biopower” (Dilts 2011, 132). *For you, only you*, as a collaborative social production, devoted to an ethical ontology of the social, is not only highly critical of, but displaces and transforms “the now prevalent assumption that the individual is the primary analytic category” with amplified practices of freedom as “central to the project of creating and maintaining selves and communities able to exercise freedom” (McWhorter 2013: 66) *together* as non-sovereign, de-psychologised, de-anthropologised, de-phenomenologised, *non-dominant peoples*.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has addressed questions of how socio-political differences and lived experiences of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity may be perceived to manifest in the making of sound arts and experimental musics. These questions have been addressed through post-structuralist theories that employ paradox, performativity and hybridity as processes to destabilise and transgress assumed limits of social intelligibility. As a result, the research has sought to map what may be understood as commonly assumed limits of social intelligibility so as to perceive the ways in which these limits can be appreciated as having shaped auditory perception and aesthetic practice and the ways in which these practices in turn may recalibrate the limits of social intelligibility. The research then, addressed dominant assumptions about gender and sound, what discourses and performances those assumptions have produced and how those discourses and performances have been used to destabilise and transform sound arts and experimental music practices through the analysis of specific aesthetic works. The research has drawn upon compositions, installations and artist-archives including works by Lina Džuverović, Anne Hilde Neset, Cathy Lane, Emma Hedditch, Sonia Boyce, Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether.

The analysis of each of the works considered within this thesis have been structured through an overarching three stage genealogical criteria that firstly sought to identify the most immediate and local power relations operative in each of the works considered; secondly to consider what kinds of discourses those power relations made possible; and

thirdly to appreciate how those discourses in turn have been used to support, challenge, resist or transform the originary power relations of domination/subordination under consideration. These criteria were then mapped to a more specific set of questions to guide the research; firstly to consider the ways in which gender manifests in the making of works with a focus upon work made by women; secondly to consider the ways in which different ideas of the category of woman, intersectional gender and politics have been addressed and materialised through practices of sound arts and experimental musics; and thirdly, how works that have examined critical feminist intersectional differences as the medium of their creative practice in sound arts and experimental musics have challenged, resisted or transformed dominant historical discourses and practices within the field.

Through analyses that question both individual experience and institutional and systemic effects, each of the works that have been addressed within this research may be considered as feminist experiments in exercises of governmentality. Throughout this research each work has been addressed as a means by which to reconsider processes of “organisation, distribution, and limitation of powers in a society” (Foucault 2008: 16, 13) with a focus upon socio-politically differing constructions of the category of woman, gender and politics, each addressed through their co-constitutive materialisation within collective processes of sound and music production. What makes these compositional processes feminist experiments in exercises of governmentality, I have suggested, is not because they might be made by “women” or might even be about or for “women”. But specifically these works have been addressed as forms of feminist composition because they do not take the notion of “woman” or “man”, “feminine” or

“masculine”, “black” or “white”, “homosexual” or “heterosexual” and neither the individual nor collective nor sound nor music as timeless givens. Rather, these works have sought to radically question the very foundations of these terms and to work through processes that materialise relations of non-domination through aesthetic practice.

From the foundational research within the *Her Noise Project* and an analysis of historical applications and meanings of the words ‘*her*’ and ‘*noise*’, which is where this research began, to Rodgers’ feminist epistemology of audio-technical discourse (Rodgers 2010b), as one of the primary literatures of this research invested in identifying the ways in which the archetypal subject of sound has historically been constructed as white, Western and male, to Born’s recent findings of “the emergence in the present of a highly (male) gendered creative digital music scene” (Born et al 2014) in the UK, gender can be appreciated as manifesting in the making of sound arts and experimental musics in ways that have materialised asymmetrical and hierarchical experiences in sound and music. In each of the examples that have been addressed within this research gender may be perceived to have manifested initially in the making of these works as a protest against experiences of marginalisation, neglect and erasure which have manifested in ‘ways of knowing’, as Džuverovic has stated, “*that there is a certain inequality as a starting point*” (transcribed Džuverovic HNI-2006). Particularly as the research progressed, the realisation of how sound itself, both as a theory of audio and audibility has been constructed to reflect and materialise quite rigid notions of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity through the foundational norms and conventions by which the discourse has historically been structured became more apparent.

With a particular focus initially upon explicitly gendered and thus marginalised identities, it became clear that works that are produced from such a position of marginalisation often proceed from aesthetic concerns that take a particular socio-political problem or question as a starting point. Aesthetic processes that are initialised as a question provide, as Butler has explained, a “means through which taken-for-granted presuppositions are contested and new ways of thinking and analysing become possible” (Butler 2011: 3). The works analysed within this research then have raised questions about experiences of socio-political inequality as their aesthetic material, as social, cultural and political sites of contestation that seek to connect the production of sound arts and experimental musics with lived experiences and wider systemic, social and institutional concerns.

Through the analysis of Cathy Lane’s *Hidden Lives* I perceived gender as manifesting in the work not because the composition was made by a woman, nor because the compositional material had been spoken by women, nor because it might seemingly be about women as ‘curators of memories’ historically relegated to the private sphere. I perceived that gender manifested in this work through the performative challenge that the work produced against the historical silencing of women as a category performed through a critical analysis of speech act theory within the compositional structure of the work. This critique, in my opinion, was leveraged on one hand upon a seemingly impossible connection between the words ‘woman’ and ‘composer’ and on the other through the deconstruction of the dominant discursive practices of subordinating speech acts by which such a historical category has seemingly been silenced. Lane’s *Hidden Lives* provided the means for a necessary analysis of speech act theory as the basis of

processes of discursive performativity which informed the remainder of the research. In particular, *Hidden Lives*, as a work that sought to explore both the collective experiences of women and a historical idea of woman through speech act theory, put forward one of the initial claims of this research, in which, as Born has suggested, “there is no musical object or text - whether sounds, score or performance - that stands outside mediation” (Born 2010: 88).

The analysis of *Hidden Lives* further considered the construction of subordinating and silencing speech acts and put forward a hypothesis of ‘paradoxical’ speech through the performance of the composition so as to both historicise experience and to expose the discursive grounds through which an idea of “woman” in isolation and in subordination has been produced. In particular this analysis sought to expose the relationship between power/knowledge (discourse) and speech and between memory and repetition within the compositional structure of the work addressed through the public/private dualism as a foundational feminist concern. What the analysis found was that paradoxically, the erasure of ‘woman’ is often also the cause for ‘women’s’ legibility and thus collectivity. Yet, my listening to this composition sought to materialise ways in which this ‘original authority’, as one that would assert a subordinate position for woman, may itself be undermined through subversive performances of authority and subordination. In particular this listening to *Hidden Lives* sought to demonstrate one process by which the ‘musical subject’ of this work may be perceived as being transformed through “an engagement with the musical object in the act of listening” (Born 2010: 88).

In Emma Hedditch's *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* I perceived gender as manifesting in the making of the installation similarly to Lane's *Hidden Lives* through feelings of indignation and marginalisation in response to the ongoing "representational invisibility" of women's music considered through an additional lens that took into account effects of gender and sexuality (transcribed Hedditch HNI-2006). Gender and sexuality played out affectively through this installation connecting through fleeting, yet decidedly political, materialisations of ephemeral noise, as a noise that intentionally slips beneath the radar to be transmitted along a queer feminist frequency which is intended to evaporate "at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility" (Muñoz 1996: 6).

Hedditch's *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* collapsed the composer/performer/audience triad as an expansion of the notion of performativity in music considered as performative composition within a political economy of the exchange. In particular my analysis sought to consider Hedditch's installation as a living compositional process. This was intended as a specific strategy to negate the deadening effects of lesbian sexuality historically and hegemonically constructed, as Butler has explained, as a "discursive falsehood" (Butler 1993: 312). This analysis sought to compliment the critique within *Hidden Lives*, focused as it was upon exposing systemic processes that would seek to silence women as a category, with a more reparative reading that sought out processes for collectivity and the sustenance of an intimate public as one that by necessity remains fleeting and ephemeral as a means of survival in often hostile environments. In particular, *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* through shared performances of audition composed

a ‘mini kind of public’ in which as Born has suggested, “the listener, entangled in a musical assemblage, feels and finds herself transformed” (Born 2010: 88).

Yet, whilst as Berlant has suggested, the materialisation of an intimate public, such as the site which I have theorised as having been established by Hedditch’s *We’re Alive, Let’s Meet!*, in itself is an achievement, the terms of belonging, of who has access to such an intimate public and whose interests form the basis of its materialisation, are the means by which questions about whose noise ‘matters’ can become more audible (Berlant 2011: 230). I addressed questions of belonging through an analysis of some of the ways in which a politics of audition can be appreciated as being mediated through representational politics by tuning into Sonia Boyce’s *Devotional Archive*. Through this analysis I sought to gauge and measure some of the assumed limits of auditory intelligibility that have been mediated through socio-political constructions of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality and discourses of racialised sexual difference as they may be perceived to have critically materialised through the construction of this archive. Boyce’s *Devotional Wallpaper, Good Morning Freedom* print and her prominent placement of Shirley Bassey in the *Devotional Archive* were each considered through a politics of representation in which historical assumptions about auditory perception that have historically maintained that both discourses and practices of sound, as communicative processes, present neutral and universal information were challenged. This analysis sought to understand some of the ways in which representations of race and sexuality have been embedded in ideas about sounding and listening. In particular I felt it was necessary to try to understand some of the ways in which different ideas of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and nationality can be perceived to have been

embedded within the perceptual organisation of audio technologies as an intentional means by which to articulate and challenge hegemonic perceptions about the neutrality of sound and listening. In order to do this I sought to understand the ways in which historical and hegemonic stereotypes of deviant sexuality, covert sexuality and “the white man’s burden” (Gilman 1985, 209; 237) can be heard as stereotypical listening responses reflected through normative ideas about noise, silence and signal.

Theoretically the analysis sought to extend the consideration of performativity as developed throughout the research, connecting patterns of relation between Butlerian theories and anti-racist and post-colonialist theories that share similar strategies focused upon the destabilisation of the sovereign subject. As a result, the chapter extended the concerns of the research, developing the discussion from performative and ephemeral performances of composition as a *devotion to audition* so as to measure historically not only who might seek to speak for whom but more specifically to consider who can be heard and to enable an attunement to the assumed limitations upon hearing within a politics of representation.

In particular my analysis of the *Devotional Archive* addressed, largely through Stuart Hall's writings in *Encoding / Decoding* (1992), the ways in which dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional *listening* codes may each be perceived to be operative through both masking technologies and socio-political processes of social organisation. In this way the chapter further sought to extend the parameters of a politics of audition through a deconstruction of a politics of representation so as to consider the ways in which stratified and hierarchised social relations are often the unacknowledged basis of discourses and practices of sound, music and listening. Listening through the



*Devotional Archive* then has provided additional ways to tune into the feminist frequency that has been called forth from the ether throughout this research for the generation of memory forged in the spaces of forgetting. For whilst the previous analyses of *Hidden Lives* and *We're Alive, Let's Meet!* sought to challenge notions of who a composer can be and to expand upon what can count as composition through the shifted parameters of composer/performer/audience, the works addressed through the *Devotional Series* have sought to expand upon what can count as listening through the challenge to the message/sender/receiver relay that the *Devotional* project has sought to transform.

The research, moving through initial questions about who historically a composer could be and what can count as composition within discourses of sound arts and experimental musics, sought to further expand upon the politics of audition through an engagement with the fundamental parameters - as laws, norms and conventions - that have historically governed acoustic histories and audio-technical discourses. In particular, through my analysis of the installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent* by Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon, I deduced that historical norms and acoustic laws embedded within hegemonic notions of pitch, timbre and perfect fidelity can be perceived as implicitly and historically materialised through hegemonic ideals of heteronormal whiteness. What I understood through my analysis in this chapter was that historical ideals of pitch and timbre may be perceived as having being produced through and in turn productive of ideals of heteronormal whiteness, predominantly considered through audio-technical discourses dependent upon a legacy developed through the neo-classical and physiological acoustics of Herman Von Helmholtz in the 1800s. Historical notions

of pitch as reflective of ideals of harmony and purity can be appreciated as having provided a stable point of reference from which notions of timbre, commonly understood as the ‘body’ of sound have been developed. In particular, I came to the realisation that similarly to hegemonically normative understandings of race, sexuality and gender whereby, historically, gender has been assumed to be determined by an a priori and stable sex and where through hegemonic discourses race and gender have been intertwined through a primacy of heterosexuality that reproduces race and defines gender, historical notions of pitch and timbre have similarly been intertwined through the notion of perfect fidelity, where historically, ideals of perfect fidelity have sought to reproduce pitch and define timbre.

These concerns were further worked through the installation *Reverse Karaoke: Automatic Music Tent*, whereby the analysis, by combining a triple oscillation between what were developed as performed articulations, processes of performative listening and vocal performativity, sought to de-essentialise and de-naturalise fixed ideas about pitch and timbre and fidelity as well as race, gender and sexuality. By considering the vocal performance of Kim Gordon, the lyrics of the original-cover song written specifically for the installation and the performances of both Gordon and the installation participants as a Foucauldian form of ‘blasphemous parrēsia’ the stability of a fundamental frequency as an essential element that signals a sovereign subject of sound was challenged. Through its activation and the archiving of its many performances this installation provided a point of resistance to the norm that would insist upon a *fidelity* between timbre and voice thereby further destabilising correlative heteronormative discourses that would insist upon a *continuity* between sex and gender or race and

sexuality, putting forward the proposition that as much as audition is a learned performance, so are constructs of pitch, timbre and fidelity products of enculturation as much as are race, gender and sexuality. Finally, the challenge to received notions of pitch and timbre and their attendant modes of auditory intelligibility were further addressed through a deconstruction of feminine whiteness collectively disorganised through the temporal drag of the original cover song of the installation.

The concept of temporal drag, as an intervention that seeks to disorganise the hegemonic logic of productive, linear time and the correlative constructions of history, memory and collectivity provided a further theoretical paradigm through which to consider the final work within the the thesis, the installation *For you, only you* by Sonia Boyce working in collaboration with sound artist Mikhail Karikis and early music consort choir Alamire. Through the analysis of *For you, only you* I sought to connect each of the threads developed throughout the research; the critical deconstruction of hegemonic social relations and materialisation of alternative publics; the destabilisation of the universal ideal of the sovereign subject; and negotiations between the individual and the collective through historically shifting liberal discourses. Each of these concerns were threaded through both dialectical and strategic relations as heard within the compositional structure and musical performances of this installation. In particular this chapter traced historically shifting conceptions of notions of an individual, self-sovereign ontology governed by discourses of colonialism and liberal economics in a move toward the development of an “ontological condition of ethics” through feminist practices of freedom predicated upon the notion of a self that does “not exist without others” (McWhorter 2013, 71-2). Experiences of music, sound and performance moved

through three stages of antiphonal performativity; firstly as a challenge to hegemonic discourses of the Western white male as the universal subject of sound and the fundamental frequency of heteronormal whiteness as established in the previous chapters; secondly as an increased political-psychic complexity within the performances of the colonised-subject that through forms of subversive performativity have sought to displace the original authority of the coloniser; and finally a movement through the materialisation of an alternative social ontology embedded with a paradoxical and corporeal understanding of freedom as social responsibility.

Further, in an effort to consider the macro-economical materialisation of sound, I sought to measure the ‘games of truth’ by which both individuals and populations have been socio-politically disciplined and regulated to “more perfectly conform to the natural order that they already ought to manifest in the first place” (James 2014: 142) through classic, neo-classic and neoliberal forms of governmentality as played out through compositional structures such as in free jazz improvisation and the avant-garde open work. These socio-political ‘truth-effects’ were mapped through the performative compositional framework of the installation so as to perceive of the “inescapably social character of what may appear to be the individual, introspective and affective modes of subjectivity engendered by aesthetic experience” within compositional processes (Born 2010: 83). In particular, by considering the triadic movements of *For you, only you* through shifting understandings and uses of amplification, governmentality, compositional and performative structures the research found that shifting historical applications of amplification within acoustic histories and audio-technical discourses may be perceived of as having developing synchronously with and through the

historically shifting production, discipline and regulation of “difference” itself, which in an era of neoliberalism is intensified as the competitive impulse required to reproduce the norm of entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Travelling through the different movements of *For you, only you* further enabled a means by which to track the amplification and intensification of the rise of the individual through the work, which on one hand sounded as a warning about the atomisation of the individual in late-capitalist societies, in which the acknowledgement of oppression as 'group' oppression rather than as something bought on by individual circumstances and thus that must be managed by a solitary individual in competition with all others has seemingly become a 'new common sense'. Listened to through an oscillation of dialectic and strategic logics and between paranoid and reparative critiques the atomisation of the individual, in my opinion, proved to be a critique inherently embedded within and through *For you, only you*, which, by maintaining a stubborn attachment to the concept of the *group*, sought to materialise an alternative collectivity “as a point of contingent convergence between musical formations and social formations” (Born 2011: 385).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this research I have argued for a paradoxical interplay between some of the tensions that have been previously highlighted by theorists such as Joan W. Scott, Ellen Koskoff, Georgina Born and Robin Wiegman (Scott 1996, 1999; Koskoff 2005; Born 2005, 2010, 2011; Wiegman 2014). Initially these tensions have emerged between, on the one hand, a need to write women into history through processes of ‘herstory’ and,

on the other, through the analysis of specific social histories, such as audio-technical discourses and technologies of socio-political difference (Scott 1999). These tensions reverberate through negotiations between stasis and movement, ideas and experience and fieldwork and textwork as approaches within feminist musicology and ethnomusicology (Koskoff 2005). They present the struggle to connect “the corporeal, the affective, the collective and the located nature of musical experience” at a micro-level with “the macro-dynamics of cultural history and technological change” that Born has proffered within music and mediation (Born 2005: 34). Finally, these tensions are combined within the two main processes of queer feminist critique that Wiegman has identified as those of ‘paranoid’ and ‘reparative’ readings (Wiegman 2014).

Additionally the research has sought to extend upon both Sterne’s theoretical work through a specifically feminist inquiry to address the inherent masculinism of the “universal abstract humanist subject” (Sterne 2003: 9 ) of sound that has remained implicit within his critique of sound reproduction technologies and to also extend upon the ways in which Rodgers’ feminist epistemology of audio-technical discourse may be perceived to be operative through compositional and aesthetic practices that seek to challenge, resist and transform compositional orthodoxies in which the figure of the white, Western male has historically dominated as the archetypal sovereign subject of sound (Rodgers 2010a, 2010b). Yet, at the basis of each of these concerns throughout this research has been the questioning of the construction of the foundational terms of the research, “woman as subject, gender and politics” (Scott 1999, 23). Whilst it might seem obvious to state that gender is definitely experienced differently across differing socio-political locations and that different socio-political experiences of gender have

been both analysed and produced through sound arts and experimental musics, what the research did find was that importantly, whilst such a thing as ‘feminist composition’ may indeed be heard to exist, as with feminism itself, there is no one monolithic feminism or feminist compositional process that would enable a regrouping of “women’s composition” as another homogenous category.

Each of the works addressed within this research may be perceived as commencing from the need to address the problem of subordinated representation within discourses of sound arts and experimental musics. Each work may be perceived as having been initiated by addressing a primary problem; the assumptions based within the conjunction of “her” and “noise”; the seeming incompatibility of “woman” and “composer”; the erasures from musical life of lesbian culture; the representational production of racialised and sexualised difference through sound reproduction technologies and audio-technical discourses; how we might find spaces of alternative expression within discourses that are already raced and gendered; how we might forge collective memories in spaces of historical erasure; how we might disorganise time away from normative reproductive heterosexual, capitalist demands; and how we might produce works and listening publics based upon modalities of non-domination and relations not based upon the neoliberal reproduction of the principle of competition. Each work within this research then can be understood as commencing from a kind of score or text, or set of pre-existing social ideas that are worked through as a series of compositional processes. As a result, I want to propose that each of these works addressed throughout this research may be considered as kind of ‘uncanonical archival interventions’, as works that open up and question how history might not only be

understood to work in the present, but how sound history itself might be mobilised in the service of alternative knowledge productions through the materialisation of the individual as an always social participant within collectivities of the historical present. Finally, the research has provided ways for thinking about feminist practices in sound arts and experimental musics, not just as an archive, exhibition, composition or installation, but as a kind of loose grouping of works that aim to deconstruct modes of domination that women as a category have historically experienced across axes of political difference and to posit a range of memorialising strategies to rework subjugated categories for an alternative aurality of life, as a struggle in and of the historical present.







## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

**1.a** Schematic breakdown: Lane, C. *Hidden Lives* (1999)

**1.b** Schematic breakdown: Boyce, S., Karikis, M., Alamire *For you, only you* (2007)

### Appendix 2

#### Interview and Presentation Transcripts:

**2.a** Lina Džuverović *Her Noise Interview* (2006). Interviewed by Irene Revell (excerpt).

**2.b** Emma Hedditch Presentation - *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium, Tate Modern, London, May 2012

**2.c** Emma Hedditch: *Her Noise Archive Interview* (2006). Interviewed by Lina Džuverović

**2.d** Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon: *Her Noise Tate Talks*, Tate Modern, London 2005 (excerpt)

**2.e** Sonia Boyce Presentation *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium Tate Modern, London 2012

**2.f** Tara Rodgers Presentation at *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium Tate Modern, London 2012

### Appendix 3

‘Gender, Education, Creativity in Digital Music and Sound Art’ workshop proposal for NIME 2014, Goldsmiths College London with Georgina Born, University of Oxford; Kyle Devine, City University London; Sally Jane Norman, University of Sussex; Mark Taylor, University of Manchester

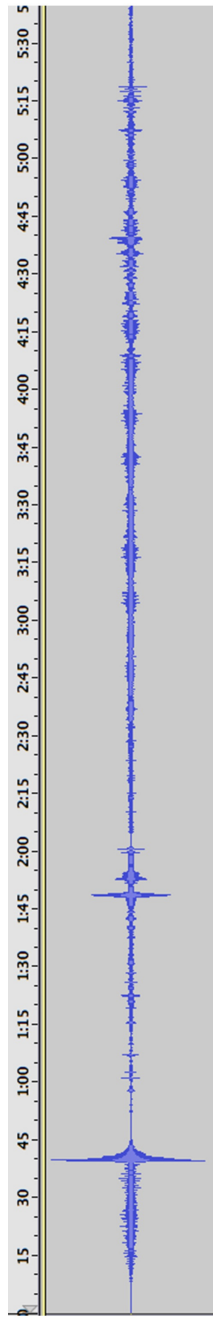
### Appendix 4

**4.a** *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium Tate Modern, London 2012

**4.b** *Sound: Gender: Feminism: Activism* Research Event LCC, London 2012 and 2014

Appendix 1  
1.a Schematic breakdown: Lane, C. *Hidden Lives* (1990)

*Hidden Lives* (1999) by Cathy Lane - 0'00" - 5'35"



0'00"- 0'40" - public space

0'40" door slams, locking out the public, locking in the private

0'40" - 1'47" Impeded pst, kss, tsk plosive consonants, phonetic occlusives signifying locutionary failure

3'00" -soft, plosive consonant forms emerge from the band of noise, - eruption of bodily voiced vowel sounds, where the individual body of the voice slowly begins to emerge from the collective spectrum. - **illocutionary disablement.** these utterances have no force

4'15" - sounds start to thin out, but "speech" is still nonsensical or inaudible

5'30" -6'00" - sparse, sharp intakes of breath no identifiable utterances or speech, total illocutionary disablement - the subject is unspeakable

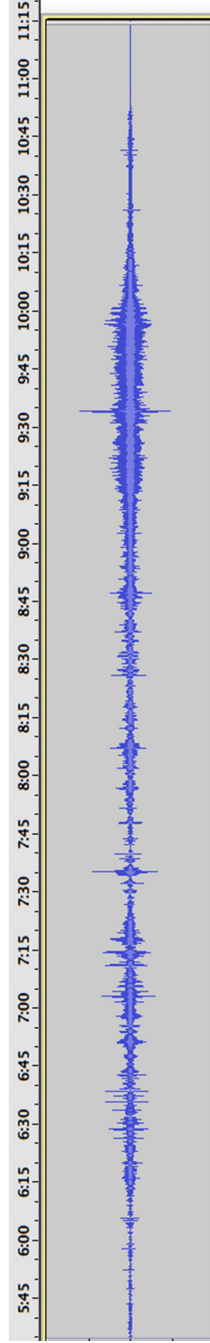
40" - 2'00" - form of sonic alienation represents the **perlocutionary disablement** of the authoritative speech act

4'00"-5'00" - **perlocutionary frustration** - uttered yet not fully-formed protests

The low time-stretched sounds gradually increase in intensity and occasionally burst as if stretching toward speech, but fail to materialise into any intelligible linguistic form. What this quite clearly highlights is the demarcation of public and private space and it is the category of 'women' in this work whose lives have been hidden from public view and from themselves. It is the relegation of the each speaker to the private realm that "deprives the speakers of their language and expression" as reflected in the "heavy editing" of their speech (Lane 2006: 8).

My proposal about *Hidden Lives* is that it sets out a claim that the speech acts that have relegated women to the private sphere as those contained with the "Little Book of Hints and Wrinkles" are speech acts which have historically silenced any protest that might refute the demands metted out by the text. As a speech act that silences contestation against the norms and conventions that it proscribes, the text has rendered the speech of its intended audience as mute, disabling a disputation of its claims as a metaphor for the general silencing of 'women'.

### *Hidden Lives* (1999) by Cathy Lane - 5'35" - 11'15"



6'00" - small protests repeatedly emerge, still utterances, breaths and whispers interrupted with vocal utterances

6'12" - 6'17" - utterances collectivise, scatter into voiced utterances, as the subject struggles toward speech

6'42" - words read from the text begin to emerge amongst increasingly frustrated utterances - voices are stretching toward speech but are still struggling - this woman is flying through all the different rooms of the house just trying to keep up with all the chores she has to do.

7'00" - phrases of the text become audible, "she has only herself to blame"

7'41" the utterances are momentarily repeated

7'43" phrases of the text emerge fully formed, orders of the text punctuated by markers of time

8'30" - 9'30" - the voices increase in density, singular readings merge into crowded readings

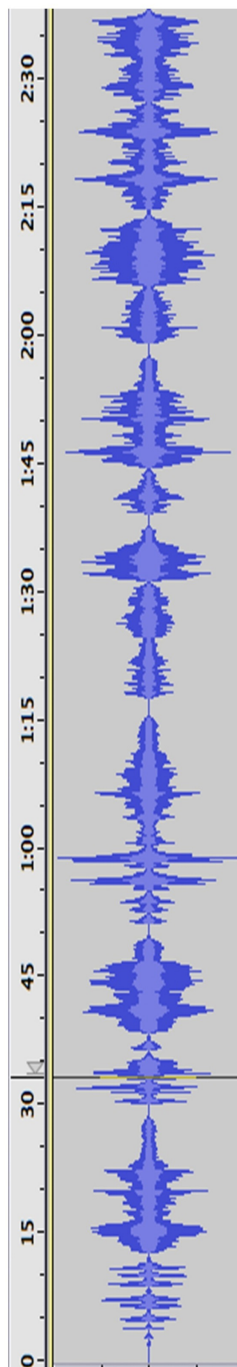
10'00" - 11'15" - private worlds dissolve back into a kind of publicness

It is through the very norms and conventions that are the subject of this composition, that gendered speech has been constructed and by which 'women's' speech has historically been prevented "from counting as an action", as being essentially passive (Langton 1993: 299 emphasis in original). This is what signals the gender of the voice in the composition, the fact that the voices have been silenced by the text/composer, not their timbre. The paradoxical construction of the category of women through these discursive silencing speech acts, that essentialised links between timbre and voice confuse, is the crux of the matter, where "the possibility of politics" does not "rest on" nor "follow from, a pre-existing women's experience" but is the means by which that experience (and sociality) is constructed (Scott 1991: 787).

## Appendix 1

### 1.b Schematic breakdown: Boyce, S., Karikis, M., Alamire *For you, only you* (2007)

*For you, only you* (2007) Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Mikhail Karikis and Alamire -1st movement 0' - 2'45''



0' - 0'11'' Karikis initiates the dialogue, clearing his throat four times

11'' Alamire responds with first line of the motet in its original timing  
Tu solus qui facis mirabilia - You alone can do wonders,

30'' Karikis clears his throat twice more, followed by 'throat mutter' and sings 'εἰώ'

38'' Alamire respond again- Tu solus Creator - you alone are the creator

50'' Karikis responds, "εἰώ, εἰώ" followed by voiced and guttural syllables that harmonically resolve with Alamire

The classic scene of interpellation is performed through Karikis's initiation as the soloist in the work,

his hailing into existence by the coloniser, performed by Alamire, as he stutters toward acquiring an intelligible language. Initially, Karikis, assumes the position of replying in this relation of antiphony.

The choir, Alamire, takes up the position of calling out to the 'troubled voice'. Karikis is called forth to testify and Alamire, initially, to bear witness, to hear the testimony and to acknowledge and legitimise the existence of the "contemporary troubled voice" within the specific colonial/subaltern power/knowledge regime (Karikis quoted in Boyce 2007: 19).

*For you, only you* as a sonic performance of the Lord and Bondsman dialectic and classic dramaturgy of the primary scene of interpellation can be heard through Alamire's response to the original call through the repeated "you alone" (you alone can do wonders, you alone are the creator, you alone are the Redeemer), calling, hailing, the "I" that Karikis struggles to stutter (εἰώ) into the regime of intelligibility.

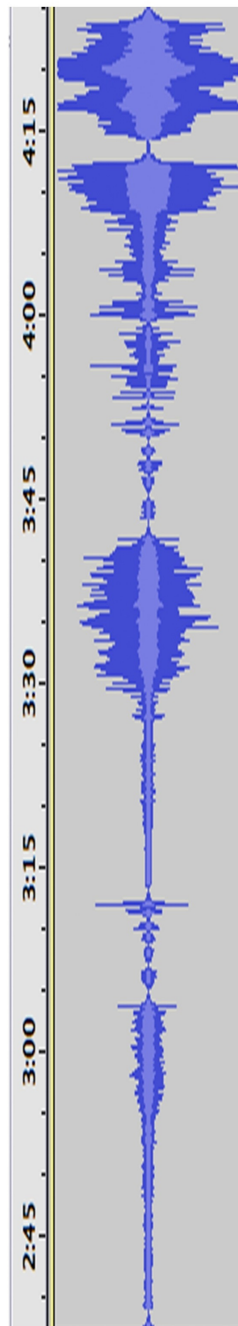
1'04'' Alamire respond again, modulating around Karikis' sustained note

1'15'' - 1'18'' silence

1'18'' Alamire perform the first three lines of the second and third verses of the motet in original timing antiphonically

1'58'' The two verses are repeated but through polyphony, the choir perform their own call and response

*For you, only you* (2007) Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Mikhail Karikis and Alamire -2nd movement 2'45" - 4'25"



**2'44"** Karikis enters, tense muttering, sustained overtone singing

**3'04"** 1st KA plosive - temporal expression - attack, delay, sustain, release

**3'05"** Karikis' "sing to me" as first aside of the piece, shifting the power dynamic between the 'old master' and the 'contemporary troubled voice', signifying the shift from classic sovereignty to biopower

**3'12"** 2nd KA plosive

**3'13" – 3'42"** Alamire provide a continuum of sound as a basis or bridge from which Karikis gradually emerges until he silences the choir abruptly with the 3rd KA plosive

The second movement of *For you, only you*, may be perceived as measuring force relations as they materialise through differing "techniques of government" as "institutionalised routines" and forms of social organisation that can be heard to reference nineteenth century theories of neo-classic liberalism, but which is a temporal order that this work seeks to complicate (McWhorter 2013: 57).

In this second movement, an increased complexity is embodied by Karikis' performance which dominates the scene of antiphony as an "individual assertion within and against the group" (Ellison quoted in Gilroy 1993b: 79).

**3'16"** Karikis' tense throat muttering, dadaist vocalisations that index jazz scat signaling the struggle in discourse

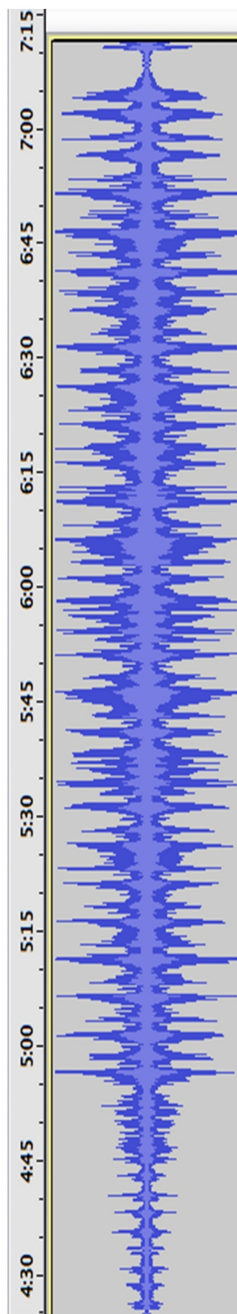
**3'42"** Karikis' "sing to me" as second musical aside

**3'51" – 4'12"** Karikis, voiced and unvoiced dada/scat vocalisations - "throwing shit at language"

**4'00"** Alamire re-enter the musical drama and the 'old master' and 'contemporary troubled voice' perform together

**4'14"** Karikis, hailed by Alamire's "you alone" is recognised within the dominant discourse

*For you, only you* (2007) Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Mikhail Karikis and Alamire -3rd movement 4'25" - 7'15"



**4'25"** Alamire perform faster and more rhythmic "fragments of sounds that are loosely organised according to the parts of the body and the resonating cavities where they are produced and reverberate" (Karikis 2007: 19). The movement opens with the tenors and countertenors and the transposition from four beats per bar to thirteen. This altered temporality denotes a shift in orders of experience, similarly to Karikis' musical aside in the previous movement

**4'35"** Mezzo-sopranos re-enter the performance, both copying each other's phrasing. Tenor, counter-tenor and mezzo-soprano have broken away from the group and begin to sound their 'individuality'

**4'46"** Karikis re-enters the performance, clearing his throat again, repeating the earlier call. Alamire repeat the melody of the original Josquin score, wordlessly though, imitating the wordless vocalisations of Karikis and appropriating the syntax of scat

**5'00" - 5'50"** both parts, Alamire and Karikis sound wordless singing

**5'50"** both characters, 'the master' and the 'troubled voice', particularly Karikis and the mezzo-sopranos, imitate each other, copy each other's pitches

The final movement of *For you, only you* presents Karikis's re-scoring of the original 1470 Josquin composition. This return to the original musical score and its re-scoring by Karikis represents a return to the economies of the original and its copy

The point at which, operating through a strategic logic, two "heterogenous conceptions of freedom", one as the discourse of a radical utilitarianism forges a connection with a second disparate discourse of revolutionary rights is at 6'13" and 7'10" where the "firework impressions" by the mezzo-sopranos signifies the most 'radical' point of movement in the piece, "at the edges of Alamire's comfort zone of experimentation" (Boyce 2007: 38). This is the moment in which the production of a social, collective memory in the work is most aligned between the different strategic positions of the performers.

**6'13"** first mezzo-soprano firework imitation

**6'15"** Karikis performs lower guttural sounds, voiced and unvoiced, copying the timing of the mezzo-sopranos

**6'55"** tenor and countertenor return to the original refrain 'tu solus' and original timing, mezzo-sopranos maintain higher wordless singing

**7'10"** mezzo-sopranos second and more sustained firework imitation



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## Appendix 2

### Interview and Presentation Transcripts:

2.a Lina Džuverović *Her Noise Interview* (2006). Interviewed by Irene Revell (excerpt).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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## 2.b Emma Hedditch Presentation - Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic Symposium, Tate Modern, London, May 2012

[illegible]

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\_\_\_\_\_

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**2.c Emma Hedditch: *Her Noise Archive Interview* (2006). Interviewed by Lina Džuverović**

[REDACTED]

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**2.d Jutta Koether and Kim Gordon: Her Noise Tate Talks, Tate Modern, London  
2005 (excerpt)**

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[REDACTED]



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**2.e Sonia Boyce Presentation *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium Tate Modern, London 2012**

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2.f Tara Rodgers presentation at *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium  
Tate Modern 2012

[REDACTED]

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## Appendix 3

### Gender, education, creativity in digital music and sound art

#### Workshop proposal for NIME 2014, Goldsmiths College, London

Georgina Born, University of Oxford  
Kyle Devine, City University London  
Sally Jane Norman, University of Sussex  
Mark Taylor, University of Manchester

##### **Description of the Workshop**

This workshop will include papers and presentations that broadly examine issues of gender in relation to both higher education and creative practices in the fields of electronic and computer music and sound art. Our starting point (and the substance of a paper by Born, Devine and Taylor) is the enormous growth of music technology degree provision in British Higher Education since the mid 1990s, which has been accompanied by a clear demographic bifurcation between music technology and traditional music degrees. Using data obtained from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) we show that the demographic of British music technology degrees, in comparison to both traditional music degrees and the national average, is overwhelmingly male (more than 90%), from less advantaged social backgrounds, and (slightly) more ethnically diverse. At issue, then, is the emergence in the present of a highly (male) gendered creative digital music scene.

Our goal is to set these research findings into dialogue with other paper-givers and discussants concerned with issues of gender in relation to creative processes in terms of technological design and use as well as performance, installation and compositional practices. The workshop will therefore offer a basis on which to reflect on questions of gender within the NIME community and beyond. What kinds of musical futures will take shape if such imbalances are allowed to persist? What steps might be taken to redress gender inequalities in educational, professional and academic settings as well as creative and curatorial practices in these fields going forward? How can we combat the tendency to focus exclusively on the 'problem of women' while ignoring the challenges posed by the styles of masculinity evident in these fields? Is the gendering of digital musics and sound art evident in certain aesthetic directions? Throughout, we adopt a constructive standpoint; as Sally-Jane Norman has commented: 'If we want to account for the resilience of observed gendering and the reproduction of imbalanced musical literacies ... then we need to come up with creative strategies for analysing, interpreting, and comparing current situations more deeply and more diversely'.

##### **Participants** (confirmed with the exception of the 2 TBCs)

Freida Abtan, Goldsmiths, University of London  
Kristina Andersen TBC  
Georgina Born, University of Oxford  
Kyle Devine, City University London  
Mark Fell

Holly Ingleton, City University London  
Cathy Lane, CRiSAP, University of the Arts, London  
Sally-Jane Norman, University of Sussex  
John Richards, De Montfort University  
Laetitia Sonami, sound artist  
Mark Taylor, University of Manchester  
Marie Thompson, Newcastle University  
Simon Waters, Queen's University Belfast

### **Relevance to NIME**

It is worth noting that many of those in the NIME community informally acknowledge that the under-representation of women and the existence of gender imbalance and inequality in NIME and related fields are key challenges going forward. The British research suggests that the field of music technology, which demonstrates a striking gender imbalance, is a microcosm of widespread issues in the STEM disciplines: the question of the gendering of science, technology and engineering is therefore a much wider one. By measuring this imbalance at the level of undergraduate students, and by discussing its implications openly and constructively but critically with leading figures in human–technology interfaces for musical performance, we expect to raise awareness of this and similar issues among the NIME community. The ultimate aim, and relevance, must be to effect change both within and beyond NIME. It is to be hoped that this workshop will be the start rather than the end of discussions of gender within NIME and related fields.

### **Duration**

Half-day.

**NB:** Because Laetitia Sonami would be contributing to this workshop, and she is also featured as a performer and is giving a keynote performance at NIME 2014, she has requested that the workshop – if accepted – could be timed to allow her some ‘breathing space’ between her performance and the workshop. We would be grateful if this can be taken into account.

### **Audience**

This panel will be of great interest to a range of NIME participants, including not only specialists and professionals, but students, visitors, novices and members of the general public.

### **Technical Needs**

Nothing unusual.

### **Outputs**

A journal article is in preparation based on the UCAS/HESA research by Born, Devine and Taylor. We will consider taking the workshop forward as a journal special issue devoted to questions of gender (e.g. *Leonardo Music Journal*).

### **Track Record**

This workshop constitutes an offshoot of Georgina Born's ERC-funded research programme, 'Music, Digitisation, Mediation: Towards Interdisciplinary Music Studies' (MusDig – <http://musdig.music.ox.ac.uk>), in which gender questions are prominent. We presented the UCAS/HESA research findings in May 2013 at the University of Oxford in a highly successful one-day workshop to a group of representatives from the 13 universities that we researched in depth, the National Association for Music in Higher Education, and other colleagues working on these issues. We then held a panel on questions of gender at a major MusDig conference in Oxford in July 2013 with a range of participants including practitioners and those researching gender in music. The panel was judged by consensus to be extremely timely and significant. For the NIME workshop we are expanding the range of practitioners contributing, gaining significantly from Norman's participation, and will also be presenting an updated analysis of the UCAS research.

## Appendix 4

### 4.a *Her Noise Feminisms and the Sonic* Symposium Tate Modern, London 2012

MODERN

TATE

**Her Noise:  
Feminisms and the Sonic  
Artist Talk and Performance:  
Pauline Oliveros**

Thursday 3 May 2012

19.00-21.15

Starr Auditorium and Turbine Hall Bridge



Image: Pauline Oliveros by Pieter Kers

#### Programme

19:00-19:10 **Welcome and Introduction: Madeleine Keep**, Curator, Adult Programmes and **Irene Revell**, Director, Electra.

19:10-19:30 **Pauline Oliveros: Listening for Life/Death Energies**  
**Solo performance on V-Accordion**  
Hearing is the first sense organ to develop in the foetus and the last sense organ to shut down after death. I am listening backwards and forwards for my life/death energies.

19:30-20:15 **Pauline Oliveros: Archiving the Future: Embodiment Music of Women**  
**Keynote talk**  
This talk references six women affecting music composition, sound art and performance, along with others, who are pushing towards a paradigm shift in the future. Each woman has a unique approach and story concerning her creative work. The composers were selected from the many new voices in the field since the 1980s, as representative of embodiment, each through unique ways of expressing "her noise".

20:15-20:30 Q&A

20:30-20:45 Please make your way out to the Turbine Hall Bridge.

20:45-21:15 **To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation (1970), Pauline Oliveros**  
"In 1968 the *SCUM Manifesto* by Valerie Solanas fell into my hands. Intrigued by the egalitarian feminist principles set forth in the Manifesto, I wanted to incorporate them in the structure of a new piece that I was composing. The women's movement was surfacing and I felt the need to express my resonance with this energy. Marilyn Monroe had taken her own life. Valerie Solanas had attempted to take the life of Andy Warhol. Both women seemed to be desperate and caught in the traps of inequality: Monroe needed to be recognized for her talent as an actress. Solanas wished to be supported for her own creative work. Commissioned by the Music Department of Hope College, Holland Michigan, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* had its premiere in 1970. Though everyone knew Marilyn Monroe hardly anyone recognized Valerie Solanas or took her Manifesto seriously. I brought the names of these two women together in the title of the piece to draw attention to their inequality and to dedicate the piece." Pauline Oliveros.



**To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation** is performed by a specially convened ensemble of 14 musicians and conducted by Claudia Molitor.

**Musicians:**

Rachel Aggs (violin)  
Viv Corringham (voice)  
Angharrad Davies (violin)  
Sharon Gal (voice)  
Naomi Graham (recorder)  
Holly Ingleton (laptop)  
Caroline Kraabel (alto sax)  
Cathy Lane (ems synth)

Lina Lapelyte (violin)  
Sarha Moore (baritone sax)  
Maggie Nicols (voice)  
Greta Pistaceci (theremin)  
Lucy Railton (cello)  
Verity Susman (tenor sax)

**Conductor:**

Claudia Molitor

MODERN

TATE

**Her Noise:  
Feminisms and the Sonic  
Film and Performance:  
The Voice Is A Language**  
Friday 4 May 2012  
19:00-21:00  
Tate Modern, Starr Auditorium



Image: Meredith Monk, *16 Millimeter Earrings* 1966  
© Courtesy: Meredith Monk / the House Foundation for the Arts

**Programme**

- 19:00-19:05 **Welcome and Introduction:** **Madeleine Keep**, Curator, Adult Programmes
- 19:05-19:15 **Performance:**  
**Cara Tolmie**, *The end is a tumultuous noise*, 2010/2012
- 19:15-20:30 **Film Screenings:**  
**Meredith Monk**, *16mm Earrings*, 1966/77  
performance recorded on 16mm, transferred to video, 24m22s  
Courtesy the House Foundation
- Sophie Macpherson**, *Deep Dancing*, 2010  
video, 6m4s  
Courtesy the artist
- Meredith Monk**, *Turtle Dreams*, 1984  
video, 27m29s  
Courtesy the House Foundation
- James Richards**, *Looking So Hard At Something It Distorts Or Becomes Obscured. (Not Blacking Out, Just Turning The Lights Off)*, 2012  
video, 16m10s  
Courtesy Rodeo. Commission by Chisenhale, London
- 20:30-20:45 **Performance:**  
**Sue Tompkins**, *My Dataday*, 2010/2012  
Courtesy Modern Institute
- 20:45-20:50 **Response:** **Isla Leaver-Yap**
- 20:50-21:00 **Q&A**

*The Voice Is A Language* is a performance and screening project that orbits the legacy of avant-garde pioneer Meredith Monk. The project casts Monk not as a direct influence upon, but an active player within a range of dynamic contemporary practices.

Exploring the dispersal of the voice and its relationship to image by assembling a collage of performance, music, video and spoken word *The Voice Is A Language* traces sympathetic lines of working between the practices of four contemporary artists:

## Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic Symposium

Saturday 5 May 2012

11:00 – 17:50

Tate Modern, Starr Auditorium



Image: Jan Herman,  
*Vivace and Dolosoro, Something Else Press Yearbook, 1974*  
© Jan Herman

### Programme:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 11:00-11:10 | <b>Welcome and Introduction:</b> Madeleine Keep, Curator, Adult Programmes  |
| 11:10-12:45 | <b>Situating <i>Her Noise</i></b><br>This introductory panel situates the <i>Her Noise</i> project within wider discourses of feminism and sound practices.   |
| 11:10-11:20 | <b>Salomé Voegelin</b> (Chair): Introduction to Panel 1   |
| 11:20-11:40 | <b>Lina Džuverovic:</b> <i>A Decade With Her Noise</i>  |
| 11:40-12:00 | <b>Cathy Lane:</b> <i>Re-presenting Her Noise</i>   |
| 12:00-12:20 | <b>Ute Meta Bauer and Fender Schrade:</b> <i>A_Muse</i>   |
| 12:20-12:40 | Q&A   |
| 12:40-13:30 | Lunch break   |
| 13:30-15:00 | <b>Affinities, Networks and Heroines</b><br>A series of contributions exploring feminist genealogies and histories from a number of perspectives ranging from the personal to the anthropological. With particular reference to women and sound practices, they encompass DIY approaches to music making, distribution and the formation of personal iconographies. |
| 13:30-13:40 | <b>Georgina Born</b> (Chair): Introduction to Panel 2   |
| 13:40-14:00 | <b>Sonia Boyce:</b> <i>Good Morning Freedom</i>   |
| 14:00-14:20 | <b>Catherine Grant:</b> <i>Girls, Fans, Her Noise</i>   |
| 14:20-14:40 | <b>Emma Hedditch:</b> <i>All of the actions of which I am part</i>  |
| 14:40-15:00 | Q&A   |
| 15:00-16:00 | <b>Vocal Folds</b><br>Voice is one of the most common tools for women working in sound, specifically the spoken and extended voice of the artist, as a device to challenge existing language, both linguistic and musical. This   |

introduction of the body can be situated as oppositional to the dominant aesthetics in the sonic realm. To what extent can this be understood as a strategy of self-representation, a feminist strategy? Three contemporary vocal practitioners address these questions, reflecting on their own work through presentation and performance.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 15:00-15:10 | <b>Anne Karpf</b> (Chair): Introduction to Panel 3  |
| 15:10-15:20 | <b>Maggie Nicols</b>  |
| 15:20-15:30 | <b>Cara Tolmie</b>  |
| 15:30-15:40 | <b>Viv Corringham</b>   |
| 15:40-16:00 | Q&A   |
| 16:00-16:20 | Tea and coffee will be served in the Starr Auditorium foyer   |
| 16:20-17:50 | <p><b>Dissonant Futures</b></p> <p>This panel explores women's varied uses and abuses of technology. In all of its outward manifestation, sound technology is highly gendered. What happens when this technology is innovated and commanded in ways that destabilise that gendering? Can the use of technology reflect radical political sensibilities?</p> |
| 16:20-16:30 | <b>Anne Hilde Neset</b> (Chair): Introduction to Panel 4  |
| 16:30-16:50 | <b>Kaffe Matthews:</b> <i>Music for Bodies</i>  |
| 16:50-17:10 | <b>Tara Rodgers:</b> <i>Dissonant Histories: Gender and Culture in the History of Synthesized Sound</i>   |
| 17:10-17:30 | <b>Nina Power:</b> <i>The Dystopian Technology of the Female Voice</i>  |
| 17:30-17:50 | Q&A   |
| 17:50       | Closing remarks   |

### About *Her Noise* and the Archive

This three-day event investigates feminist discourses in sound and music through a programme of talks, performances, discussions and film screenings. The programme brings together performances and a talk by Pauline Oliveros; an evening orbiting the legacy of Meredith Monk; and a day of talks and discussions with contributions from artists, musicians, curators, writers and academics. The events are realised as a collaboration between CRiSAP, Electra and Tate.

The events build on a long running research project, initiated in 2001 by Lina Džuverovic and Anne Hilde Neset. From its inception, the ambition of *Her Noise* was to investigate music and sound histories in relation to gender, and to establish and maintain a lasting resource in this area through building up an archive. In 2005 Lina and Anne co-curated *Her Noise*, an exhibition building on their research, which took place at South London Gallery, Tate Modern and Goethe Institut and gathered international artists who use sound to investigate social relations, inspire action or uncover hidden soundscapes. The exhibition included newly commissioned works by Kim Gordon & Jutta Koether, Emma Hedditch, Christina Kubisch, Kaffe Matthews, Hayley Newman and Marina Rosenfeld, as well as a series of talks and performances.

The *Her Noise Archive*, as it became called, formed the backbone of *Her Noise* and was developed by the curators, in collaboration with Emma Hedditch and Irene Revell. The archive contains the collected research materials, interview and performance footage and includes books, fanzines, records, CDs, catalogues and other ephemera. This material includes a growing number of on camera interviews with artists including Pauline Oliveros, Maryanne Amacher, Diamanda Galas, Else Marie Pade, Jutta Koether, Marina Rosenfeld, Thurston Moore, Jim O'Rourke, Kevin Blechdom, Kembra Pfahler, Kim Gordon, Lydia Lunch, Peaches and others.

After international touring throughout 2006 to 2008, the *Her Noise Archive* was donated to CRiSAP (Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice), London College of Communication. The archive now finds its permanent home in the University of the Arts, London Archives and Special Collections at London College of Communication, following a period of cataloguing by researcher Holly Ingleton, in collaboration with Cathy Lane (CRiSAP) and Irene Revell (Electra).

This donation marks a move to actualise the initial desire of *Her Noise*, to 'create a lasting resource', that also operates as a starting point for new investigations. *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic* is both a marking of the *Her Noise Archive's* new permanent publicly accessible home, but equally an opportunity to further explore and expand the initial impetus of the project, opening a new chapter in these feminist investigations in sound.

[www.hernoise.org](http://www.hernoise.org)  
[www.crisap.org](http://www.crisap.org)  
[www.electra-productions.com](http://www.electra-productions.com)

All events organised by:  
CRiSAP (Cathy Lane)  
Electra (Fatima Hellberg and  
Irene Revell)  
Holly Ingleton, City University  
Tate Modern (Madeleine Keep and  
Marianne Mulvey)

*The Voice Is A Language* is curated by  
Isla Leaver-Yap  
Special thanks to: Anne Hilde Neset,  
Lina Džuverovic, Evelyn Wilson,  
Jennifer Tomomitsu, Stuart Comer,  
Marko Daniel, Salomé Voegelin,  
Ciaran Harte, Ione, Cosey Fanni Tutti

## Appendix 4

### 4.b *Sound::Gender::Feminism::Activism* Research Event LCC, London 2012 & 2014



**CRISAP**  
CREATIVE RESEARCH INTO SOUND ARTS PRACTICE



**SOUND::GENDER::FEMINISM::ACTIVISM**  
**17 MAY 2012**

**SOUND::GENDER::FEMINISM::ACTIVISM**

**RESEARCH EVENT 17 MAY 2012**

**PANEL SESSIONS**

**10:00 – 10:15** Cathy Lane - **Introduction**

**10:15 – 11:00** Session 1: **Politics of Location** Chair: Irene Noy

1. Holly Ingleton - **Her Noise: Identifying Feminist Strategies**
2. Helena Lopes Braga - **Francine Benoît, Or The Story Of A Communist, Feminist Homosexual In Portugal During The Dictatorship**
3. Mikhail Karikis - **The Vanishing Sounds Of Seawomen**
4. Gayathri Khemadasa – **Phoolan Devi Opera**

**11:00 – 12:00** Session 2: **Meta(l)morphosis** Chair: Greta Pistaceci

1. Caro Churchill - **Feminist Perspectives On Sound Engineering: Challenging Trends In The Production And Engineering Of The Female Vocal In Pop Music**
2. Iris Garrelfs - **Escaping Gender Through Technology: Sonic Freedom And The Machine**
3. Annie Goh- **Aural Narcissism – Reconstructing Echo**
4. Marie Thompson - **Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminizing the Threat of Noise**

**12:00 – 12:30** Break

**12:30 – 13:30** Session 3: **Corporeal Voices** Chair: Iris Garrelfs

1. Irene Noy - **Listen to His Master's Voice: Authoritative Acousmatic Voices in an audio piece by Hildegard Westerkamp**
2. Anat Ben-David - **Politix Of Sound**
3. Melanie Chilianis - **The Body's Impact on Creative Sonic Practice :: Sonic Practice's impact on the Body**
4. Holly Pester - **Poetics Of Disembodied Feminine Noise**

**13:30 – 14:30** Lunch (Provided)

**14:30 – 15:30** Session 4: **Dissemination/Communication** Chair: Anna Raimondo

1. Johnny Pavlatos - **Radio, The Body, Meaning, and Context: A Reconsideration**
2. Diana McCarty – **A Sound of Her Own: Feminist Radio**
3. Kerstin Schroedinger- **Material Interventions (II) - The Story Begins With The Invention Of The Telephone**



**CRISAP**  
CREATIVE RESEARCH INTO SOUND ARTS PRACTICE



**SOUND::GENDER::FEMINISM::ACTIVISM**  
**17 MAY 2012**

4. Magz Hall - **Do You Trust Me - Scientific Research Reaffirming Vocal Gender Prejudices**

**15:30 – 16:30 Session 5: Composing Difference** Chair: Holly Ingleton

1. Amy Cunningham - **The Difference Machine**
2. Laura Seddon - **'They Clapped Until She Bowed Once More'**
3. Jane Dickson - **Virtuosity, Gender And New Music**
4. Theresa Schubert-Minsky - **Female Sound Practices Since The 1990s: Thin Voices Occupying Space**

**16:30 – 16:45 Break**

**16:45 – 17:45 Session 6: Sexing the Groove** Chair: Johnny Pavlatos

1. Sharon Gal - **Gals With Guitars - Collaborative Composition And Creative Exchange In An All-Female Group.**
2. Norah Lorway - **From Riot Grrrl To Girrlsound: Promoting A Meaningful Awareness For Women Working In Sonic Arts.**
3. Theresa Beyer - **Contribution: Asking For Gender In Female Hip Hop**
4. Val Phoenix - **Sounds And Visions: Women Using Creativity As A Strategy Of Self-Defense**

**17:45 – 18:15 Closing Remarks**



**CRISAP**  
CREATIVE RESEARCH INTO SOUND ARTS PRACTICE



**SOUND::GENDER::FEMINISM::ACTIVISM**  
**17 MAY 2012**

**Artworks: Audio**

- Andra McCartney & Sandra Gabriele - **Soundwalking At Night\*** - 10:42
- Anja Kanngieser - **Towards A Careful Listening**
- Tripta Chandola - **An 'Obscene' Calling**
- Johan Landgren - **a semblance of order (on a motet possibly by Josquin des Prez)** - 04:58
- Park McArthur - **Epistle\*\*** - 08:20

**Artworks: Video**

- Amy Cunningham - **The Difference Machine** (Extracts) (2012) - 10:00 video with sound
- Anat Ben-David - **Politix of Sound** - 05:26
- Anna Raimondo & Camila Mello - **Untitled (silences and hesitations)** - 10:32
- Bonnie Jones - **WE'VE (let me run on ahead and see what the future looks like)** 2012 | 11:21 |  
United States | bw | silent | Improvised writing video, all text by Bonnie Jones
- Gayathri Khemadasa - **Phoolan Devi Opera**
- Gianmarco Del Re - **Iris Garrelfs live at Cafe Oto** - 06:35
- Sarah Hardie - **I'm Calling** - Documentation of Rehearsal at RSA - 09:09  
- Documentation of Sound Installation at RSA - 11:59
- Sharon Gal - **Gals With Guitars** - 09:51
- Val Phoenix (Dir) - **Ladyfest London** 2008 UK (Mixed Media) - 03:56  
- **Ruby Tuesday Rock Camp for Girls** 2009 UK (Mini DV) - 04:30

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\*\* <http://excursus.icaphila.org/i/sunday-nov-20-2011-2pm/> for more information





**:: SOUND ::  
:: GENDER ::  
:: FEMINISM ::  
:: ACTIVISM ::  
SGFA2014**

**15th, 16th & 17th October 2014**

**Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP)**  
London College of Communication

## Sound::Gender::Feminism::Activism2014

**What, in the historical present, might constitute an activist life in sound?**

### **Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP)**

*London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.*

This two-day research event seeks to query the place and performance of activism within discourses and practices of sound arts, sound-based arts and experimental musics that are engaged with gender, feminist and queer politics.

Our invited keynotes are **Tara Rodgers** (USA) - author of *Pink Noises: Women On Electronic Music and Sound* (2010) - and **Maggie Nicols** (UK) – musician, improviser, vocalist, activist.

The event incorporates presentations, performances and screenings from academics, musicians, artists and performers selected through a peer-review process, each taking a different approach to the question:

*What, in the historical present, might constitute an activist life in sound?*

This year's presenters are: Alison Ballance, Anja Kanngieser, Ann Antidote, Anna Benedikt, Anna Raimondo, Annie Goh, Christopher DeLaurenti, Claudia Wegener, Elin Øyen Vister, Emma Lilwall, Evan Ifekoya, FYTA, Franziska Rauh, Freya Johnson Ross, INVASORIX, Iris Garrelfs, Kerstin Schroedinger, Lucia Farinati & Claudia Firth, Mark Harris, Mindy Abovitz, Mitra Kaboli, Philip Cornett, Rebecca E Davies, V.A. Phoenix, Victoria Gray, Virginia Kennard & Emi Pogoni.

The peer review panel for SGFA2014 were Cathy Lane, Angus Carlyle, Holly Ingleton, Tanya Boyarkina, Ximema Alarcon, Charlotte Flax, Laura Seddon and Artur M Vidal.

## About:

### **Sound::Gender::Feminism::Activism2014 (SGFA2014)**

SGFA2014 follows on from the Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic events and symposium at Tate Modern in May 2012 (<http://hernoise.org/interactions/feminisms-the-sonic/overview/>) and the Sound::Gender::Feminism::Activism research event at London College of Communication in that same year (<http://hernoise.org/interactions/soundgenderfeminismactivism/overview/>). The aim is to continue and expand upon dialogues and discourses related to feminism and sound, and to contribute to a growing network of researchers and practitioners who are contributing to the development of the field of feminist sound studies.

### **Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP)**

CRiSAP is a research centre of the University of the Arts London dedicated to the exploration of the rich complexities of sound as an artistic practice. Our main aim is to extend the development of the emerging disciplinary field of sound arts and to encourage the broadening and deepening of the discursive context in which sound arts is practised.

### **Her Noise**

Her Noise was initiated by Lina Džuverović and Anne Hilde Neset in 2001 with an ambition to investigate music and sound histories in relation to gender, and to create a lasting resource in this area through building up an archive. In 2005, Lina and Anne co-curated *Her Noise*, an exhibition building on their research. The Her Noise Archive was donated to CRiSAP and now finds its permanent home in the University of the Arts London's Archives and Special Collections, at London College of Communication following a period of cataloguing by researcher Holly Ingleton, in collaboration with Cathy Lane (CRiSAP) and Irene Revell (Electra). (<http://hernoise.org>).

## Timetable:

### Wednesday 15th October

#### 14.00 -17.00 Workshop with Maggie Nichols

In Our Different Rhythms Together

The workshop will establish a group dynamic where participants can feel safe and inspired: exploring the voice and other instruments – should people chose to bring them – and experiencing the joy and liberation of free improvisation and its relationship to individual and collective well being.

### Thursday 16th October

10.00 Registration

10.25 Introduction to SGFA2014

#### 10.30 Session One

*Chair: Holly Ingleton*

- Kerstin Schroedinger '(counter)-memory work: Film and Sound again'. Presentation.
- Alison Ballance 'Said - 2014 version'. Performance.
- Iris Garrelfs 'Beyond speech and song: exploring reactions to female vocal expressions in experimental sound'. Paper.
- Discussion.

11.50 Ann Antidote *There are vulvas around you if you choose to see.*  
Video screening.

#### 12.00 Session Two

*Chair: Artur M Vidal*

- Rebecca E Davies 'White Woman 'Cellist' '. Performance Lecture.

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- Anna Benedikt ‘ “My idea is, to dissolve hierarchies [in a] single person. For this reason, I was always interested in Countertenors”
  - Olga Neuwirth’s Hommage à Klaus Nomi as queer activism’.
- Presentation.
- Virginia Kennard & Emi Pogoni *How do I look?* Video.
  - Mindy Abovitz ‘The Dangerous Female: One Who Drums’
- Presentation.
- Discussion.

- - - - - 13.30 Lunch - - - - -

### **14.30 Session Three**

*Chair: Angus Carlyle*

- Mark Harris ‘The Materiality of Water’. Presentation.
  - Elin Øyen Vister ‘The Puffin – practising strategies for listening to coexistence’. Performance talk.
  - Victoria Gray ‘Some Somatic-Sound-Subject Fragments’.
- Performance recital.
- Discussion.

15.50 Anna Raimondo *Encouragements*. Video Screening.

- - - - - 16.00 Tea and coffee break - - - - -

### **16.30 Keynote Maggie Nicols**

*Chair: Cathy Lane*

## Timetable:

### Friday 17th October

Emma Lilwall *///ratatat/glitch/internal///* Durational Performance.

#### 10.30 Keynote Tara Rodgers

Chair: Holly Ingleton

#### 11.30 Session Four

Chair: Ximena Alarcon

- Annie Goh 'Confrontation, diplomacy, subversion – strategies for feminist activism in sound?'. Presentation.
- Franziska Rauh 'Excerpt from *Three Weeks in May* (1977) Radio within the Artistic-Activist Practice of Suzanne Lacy'. Presentation.
- Claudia Wegener 'The Women Sing At Both Sides Of The Zambezi' Presentation.
- Discussion.

12.50 Mitra Kaboli *Hardboiled Eggs*. Audio.

- - - - - 13.10 LUNCH - - - - -

14.10 INVASORIX 'AQUÍ Y AHORA: Non-professionalisation as a strategy'. Presentation and performance.

#### 14.30 Session Five

Chair: Laura Seddon

- V.A. Phoenix 'Activating an Archive'. Presentation
- Freya Johnson Ross 'Sisterhood And After'. Paper.
- Philip Cornett 'Cambridgeshire LGBTQ Oral Histories'. Presentation.
- Anja Kanngieser 'Using Sound as a Method for Doing Politics'. Paper.
- Discussion

- - - - - 16.00 Tea and coffee break - - - - -

16.10 Emma Lilwall *///ratatat/glitch/internal///* Final performance.

16.30 Evan Ifekoya *Disco Breakdown: PREFORMLEC Edition*.  
Performance.

**16.40 Session Six**

*Chair: Cathy Lane*

- Chris DeLaurenti 'A Half-Life in Activist Sound'. Presentation.
- FYTA 'FYTINI: An attempt towards the queerification of Greek music'. Performance-lecture.
- Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth 'The Force of Listening'. Presentation.
- Discussion

**18.00 Summary**

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