


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

## Listening in/to Literature

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Tropical Riffs: Latin America and the Politics of Jazz.** By Jason Borge. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Pp. 266. \$26.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822369905.

**The Cry of the Senses: Listening to Latinx and Caribbean Poetics.** By Ren Ellis Neyra. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. Pp. xvii + 222. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478011170.

**Hearing Voices: Aurality and New Spanish Sound Culture in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.** By Sarah Finley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. Pp. 252. \$60.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781496211798.

**Writing by Ear: Clarice Lispector and the Aural Novel.** By Marília Librandi. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. Pp. xxi + 214. \$88.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781487502140.

**The Senses of Democracy: Perception, Politics, and Culture in Latin America.** By Francine R. Masiello. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. Pp. 326. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781477315040.

**Sonar: Navegación/localización del sonido en las prácticas artísticas del siglo XX.** By Luz María Sánchez Cardona. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana; Juan Pablos Editor, 2018. Pp. 171. \$34.99 paperback. ISBN: 9786072815469.

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The potentiality of the sonic, particularly as it relates to orality and local music, is well established in Latin American literary and cultural studies. From (*neo-*)*indigenista* literature to *testimonio*, from *novelas bolero* to the *novelacorrido*, the spoken and singing voice as represented in literary and cultural texts has served as a means to undermine colonial logic and affect structures of power in a region organized around the lettered city. The at times fraught and at times generative relationship between oral and written registers has been of particular concern to postcolonial studies. In this regard, attention to sound in Latin American literary studies has often been propelled by an appeal from “below,” when Indigenous or Afro-descendent communities, women, campesinos, the working class, and other underrepresented and politically disenfranchised groups demand recognition of their rights, identities, and knowledge systems.

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Foundational studies by scholars like Martín Lienhard, Carlos Pacheco, and Ángel Quintero Rivera have attended to the ways in which orality and local rhythms challenge and destabilize the dominance of written culture, which often excludes oral epistemologies and transmission of knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

While Latin America's colonial past and postcolonial present remain important concerns in recent scholarship on literary sound, the six monographs examined here broaden their critical scope beyond colonial and postcolonial inquiry. As a result, the orality-literacy binary is displaced in favor of a more capacious multisensorial reading and writing that posits *embodied listening* as an ethical, political, and aesthetic practice and tunes in to the material and social conditions of sound beyond communication or expression of difference. This expanded field of literary and cultural listening makes audible posthuman and more-than-human sound, explores aurality as a form of literacy, and turns to synesthesia and multisensorial listening to attend to literary and artistic sound as a resonant object expressive of historically specific contexts. What's more, by examining literature in dialogue with sound technologies and other artistic forms, these monographs substantiate recent calls for new methodologies in literary sound studies, greater interdisciplinary collaboration, and attention to literature's exchange with different forms of media.<sup>2</sup>

The six works survey an array of sociopolitical, temporal, and geographic contexts. Sarah Finley's *Hearing Voices* returns to the foundational figure of Latin American feminism, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, to tease out how aurality, music, and sonic culture are vital to the seventeenth-century New Spanish writer's project. In *The Senses of Democracy*, Francine R. Masiello assesses an expansive archive of principally Southern Cone visual and literary works from the nineteenth century to the present, with attention to the role of human perception in the development of democracy. Placing Latin American art and literature in dialogue with the European and US traditions, Luz María Sánchez Cardona's *Sonar* traces how sound technologies have impacted aesthetics and society since the birth of the phonograph in the late nineteenth century. With careful attention to Clarice Lispector's plurilingual background, Marília Librandi reads the Brazilian author not merely as a novelist but as a philosopher whose writings form "a theoretical source capable of helping one to rethink fiction in general as an aural practice" (8). Analyzing the rise and decline of jazz in the twentieth century, Jason Borge's *Tropical Riffs* offers a corrective to the partial narrative that paints jazz as a quintessentially US American genre by highlighting the extensive transnational exchange among jazz artists across the Americas. Finally, attuning to twentieth- and twenty-first-century Caribbean and Latinx literature, music, and film, Ren Ellis Neyra's *The Cry of the Senses* enacts a multisensorial listening that hears unruliness, hysteria, refusal, and errancy as means of decentering the sensorial hegemony of the US military-industrial complex. In different ways and with distinct objects of study, these monographs coincide in reading sound and audition in literary and cultural texts as an avenue for addressing questions of inequality and political exclusion, indexing gaps in the historical archive, and challenging necropolitical sense regimes that impose nationalistic and market-driven modes of perception.

<sup>1</sup> Martín Lienhard, *La voz y su huella* (Mexico City: Ediciones Casa Juan Pablos, 2003); Carlos Pacheco, *La comarca oral: La ficcionalización de la oralidad cultural en la narrativa latinoamericana contemporánea* (Caracas: La Casa de Bello, 1992); Ángel Quintero Rivera, *Salsa, sabor y control: Sociología de la música tropical* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Anke Birkenmaier, "Sound Studies and Literature in Latin America," in *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Latin American Literary and Cultural Forms*, edited by Guillermina De Ferrari and Mariano Siskind (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 352.

## Technologies of Multisensorial Listening

The move beyond the orality-literacy binary bears on a related dichotomy that has long troubled sound studies: the uneven relationship between vision and hearing, with sound historically “occluded by the visual hegemony.”<sup>3</sup> As Jonathan Sterne recounts, “Romantic or naturalistic accounts [posited] sight as the sense of intellect and hearing as the sense of affect, vision as the precise, localizing sense and hearing as the enveloping sense.”<sup>4</sup> This has given rise to something of an inferiority complex in sound studies that often manifests as “the audiovisual litany,” which “idealizes hearing . . . [and] alternately denigrates and elevates vision.”<sup>5</sup> Contrary to this critical tendency, the works examined here reject the sight-sound dichotomy by putting sound in contact with other senses. This is first evidenced by the fact that all six include images, thus insisting materially on an exchange among the senses. Multisensorial listening also becomes a matter of methodology and interpretation. Librandi, for instance, positions listening as a bridge or “third term” (7) that undermines and complicates the orality-writing binary, maintaining that both speaking and writing require the listening ear. Attention to the entanglement of the senses is likewise at the heart of Masiello’s *The Senses of Democracy*.

One of the most important scholars thinking at the intersection of politics and literature, Masiello has long documented the generative ways in which poetry and prose draw on and are nourished by sound and the senses in their representational and formal aesthetics. *The Senses of Democracy*, published in 2018, offers a welcome follow-up to the author’s *El cuerpo de la voz: Poesía, ética, cultura* (2013). The earlier work asserts that, beyond logos and a fixed message, poetry communicates to the reader through its very materiality, its density and rhythm, becoming “an appeal to the body, to the five senses [una apelación al cuerpo, a los cinco sentidos].”<sup>6</sup> As in *El cuerpo de la voz*, the multisensorial inquiry undertaken in *The Senses of Democracy* focuses primarily on the Southern Cone, but here Masiello expands beyond poetry to consider a rich and varied archive that includes essays, travel writing, university lectures, visual art, narrative, performance art, and other literary and cultural texts.

Organized around different notions of “sense work,” the five chapters move chronologically—from the early Argentine Republic to the hemispheric Americas of the digital present—to show how human perception and the sensing body have aided in defining and upending notions of politics, democracy, and crisis in postindependence Latin America. Charting representations of the senses allows Masiello to tease out how a universal human activity—perception via sight, audition, touch, taste, or smell—becomes “a local articulation of the senses” (4) when considered from specific historical and cultural loci. As the author stresses, attention to embodied sensing in historically contingent contexts opens the possibility of thinking against the homogenizing logic of globalization and the neoliberal present.

Although Masiello’s study takes up all five senses of human perception, sound has a place of privilege in the monograph, reappearing in each chapter and providing a space to track how audition—the act of listening—often undermines and challenges sense regimes associated with hegemonic (masculine, colonial, authoritarian) reason. In chapter 1, an aural close reading of poetic caesura in the Argentine poet Esteban Echeverría’s unitarian writing shows how he seeks to “denounce the tyranny of matter over reason, to reject crass sensuality in order to sing the poet’s spirit” (47). For Masiello, listening to

<sup>3</sup> Alan Burdick, “Now Hear This: Listening Back on a Century of Sound,” *Harper’s Magazine*, July 2001, 75.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 95.

<sup>5</sup> Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Francine R. Masiello, *El cuerpo de la voz: Poesía, ética y cultura* (Rosario: Universidad Nacional de Rosario, 2013), 9.

the “poetic measure that is missing” in Echeverría’s verse cultivates futurity and opposition to Juan Manuel de Rosas’s brutal (sense) regime (45). Later, she shows how the role of espionage in Juana Manuela Gorriti’s “La hija del mashorquero” (1865) evidences an emerging “auditory age” (90) during Rosas’s caudillo dictatorship (1829–1852).

Rosas’s auditory age as a listening practice politicizes the senses and articulates perception to partisanship and state terror. This inquiry into the relationship between hegemonic reason and sense work continues throughout the monograph, with the senses constituting a form of embodied knowledge that may be wielded by the state for subjectification or harnessed by the populace as a means of contesting dominant logic. Technology becomes integral to both of these dynamics. Chapter 2 offers a standout reading of how technology, politics, economics, and gender intermingled and led to an “epistemic shift” (73) in the nineteenth century that was given form via the senses in narratives by women. In a reading reminiscent of Jacques Rancière’s notion of the distribution of the sensible, Masiello adeptly argues that, via engagements with emergent technology and new perceptive capacities, “the feminine presence [stood] as a challenge to the regime of the senses that had been set in place by men” (72).

Technology continues to take center stage in chapter 3, where Masiello considers early twentieth-century avant-garde praxis with an ear to artists’ “materialist obsession with sense perceptions” (135). Embodied perception allowed creators to process the onslaught of new technologies (cinema, radio, telephone) and societal changes during high modernism, which often took the form of a confrontation between *reason* and *shock*. Masiello posits “synesthesia as technique” (145) as a means through which avant-garde intellectuals sought to counter the individuation and alienation of industrial capitalism. However, the generative shock and awe of early twentieth-century technologies and spectacle give way to biopolitical terror as a mechanism of control. Chapter 4 examines the perceiving body in relation to state terror in dialogue with the Argentine philosopher León Rozitchner’s work on power, subject formation, and perception (183). During the twentieth-century dirty wars, embodied knowledge became a means through which the state—through torture, disappearance, and other violence—consolidated power and controlled sensing bodies.

The final chapter turns to posthuman sounds of recent sense work. Eschewing the voice/speech dichotomy that has structured listening since antiquity, Masiello advocates for attending to the wisdom of animal voice (235). Reiterating a claim that underpins the entire text, that “experience is above all somatic” (234), she reads the work of the Brazilian contemporary artist Nuno Ramos, who foregrounds the materiality of voiced sound in a way that challenges assertions that human speech is the privileged ground of reason (235). *The Senses of Democracy* closes with a series of analyses of twenty-first-century narrative, including the Mexican Carmen Boullosa’s *La novela perfecta* (2006) and the Puerto Rican Pedro Cabiya’s *La cabeza* (2007), among others. Through what we might call cyborg sensing, Masiello shows how these works reflect on the speed, consumerism, dehumanization, and deep inequalities of the neoliberal present.

The role of sound technology in shifting social and political relations is a common theme across the monographs surveyed here, which relates to how new technologies compelled intellectuals and artists to imagine new possibilities for sound starting in the late nineteenth century. Sánchez Cardona’s study is particularly strong in this regard. In *Sonar*, Sánchez Cardona continues her interdisciplinary inquiry into sonic art and literature, which includes a 2016 monograph on the role of aurality and sound technologies in Samuel Beckett’s corpus, numerous articles and essays on the materiality and force of sound, and creative work that inquires into subjectivity and sensory perception. *Sonar* is a sustained meditation on the ways in which sound technologies have expanded imaginative capacities, produced new subjectivities, inspired new lines of philosophical inquiry, and participated in the consolidation and destabilization of power relations and systems of control.

In seven chapters organized around consequential innovations (e.g., phonograph, radio) and movements (e.g., Dada), *Sonar* charts a history of the mechanization of sound and elucidates the ways in which sonic inscription and diffusion have profoundly shaped aesthetics, politics, and culture. The text begins by considering sound technologies as an “idea” (24). Thanks to new innovations in sonic transcription, manipulation, and transmission, intellectuals and creators imagined new possibilities for the future and envisioned epistemological and ontological shifts due to new sonic practices. The mere prospect of liberating sound from its originating source generated “a new type of ‘technologized’ sensibility [un nuevo tipo de sensibilidad ‘tecnologizada]” (25), which was evident in literature, visual art, and music compositions from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This imaginative futurity is further developed in chapter 3, where Sánchez Cardona proposes “the sound idea [el sonido-idea]” (57), which grants materiality to these imaginative possibilities for sound. The chapter closes with an enlightening discussion of the Mexican composer and theorist Carlos Chávez, who insisted that “new forms of art correspond to new physical media and new sociological circumstances [a nuevos medios físicos y a nuevas circunstancias sociológicas corresponden nuevas formas de arte]” (quoted in Sánchez Cardona, 75). In this way, and like Masiello, Sánchez Cardona examines emerging sound technologies and practices with close attention to sociohistorical and cultural specificity.

Working through the implications of “emancipated sound [el sonido emancipado]” (31), chapter 2 posits technology as a prosthesis for sound making, which disrupts common uses and categorizations of sound. In the hands of Dadaists, surrealists, and Italian futurists, urban sounds gained new aesthetic potency. Despite different practices and ideologies, these avant-garde movements shared an interest in affecting society and politics by wielding and conceiving of sound in untraditional ways, particularly radiophonic sound. The utopian promise of sound technologies explored in chapters 1–3 dissipates in chapter 4, as artists and thinkers confront both censorship and one-way transmission of radio content. Sánchez Cardona observes a preoccupation that “broadcasting quickly became a kind of *omnipresent transmitter*, essentially deaf to the needs of its audience [la radiodifusión rápidamente se convirtió en una especie de *emisor omnipresente*, prácticamente sordo a las necesidades de su audiencia]” (91). Radio had become a tool to propagate capitalist bourgeois values without any of the emancipatory potential sought by the historical avant-garde.

Chapter 5 focuses on sounds that, without the mediating assistance of machine, would be impossible for humans to generate. In the musical sphere, this gave rise to electronic music and rendered the creator as much engineer as artist. The chapter centers on the Mexican composer Raúl Pavón’s “icofón,” an oscilloscopic machine that visualizes sound by displaying electrical signals as waves (107–108). Finally, chapter 6 elaborates on a series of sound works and happenings related to two artist collectives: Fluxus and Zaj, whose work often decoupled sound from music and voice. Throughout, Sánchez Cardona puts Latin American, principally Mexican, art and criticism in dialogue with their European and US counterparts. This places technological innovation in a comparative, transnational light and brings a host of concepts and untranslated thinkers (Douglas Kahn, Seth Kim-Cohen, Brandon LaBelle) to a Spanish-language readership.

Librandi’s *Writing by Ear* shares Sánchez Cardona’s and Masiello’s interest in technology and multisensorial listening. Chapter 5, “Loud Objects,” positions the typewriter as a norm-shifting technology that made space for women to become writers. Often owing to their training as pianists, women were particularly adept at transcription, and this opened a door for feminine composition. Citing the media theorist Friedrich Kittler, Librandi revels in the ambiguity of the term *typewriter*, which could refer to the machine or the woman who types. Lispector becomes one of these women, and the “loud objects” of the chapter’s title relates to her reflections in chronicles and narrative regarding the ways

in which the noisy typewriter became a prosthesis of writing, a means of producing “an interior voice” (121).

Girding Librandi’s analysis are three interrelated concepts: writing by ear, the aural novel, and echopoetics, which she elaborates on in six chapters and a coda. The first, “writing by ear” relates to one of the most generative contributions of the monograph. Pointing to Brazil as a zone of continual encounter in the colonial and globalized eras (31), Librandi suggests that Brazilian authors write with and invite us to read with “Native Ears” (36)—an aural counterpart to Mary Louise Pratt’s “Imperial Eyes”—that are attuned to other ways of knowing and being in the world. Provocatively, Librandi insists that “writing by ear” occurs when literature is “produced in a place where literacy is the exception and not the rule” (38), which results in “an ethics of listening and to the incorporation—without reduction—of the majority population oriented towards orality” (39). Displacing writing and reading as privileged benchmarks of knowledge, aural narratives place listening as a competency on par with literacy (39).

From this practice of writing by ear emerges the aural novel, which establishes narrative as “a space of listening” (45) in which the author, protagonists, and reader are positioned as listeners open to polyphony and improvisation (53). The composition of the aural novel requires an author to write as listener, and thus the notion of authorship is contested and displaced. This is a quality that Librandi identifies throughout the modern Brazilian tradition. Beginning with the nineteenth-century author Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis—the “father” of the “modern aural novel in Brazil” (54)—and continuing through Concrete poetry and regionalism, Brazilian literature has been uniquely and persistently committed to listening in writing. Thus, she situates Lispector in a genealogy of aural writing that merges lettered and aural practices.

The rejection of authorial privilege gives rise to one of the most potent concepts of the monograph: echopoetics. Librandi shows how *A paixão segundo G.H.* (1964) pursues an “echopoetics” as a work structured by “reverberations of sound and silence” (131) that render the narrative’s speaking subject a listener. *A paixão’s* echopoetics emerges after an unexpected confrontation between the female narrator, G.H., and a dying cockroach. What results is an echopoetics in which “Echo is s/he who speaks from a receptive rather than authorial footing” (132). In this way, the concept presents a powerful ethico-aesthetic heuristic, as it implies a “definitive radicalization of the emptying-out of an enunciating subject (the owner of the voice) . . . Self-consciousness is not possible within this mute latency of the absent ‘I’” (153). Indeed, Librandi emphasizes that G.H., upon being rendered a resonant listening subject, loses her “*montagem humana*” (human setup, 131), following which “the human is but one of many possible points of reference” (161). With a philosophical ear, Librandi has much in common with one of her key interlocutors, Adriana Cavarero, one of the most innovative thinkers of contemporary humanistic sound studies,<sup>7</sup> and Librandi’s consideration of more-than-human aurality will provide fertile ground for future lines of inquiry.

### Audile Technique and Listening to the Listener

Each of these studies contributes to a recent sonic turn in literary and cultural studies that decenters orality in favor of *aurality*—a shift from attention to the voice that speaks to a more perceptive listening to voices and hearing voices that listen.<sup>8</sup> In this, these

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Tom McEnaney locates this sonic turn firmly in the twenty-first century, identifying a new treatment of sound in theory that constitutes “a reorientation to denaturalize hearing and reconceive listening practices as historically contingent, material, and social techniques.” McEnaney, “The Sonic Turn,” *Diacritics* 47, no. 4 (2019): 84.



monographs align with the concerns of recent scholars such as Ana María Ochoa Gautier, whose landmark study *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2014) attunes to acoustic dimensions of the colonial and postcolonial archive to explore how lettered listening practices transcribed and rationalized “othered” sounds.<sup>9</sup> *Aurality* ultimately “both contributes to the ‘aural turn’ and suggests alternative paths to the current institutionalization of sound studies around a Western-centered paradigm.”<sup>10</sup> To do so, Ochoa Gautier’s study relies on careful attention to “audile technique,” a term first proposed by Sterne. Audile technique refers to practices of listening that provide insight into the values, beliefs, and habitus of the listener, as well as into the social and cultural norms in which listening practices are developed.<sup>11</sup> For Sterne, modern “audile technique articulated listening and the ear to logic, analytic thought, industry, professionalism, capitalism, individualism, and mastery.”<sup>12</sup> In Latin American studies, Sterne’s audile technique has been taken up to generative ends by scholars like Tom McEnaney in a discussion of K’iche’ Mayan activist Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s influential *testimonio*, which decried state-backed genocide during the Guatemalan Civil War (1960–1996). McEnaney turns his ear to Menchú’s interlocutor and transcriber, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, whose listening as “ethnographer and psychoanalyst” directs Menchú’s oral *testimonio*,<sup>13</sup> yet is excluded from the written transcription that led to global fame and controversy for Menchú. McEnaney rightly insists that responsible scholarship on Menchú’s entextualized *testimonio* should account for both “the semiotics of sound” and Burgos-Debray’s role as listener.<sup>14</sup>

Similar attentiveness to who is listening and how sound is perceived structures Borge’s *Tropical Riffs*, which attends to the politics of musical nationalism in twentieth-century Latin America. Rigorously interdisciplinary, Borge examines a wide range of texts and media—including albums and concert performances, TV shows, cinema, posters and illustrations, poetry, fiction, and jazz criticism—to show that “the word ‘jazz’ was better suited as an umbrella term for a whole range of musical practices in the hemisphere than as a stable signifier for a discretely national form” (3). This “range of musical practices” includes *música típica* like the Argentine tango, Brazilian samba and bossa nova, and Cuban big band and mambo. More than just contending that these styles should be included under the rubric of jazz, Borge convincingly shows how a generative exchange occurred between Latin America and the United States that resulted in innovations in jazz techniques and technologies.

In terms of practices of listening, each chapter of *Tropical Riffs* carefully examines cultural criticism to trace, first, how national and international jazz were received and perceived, and second, what this reception reveals about local ideologies and anxieties. In Latin America and globally, jazz became a polyvalent and unstable signifier that, depending on location, epoch, and audience, denoted disparate and often contradictory terms, such as capitalism and anti-Western resistance, avant-gardism and primitivism, or racial contamination and racial integration. Borge provides illustrative case studies to demonstrate how racial and nationalistic ideological systems guided and girded jazz’s reception in the Americas. Concretely, proponents of musical nationalism in Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba portrayed jazz as a dangerous genre that would lead to corruption of national rhythms, and Borge argues that such musical nationalism was often a cover for racism.

<sup>9</sup> Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Esteban Buch, “A Latin American Ear,” *Latin American Research Review* 55, no. 3 (2020): 614.

<sup>11</sup> Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 23, 92–93.

<sup>12</sup> Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 95.

<sup>13</sup> Tom McEnaney, “‘Rigoberta’s Listener’: The Significance of Sound in *Testimonio*,” *PMLA* 135, no. 2 (2020): 396.

<sup>14</sup> McEnaney, “‘Rigoberta’s Listener,’” 394.

Meanwhile, others found ways to challenge this hegemonic position, which allowed local forms to both borrow from and influence jazz and its musical offshoots.

Charting the halting and uneven arrival of jazz to Latin America by way of Europe and new media, chapter 1 centers on Josephine Baker, the African American sensation known as “Black Venus” (35), who found success in Paris. Borge traces how Black jazz interpreters like Baker inspired avant-gardism in Latin America due to their spectacularized embrace of contradictory binaries such as modern/savage or exotic/cosmopolitan. While artists and thinkers such as the Mexicans Miguel Covarrubias and Manuel Maples Arce embraced the imperial North’s marginalized others, the Latin American political elite and more conservative thinkers feared racial and ideological contamination, as well as offense to public morality (39) and high art (41).

The subsequent three chapters trace the exchange and hybridization of US and Latin American genres and styles by teasing out how jazz interpreters across the Americas influenced one another. Chapter 2 finds parallels between the suppression of the Afro-Argentine origins of tango—the form’s whitewashing in criticism and scholarship—and an insistence on US jazz’s “black” roots by the Argentine music scene (52). Such racism and musical purism meant that Argentine composers like Astor Piazzolla, who collaborated with jazz performers and found success on a world stage, often faced a lukewarm reception back home. In chapter 3, Borge turns to the Brazilian context and the promotion of *mestiçagem* (“racial admixture,” 6) that accompanied the onset of authoritarian rule in the 1930s. Because of skepticism toward Good Neighbor-era cultural imperialism, jazz was not readily available in Brazil. Despite this, Borge shows how styles like samba and bossa nova both influenced and were shaped by jazz. Chapter 4 offers a standout reading of the importance of Cuban artists, music technologies, and styles to various iterations of jazz in the United States. The case study of the “fruitfully inharmonious” (137) style of *conguero* drummer Chano Pozo solidly demonstrates how Cuban rhythms challenged and revamped Dizzy Gillespie’s big band and bebop compositions in the 1940s.

Each chapter also considers the ways in which jazz has informed and infiltrated literary form. In this, Borge’s consideration of the Argentine tradition is especially illuminating. Chapter 2 reads Julio Cortázar’s roman á clef *El Perseguidor* (1959) in relation to Charlie Parker’s tumultuous relationship with jazz criticism. Borge determines that the novella stands as a metonym of criticism’s cynical autopoiesis in its critique of the “ethnographic authority of jazz criticism [that] frequently justifies its own existence” (74). Meanwhile, chapter 5 examines César Aira’s *Cecil Taylor* (1993) as a critique of the hagiographic tone of jazz biographies. By focalizing the period before Taylor achieved renown, Aira demystifies the notion of creative genius and shows how artistic invention is preceded by poverty, failure, and derision, thus “revealing the labor and oppression behind the struggle for creative freedom” (184). Borge’s attention to the representation of audile techniques in Argentine narrative underscores how listening practices have become articulated to spectacularized capitalism.

### The Political Sound of Music

Borge and Finley explore vastly different contexts and musical styles, yet there is productive overlap in their shared consideration for how music relates to community formation, political ideologies, and systems of power. In this regard, Finley’s concern for women’s marginalization in New Spain is particularly instructive. With a manifest knowledge of early modern music theory, Finley’s *Hearing Voices* reevaluates Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s corpus with attention to how poetic aurality confirmed and challenged political and civic order, undermined ocularcentric representations of femininity, and valued marginalized ways of knowing. Carefully situated in relation to existing scholarship, Finley’s analyses deepen our understanding of Sor Juana’s intellectual interests and likely



interlocutors (Pythagoreanism, Athanasius Kircher), while providing a vocabulary and methodology for understanding how music and music theory in the early modern period went beyond mere aesthetics to draw on and shape mathematical, scientific, philosophical, political, and religious spheres.

Finley's close readings attend to musical imagery in the poet's figural language and identify the transposition of musical terms (*concordia discors*, resonant sympathy) to poetic form. Chapter 1 examines Sor Juana's occasional works (pieces penned for special events) to sound out how auditory language and musical iconography represent and reimagine political and civic authority. Finley adeptly shows how Sor Juana's poetry drew on scientific knowledge, mythological figures, and notions of "cosmic harmony" (16) to establish parallels between imperial and divine authority. Shifting focus, chapter 2 asserts that Sor Juana's writing practice was likely influenced by the German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher. Finley points to how the nun's musicopoetic portraits intersect with ideas put forth in Kircher's musical treatise, particularly relating to *musica poetica* (music as rhetoric) and *musica pathetica* (musical pathos). Additionally, *Hearing Voices* outlines how Sor Juana's musicopoetic portraits complicated the traditional focus on women's physical beauty by incorporating "gendered sonorities" that "link aurality and women's knowledge" (78). This is exemplified with a reading of *Redondilla 87*, an ekphrastic acousticopoetic piece on "beloved Feliciana" (74). Finley eloquently evinces how Sor Juana takes a typical *object* of the male gaze—Feliciana as mute and passive feminine beauty—and renders her *subject* by likening her voice to a musical instrument that sounds, affects, and produces mathematical and spiritual harmony (75).

Refusing to take a monolithic view of Sor Juana as either subversive or compliant, Finley examines different pieces that sometimes uphold and sometimes defy structures of power. This nuanced approach to Sor Juana's poetry is nowhere better exemplified than in chapter 3's reading of the poet's villancicos (short dramas set to music), which were often meant for popular audiences and thus included colloquial speech and a didactic tone. Finley first homes in on a series of villancicos from the 1677 Assumption cycle that reject typical representations of the Virgin Mary as "exemplary [of] feminine silence" (126). The villancicos portray an erudite Mary with the power to restore cosmic and civil order, whose "agency relates to feminine sonorities" (96). Lest the reader think Sor Juana's poetry listened equally to all marginalized voices, Finley then reads a set of villancicos that portray enslaved people as sonically discordant with Catholic and imperial norms. In this case, the dissonance of Black song and dance is eventually silenced by the "knell of the church bell tower [rumor del campanario]" (118) in an effort to bring Black sounds and temporality into the accepted order.

### Hearing Marginalized Cultures

Finley's attention to the objectification and silencing of women—aurally contested in Sor Juana's poetry—as well as the violence perpetuated against Afro-descendent sonority in the nun's writings, align with a central concern in the six studies discussed here, as each work attunes to minority and marginalized modes of sensory knowledge. On this score, Ellis Neyra's *The Cry of the Senses* sets itself the task of not only analyzing but also enacting a multisensorial solidarity with its sonic corpus.

*The Cry of the Senses* contributes to a recent boom in scholarship on sound in Caribbean art and literature<sup>15</sup> and draws on influential scholars of Black studies such

<sup>15</sup> See works such as Anke Birkenmaier, *Alejo Carpentier y la cultura del surrealismo en América Latina* (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial, 2006); Alejandra M. Bronfman, *Isles of Noise: Sonic Media in the Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Edwin C. Hill Jr., *Black Soundscapes White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); and Njelle W. Hamilton, *Phonographic Memories: Popular Music and the Contemporary Caribbean Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

as Franz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten, and Hortense Spillers in its examination of Latinx, African, and Caribbean diasporic texts. Moreover, Ellis Neyra's study engages with queer theory and performance studies to sound out modes of listening that undermine and refuse the sovereign logic of the US military-capitalist state, imagine futures and pasts in defiance of hegemonic sense regimes, and engender a "sensorial solidarity" (25) toward migrant, marginalized, and battered bodies. To this accomplish these tasks, *The Cry of the Senses* wields a series of compelling conceptual tools for analyzing sound as an anticolonial, oppositional mode of perception. Among these, *multisensorial poetic listening*, *performative unincorporation*, and *sensorial errancy* stand out as powerful techniques for apprehending the imaginative potency of sound and aurality.

"Multisensorial poetic listening" is an embodied, sentient mode of participation that insinuates the listener into a performance and becomes audition's aural complement to close reading. In the case of a 1973 concert at Yankee Stadium by the Puerto Rican salsa band Fania All-Stars, this type of multisensorial listening provoked such "unruly audition" (49) that "joyous, de-individuated, and complex" riots ensued (37). Ellis Neyra employs multisensorial poetic listening as a methodology throughout the study, self-consciously positioning herself and their scholarship in solidarity with Caribbean, Latinx, and Puerto Rican unruliness. Chapter 2 turns to performance that counterposes feminine Puerto Rican defiance to the masculine power of the US war machine. In a close reading of Pedro Pietri's one-act play *The Masses Are Asses* (1974), Ellis Neyra reads the protagonist Lady as a captive of patriarchal power. When Lady cannot escape Gentleman's violent, masculine system, she turns to the "sonic shapes of hyper-participation" (56) via wordplay, "raucous flatulence," and "matrilineal repetition," which work to deny Gentleman a claim on her (71). Lady's hyper-participation in the scene results in an "unincorporated" anti-subjectivity that refuses to conform to Gentleman's sovereign claims, thereby metaphorically rejecting US claims to Puerto Rico.

The notion of "sensorial errancy" (92) is marshalled to defy the perceptual violence done to the Puerto Rican archipelago, including its human and more-than-human ecology. This violence most directly pertains to the enduring legacy of weapons testing that took place throughout the twentieth century in and around Vieques and Culebra islands, but it also relates to the aftermath of Hurricane María in 2017. Here, Ellis Neyra attunes to Beatriz Santiago Muñoz's cinematic practice, showing how the filmmaker "ritualizes a cinema that listens" (97). Muñoz's filmic listening at once decenters the ocularity of film while aurally focalizing sounds that contest and reimagine Puerto Rico's past and future. The final chapter undertakes a sonic reading of the Chicana poet Eduardo Corral's *Slow Lightning*, a 2012 collection whose deeply synesthetic verses unfold in the desert ecology of the Mexico-US borderlands. Attending to the transmedial nature of the collection, whose structure and rhythms evoke corridos and Prince, rancheras and boleros (133–134), Ellis Neyra shows how Corral's project performs a queer "ecstatic mourning" (131) in verses haunted by migrant and slave death, resilience, and fugitivity.

Like Masiello's "animal voice" and the posthuman sounds of Lispector's cockroach in Librandi, Ellis Neyra's attention to ocean and desert ecologies maps out promising new directions for literary sound studies in dialogue with ecocriticism. Similarly, the six monographs' contemplation of technology and the material existence of sound point to new lines of inquiry for literary and cultural sound studies in a digital age. These works join a burgeoning field of literary sound studies that critically attunes to the sociohistorical specificity of listening practices, as well as the physical, semantic, and affective properties of sound that bear on culture and politics, epistemologies and ontologies. They are an indispensable starting point for future criticism that attends to sound and audition in Latin American literature and culture.

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