

Listening to Contemporary Art: Vocality as a Technology of Relation

By

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## Dissertation Abstract

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This dissertation proposes that by reassessing feminist tactics of vocality as a technology of relation in contemporary art practice we can better understand the way particular artworks position spectators-as-listeners. The project shifts critical attention to works of art that call on us to listen and yet frustrate our capacity to hear. In so doing, I demonstrate how this call to listen to what is hard or difficult to hear is crucial to the ethical and political aims of art by women and artists of color who take advantage of the space of the gallery and museum to alter sensory dynamics as a way of changing social power relations. I focus on pivotal works by Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, and Pauline Oliveros from the 1970s. Rather than contextualizing these works in the 70s, my methodology insists that we attend to the ways their vocality resounds in our present. I argue that these works are purposefully difficult to hear. In their use of feminist tactics of vocality as a technology of relation, they call upon and position the spectator as listener, asking that we lean in and listen, without promise that we will apprehend or comprehend. The dissertation theorizes this strain on listening that challenges and remakes power dynamics in spectatorship, criticism, and curatorial practice. The project engages photography, video, film, and sound works to bring the history and theory of photography into critical tension with the fields of sound and new media studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Vocality as a Technology of Relation**

The questions that drive this dissertation emerged from an inquiry that I began in 2012, when I was caught by a recording of Nina Simone's performance of the pop song "Feelings" at the 1976 Montreux Jazz Festival.<sup>1</sup> From the stage, Simone confesses to having become a robot and asks the audience to help her remember her feelings of love. The fierce tenderness of Simone's voice, its oscillation between steadiness and a shaky swell draws us in and her virtuosic finesse on the piano (highlighted by close-up framing of her fingers in the film) are punctuated by intermittent pleas to the audience. "Feed me," she says, demanding that the audience fuel her by singing, repeating the song back. The call and response of sounding and listening in Simone's performance of "Feelings" is foundational to my engagement with vocality, so much so that this project would not have been conceived without her call. To begin with Nina Simone is also to begin amid the black power, women's liberation, and gay liberation movements of the 1970s; it is to say immediately that gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and exile are central concerns of this project. And yet, the resonance of her call is not bound or contained by the early 1970s but indeed has ongoing relevance. If we heed this call, what response are we asked for? How do we formulate methods for attending to the complex assemblage that vocality constitutes?

This dissertation theorizes deployments of vocality in contemporary art practice. In particular, I engage feminist tactics of vocality that take hold of the spectator and the relation that they make possible. In doing so, I shift the attention of art criticism to works of art that ask us to

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<sup>1</sup> This inquiry began in "Queer Theory and Visual Culture" a seminar taught by my advisor Professor Jill H. Casid in Fall, 2012 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

listen, just as much as they ask us to look. As I demonstrate, this call to listen is crucial to the ethical and political aims of the work of women artists, queer artists, and artists of color. While I focus closely on three works from the early 1970s that specify feminist tactics of vocality, this dissertation responds to a wider phenomenon in contemporary art practice that defies the strict bounds of discrete periodization, media, and genre by issuing a call to listen that is rendered difficult or even impossible to apprehend and that has ongoing consequence in our present.

Take the title of Rashaad Newsome's 2015 collage *When You're Talking to Someone and You Know They Are Lying but You Keep Listening* (figure 1), which pictures a figuration of diamond bling, catty feminine hand, hard masculine neck emblazoned with looping tattooed script, lush sparkling lips, and two small bespectacled eyes looking up, throwing shade. Newsome's title instructs us, in a very meme-conscious way, to view the figure as continuing to listen to the someone ("they") that is lying. Yet, with the ambiguously directed "you", what might seem to be a simple, straightforward conversation between two triangulates outward to us. Are we the "you" who keeps listening or are they listening to "us" as spectators? And listening to what? Attention hovers at the point of indecipherable vocal material between Newsome's collaged figure and us. Consider Zoe Leonard's installation *Strange Fruit (for David)* from 1992-1997, in which the bodily and social violence of racial terror and the immeasurable losses of the AIDS epidemic are aligned via the title (figure 2). The work is named for the anti-lynching protest song made famous by Billie Holiday and is dedicated to Leonard's friend, the artist David Wojnarowicz, who was lost to AIDS. This piece gestures to an affective and resonant vocality that moves as a transversal tactic across bodies and forms but also across histories of violence. Benvenuto Chavajay's *4'33"* (2015) positions a cluster of clay microphones whose material might seem to deaden, deflect, or dampen the potential for amplified vocality yet might also ask

us to listen to a confluence of vocalities therein (figure 3). Chavajay twists the prompt of the eponymous canonical composition by avant-garde composer John Cage back on us, charging us to listen toward the vocal materiality of that which might yet be, could have been, or once was amplified by the mic and the clay. Chavajay places us in a strained relation wherein if we choose to listen, it is to listen toward that which is not readily available. Turn to a suite of acoustic paintings composed from soundproofing materials by conceptual artist Jennie C. Jones which mine the vocabulary of minimalism and abstraction while reworking a history of jazz and blues through the referents they deploy (figure 4). The paintings do not seem to produce sound in the space of the gallery, but at the same time their formal language, which references musical notation and textural expanses, conjures up multiple voices and histories in the psychic space of the spectator calling our attention to the multiple sensory, affective, psychic and historical planes across which her tactics of vocality work. Christine Sun Kim's *All. Day.* from her 2012 series *Scores and Scripts* depicts the motion of her hand signing "all day" in American Sign Language, while the text below consists of the musical notation for rest to generate a rough calculation for the number of rest bars that would add up to the thirty-two years of silence Sun Kim (who was born deaf) had experienced at the time she made this drawing (figure 5). Sun Kim's *All. Day.* destabilizes listening from the presumption that it would be necessarily tied to a particular sense or ability, and opens listening up as a form of attention.

Yet, despite this "sonic turn" in contemporary art production broadly speaking, sound study in art history remains tied analytically to sound art. By "sound art," I refer not merely to an object but also, and most importantly, to what has become the canonical narrative. This narrative begins with Marcel Duchamp's experiments in composition and sculpture, such as *Erratum Musical (for three voices)* or *With Hidden Noise*, from 1913 and 1916 respectively (figures 6-7).

Or it starts with John Cage's *4'33"* framing of ambient sound from 1952, which was foundational to the problematizing of listening and became a starting point for much experimental composition. Or it commences with conceptual artist Robert Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* from 1961, which quite literally is a box with audio recording of its production (figures 8-9). And this narrative might include recent works such as Janet Cardiff's *Forty Part Motet* of 2001, a sound installation that uses forty individuated voice recordings to immerse and position the hearing spectator (figure 10).

I do not attempt to simply rework or dismiss this canon, as this larger canonical narrative is unable to account for the ways in which visual art calls on us to listen. So too, my dissertation is not so much concerned with either the production of sound, or the faculty of hearing but with the ways that artists use tactics of vocality to demand our attention. I address this critical gap in the three chapters that follow by asking: how might attention to tactics of vocality alter our account of how contemporary art addresses the spectator? I make a shift to listening as a critical methodology by examining the conceptually and politically driven contemporary art practice of feminist artists and artists of color whose work issues a non-transparent and difficult demands for a spectator who listens. This shift extends directly from my commitment to the museum and the gallery as spaces that can activate conversations between multiple and diverse publics and that become vehicles for transformative contact through social encounters with difference. How might contemporary art criticism and curatorial practices shift to attend to the ways in which women artists and artists of color are using complex vocalities that issue a call to listen and yet, in various ways, render that listening difficult to perform? While this may seem a self-evident question, I have found that vocalities are often elided in art historical scholarship, particularly

when it comes to the kind of works I attend to here—works that issue a call that frustrates the act of listening.

My study offers a corrective to this scholarship by proposing a methodology that asks that we attend to the ways in which the formal (sonic, visual) and affective dimensions are inextricable within aesthetic practice and the ways that these specific works as practices position our attention. I am not suggesting that we simply replace ocularcentric methods with a method that merely adds the sonic, replaces one fetishization with another, or pits one against the other in a false opposition that Jonathan Sterne calls the “audiovisual litany.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, I demonstrate how the visual may make a difficult appeal to listening and that art historians, art critics, and curators would do well to attend to the strain of that call, a form of calling to attend that enlists the spectator-as-listener in a relation of complex, demanding, and non-straightforward collaboration with the work of art.<sup>3</sup>

### *Key Terms*

I term this call *vocality*, which I understand as a potentiality of voice in excess of its function of bearing language and even, in some instances, in excess of its audibility, and as a practice that performs relational bonds between self and other. I introduce *vocality* as a

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Sterne deploys “the audiovisual litany” as a term to describe this opposition in discourse between sound and visibility, see: *The Audible Past: The Cultural Origins of Sound Production* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 15-19. In Nancy’s analysis in *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) he reverts to this opposition. For a careful reading of Nancy’s use of the verbs *écouter* (“to hear”) and *entendre* (“to listen”), see Brian Kane, “Jean-Luc Nancy and the Listening Subject,” *Contemporary Music Review* 31, nos. 5-6 (2012): 439-47.

<sup>3</sup> See especially work by Laura Marks on the haptic and media in *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Fred Moten on the phonic substance of photographs: *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

technology of relation to focus on the connective pull that vocality exerts. I employ the term *vocality* as distinct from *orality* to loosen this project's ties to language, speech, and communicative legibility. As such, I understand vocality to leave open the space for non-linguistic expression, non- or even anti-representational tonalities (here we can also think of intonation, timbre, and accent as extra-linguistic dimensions, even if the vocality considered is linguistic), as well as the seemingly silent or otherwise inaudible. Further, I use *vocality* rather than *sound* to emphasize and lay claim to the place of the voice within sound studies and to assert that to undermine vocality as a technology is to strip the body of its history—an erasure that reiterates colonial violence.<sup>4</sup> My use of vocality also signals a departure from musicological understanding of the voice as exclusively a musical instrument, while at the same time recognizing vocality as a form of technology and recognizing that vocality often manifests as a sonic phenomenon. Musicologist Nina Sun Eidsheim argues this position through a vibrational theory of music that engages sound, music, singing, and listening as dynamic, imbricated, contingent, and dependent forces.<sup>5</sup> The ways in which identity figures in vocality, vocal delivery, transmission, and reception are complex and heterogeneous. Informed by key work in black studies, I understand vocality as vocal materiality with racial, gendered, and sexual force. Licia Fiol-Matta describes the voice as “covered by gender (riffing on Hortense Spillers, who spoke of a subject ‘covered by race’).”<sup>6</sup> This material and relational metaphor of covering prompts

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<sup>4</sup> For an extended meditation on sound, the black body, and technologies see Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005). We might also refer to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967). This is an intervention that goes against key scholarship on sound art such as the work of Douglas Kahn, Caleb Kelly, and Jonathan Sterne. I address this problematic more thoroughly in the literature review to follow.

<sup>5</sup> Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Licia Fiol-Matta, *The Great Woman Singer: Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 5. See Hortense Spillers, “The individual in the collective traversed by ‘race’—

consideration of the ways that vocality is a relational assemblage—material through which identity is iterated. Indeed, my engagement with vocality comes out of a strain of politically engaged scholarship that would attempt to amplify “the voice” of the marginalized subject—from what Gayatri Spivak calls the “subaltern” to what Renate Lorenz calls the “freak”—without the fantasy that this voice may be, in any way, simply recovered, not least because of the ways that the works to which I attend demonstrate and exercise the difficulties of hearing or locating that voice.

Throughout the text, I refer to tactics of vocality to emphasize the artists’ agency in their deployment of vocality, and follow Michel de Certeau’s formulation of tactics as ‘styles of action’ that remain dependent, and thus relational, upon the possibilities offered up by circumstance.<sup>7</sup> In the works that I study in this dissertation, relationality between the spectator and the work of art is shaped by the tactics of vocality they deploy. According to de Certeau tactics also flourish on the unpredictable and the fleeting, challenging locatability and position.

At the same time that I recognize vocality’s immanent relation to corporeality, I do not presume that vocality necessarily signals liveness or human presence, in that I distance myself from a categorical division between machinic versus human presence. I am also committed to the vital importance of leaving open the question of whether or not this emission is received or heard and, rather, foreground the way in which vocality extends itself relationally toward a listener, which I provisionally call the *spectator-as-listener*. This further locates the project within the

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and there are no known exceptions, as far as I can tell—is covered by it before language and its differential laws take hold.” Spillers, “‘All the Things You Could Be by Now, If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother’: Psychoanalysis and Race,” in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 376-427, 378.

<sup>7</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 30.

field of art history by focusing my concerns and methodology within scholarship on body art, performance art, installation art, and video art. The vocality this project tracks is not specific to one particular medium or mode of making but moves across media.

By deploying the idea of *vocality as technology of relation*, I understand *technology* as both a strategic and inventive praxis via its ancient Greek and Latin etymologies (to fashion or form) and as referencing a combining or weaving that builds a relationship between multiple parts.<sup>8</sup> I also rely on critiques of the separation of the human and the technological wherein their enmeshment is asserted. Here I draw on the work of Donna Haraway and, more recently, Alexander Weheliye.<sup>9</sup> While this project does not seek to provide a genealogy of sound or voice technologies, I do insist that vocality is a technology of relation in order to emphasize the difficulty in what is otherwise passed off triumphantly as a communication technology or divided according to a map of the senses in which visual technologies are ostensibly distinct from auditory ones. With the term *technology*, I draw on its derivation from *techne*—as practice. Weheliye, in his rethinking of the constitutive role of racialization in biopolitics, develops “habeas viscus” as a technological assemblage of the human, in which technology is defined as “the application of knowledge to the practical aims of human life or to changing and manipulating the human environment.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, I introduce vocality as a technology of relation to focus on the reciprocal and relational pull that vocality exerts in this process, particularly by

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<sup>8</sup> "technology, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198469?redirectedFrom=technology> (accessed December 13, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the later Twentieth Century” (1984) in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149-181; Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 12.

those subjects (women of color, queer women) for whom a relation to the human cannot be taken for granted. My deployment of *relation* strategically situates this conversation at the crossroads of feminist and post-colonial theory and relational aesthetics that pose relation as a charged dynamic of exchange and potential change.

Here, *relation* means both to recount and to bring attention to proximity, getting at the space-time dimension of vocality. *Relation* references the assemblage of temporalities, histories, and their alterations and displacements that vocality has the potential to activate. This radical proximity, irreducible materiality, and mobile territoriality of vocality presents its own ethical matters and ideological contexts.

*Technology of relation* refers to the ways that the voice acts across the bodies of speaker and listener, to the ways in which women artists of color and queer women artists use voice to negotiate the limits of embodied subject experience (the not always audible physical and psychic effects the voice has on the speaker and its recipient), and to the ways in which it enfolds dimensions of identity. *Vocality as a technology of relation* is strategically employed to point to the (dis)juncture between voice and body, sound and source.

*Relation* refers to the simultaneous interiority and exteriority of vocal material and, thus, vocality, including the vocal practices of speaking, singing, and breathing from points of production and reception alike. That is, vocality functions as a technology, or practice, that relationally links emission, transmission, and reception. This project understands relation as emerging out of difference, as Édouard Glissant proposes, rather than as necessitating commonality. That is, instead of a form of relation that would conflate differences, I propose to work with the rub of relation in difference. Further, this project does not dictate or describe a singular form of relation but looks at the contingency and immanence within each chapter as a

specific case study, holding both the utopic potential of vocality to manifest collectivity alongside its ability to stir the histories of violence and the terrors of colonialism in our present.

*Feminist tactics of vocality as a technology of relation* require consideration of the ways in which the spectator is called upon within the scene of encounter. In his introduction to the critical survival strategy of disidentification, José Muñoz describes a performance titled *Marga Gomez is Pretty, Witty, and Gay* from 1992, wherein Marga apprehends “the lesbian’s call” through what Muñoz calls “homosexual hearing.” Lacking this mode of listening, Marga’s mother does not receive the call. Muñoz writes, “Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship.”<sup>11</sup> Thinking with the work of native scholars, one might insist further that the mode of address may not just be directed toward specific listeners but may also place listeners in the difficult position of feeling rebuffed by the call.<sup>12</sup> I take seriously such differentially difficult calls and the formulation of disidentification as a survival tactic in order to highlight the ways in which the resonances of vocality are differentially audible across this project and have different stakes for different spectators. That is, the call may not be for you (or me), and the works mean and are heard differently dependent on the contingent relations within the scene of encounter. While, at times, the call of the work may not be produced for you, it is also the case that even when the call is apprehended, received, or heard (and this is

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<sup>11</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Here I am thinking with work on indigeneity in American Indian Studies and Visual Culture via Dylan Robinson and Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie on modes of address. See in particular, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, “When is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?” in *Photography’s Other Histories*, Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, Eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 40-52.

not always the case), this difficulty does not stop but, in the case of these works, has continued resonance and agential motoring force.

Throughout the dissertation I refer to “the call” of the work of art. The call is articulated specifically in each of the chapters, but these articulations share concerns deserving of further qualification. To be blunt, this dissertation is not about art transmitting a decipherable message. While it may seem that listening and vocality would be tied to linguistic operations (and they are in many instances), it is precisely the ways in which the artists I study problematize the presumption that agency is only located in speech or language that prompts my deployment of these terms. This dissertation is about attending to artworks that produce a difficulty that refuses to settle and continues to call on the spectator to listen. The difficulty of address to the spectator is what I term *the call*. To say that one has “mastered” it and “captured” its meaning would be to incite colonizing/disciplining violence all over again.<sup>13</sup> Through his concept of the “right to opacity,” Édouard Glissant has described this aesthetics of a kind of refusal as referring to initiated knowledges and the right to remain illegible in the face of oppressive power dynamics of colonialism.<sup>14</sup>

The study of *feminist tactics of vocality as a technology of relation* in this dissertation differentiates them from other ‘styles of use’ or deployments of vocality. That is, the vocality that I turn to is doing specific things: it is challenging, difficult, hard to locate, and disarms the

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<sup>13</sup> See Sandy Soto’s formulation of de-mastery as queer work against disciplining and monological and monocausal subjectivities, or rendering, as she writes “intelligible a structure of feeling whose force is precisely in its unintelligibility what Raymond Williams eloquently describes as “something yet to come,” something still “at the very edge of semantic availability” (*Marxism and Literature*, 130, 134).” See: Sandra Soto, *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer: The De-Mastery of Desire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

spectator in ways that challenge authority and power relations. Indeed, many of the key terms composing the theoretical contribution of this dissertation, (listening not least) bear significant freight in terms of how we understand them to mean as praxis. To make explicit what I am and what I am *not* speaking to, this project's method pivots on four key moves.

1. **As the call relays across time, this project does not confine the works to the historical situation of their making, but, insists that we attend to the ways their vocality resounds in our present.** There are political implications to this, that is to emphatically mark them as sounding in our present is to also begin to address the ongoing conditions of the 1970s that served an impetus (among many) that situates their relevance not only to 1970s politics but also to and in our present day.
  
2. **The feminist tactics of vocality that are central to this study are not fixed, easy, or necessarily decipherable or, indeed, even necessarily audible.** To critically outline the ways that vocality functions across the work continues to be difficult in part because of shying away from what Sylvia Wynter calls the 'harm of the definitional' but also for the ways that tactics work with time. Nonetheless, the neologisms developed for this project mark the beginning of what I hope to be a sustained inquiry into the complexity of their assemblage. If I write from the position of a paranoid analyst (thinking of Sedgwick) I may not have developed anything, instead, I hope that I will be able to return and extend (but not necessarily repair) the extant work again and again.<sup>15</sup> This could be taken as a defensive statement and in

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<sup>15</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This essay is about you" in *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-51.

some ways it is, but I also remain sincerely humbled by the complexity of vocality—that it might be articulated through a more estranged terminology, speaks to what I find so compelling, that is that vocality at once holds the capacity for language and at the same time is not limited by linguistic bounds but functions in excess of language.

3. **Vocality as a technology of relation is not about hearing—it is about the call to listening—that is, about a tactic of vocality that creates relation through its strain on listening, challenging our ability to apprehend, understand, and comprehend.** This project is about listening and the troubling vocality these works produce, rather than about ability or inability to hear. The question of audibility/inaudibility has to do with the difficulty that these works produce rather than with the capacities of the hearing subject. Even if we cannot hear the vocality this does not mean that it is metaphorical; this may mean that it is inaudible to you or to me, but does not mean that it loses material, affective, racial, sexual force. Think here of the way that micro-aggressions may be inaudible to one subject but rise up as an edifice, wall or chasm in the face of another subject. Think here, too, of the way in which a decentering of the work from a position that universalizes the spectator—that is, the relation the vocality makes is variable depending upon the spectator it reaches out to; think also of the way resonances continue to vibrate across material over time, continue to be present even if at inaudible levels. That vocality works differently across these works by Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, and Pauline Oliveros might seem to some readers as indication that vocality might be too broad a term into which to enfold these diverse practices, and yet for the purposes of this project I have insisted

on holding them together for the way in which vocality in its multifarious forms continues to call the spectator in as a listener, or functions variously *as a technology of relation*. That these might be multiple, and at times seemingly contradictory is precisely the point: vocalities are both singular and plural, metaphorical and material.

4. **This project is not a philosophy of the senses. Instead, I am theorizing with works of art that deploy difficult vocalities that call on us to listen.** The philosophy with which I seek to align is one that extends directly from the art works themselves, acknowledging the agency and force produced by the ostensibly dead weight of objects: photographs, film, writing, musical scores, tape recordings. This not only destabilizes a boundary between art and theory, but also what might seem to be the inanimate or dead, and the living or animate. Can there be animate or moving death? Not just the rattlesnake that coils after death, or the chicken who walks a few more steps after you slit her throat, but the material and affective force of things which exceed any life or death divide.

### *Contribution*

Retrospective assessments of 1970s art production describe a decade of transformative upheaval and disruption and redefinition of the gallery space, wherein “conceptual art, earthworks, installations, video, body art, and performance all worked actively to redefine the spaces in which art was viewed and to integrate the audience into the process of artistic production.”<sup>16</sup> With this aim, Adrian Piper asserts, in a section of an ongoing essay from 1971,

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?: Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 5. For extended analysis of this shift see Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1972* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).

I can no longer see discrete forms in art as viable reflections or expressions of what seems to be going on in this society. They refer back to conditions of separateness, order, exclusivity, and the stability of easily-accepted functional identities which no longer exist. For what *a posteriori* seems to be this reason, I'm interested in the elimination of the discrete form as art object (including communications media objects), with its isolate internal relationships and self-determining esthetic standards. I've been doing pieces the significance and experience of which is defined as completely as possible by the viewer's reaction and interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

Here Piper articulates her desire to enfold the audience in the performance of meaning making.

This call to the spectator is one that can be traced across her oeuvre specifically but is also characteristic of trends in conceptual art more generally. With the dematerialization of the art object, terms for engagement and modes of address are radically activated in what comes to be called installation art, social practice, performance art, body art, new media art, situational aesthetics, and relational aesthetics.<sup>18</sup>

I demonstrate how women of color and lesbian artists deploy vocality as a technology of relation as an aesthetic practice in a set of case studies that focus on pivotal works by Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, and Pauline Oliveros, who take advantage of the space of the gallery and the museum to alter sensory dynamics to change social power relations. By reassessing vocality as a technology of relation in 1970s feminist art practice, we can better understand the status of spectators-as-listeners. Rather than merely recover vocality as an object, this study joins a swell in scholarship that offers a reading of voice and vocality as a materially vibrational practice that

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<sup>17</sup> Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1972* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 234-235.

<sup>18</sup> For contextual grounding see: Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and locational Identity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002); Erika Suderburg, Ed., *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Alexander Alberro and Black Stimson, *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999); Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999).

positions what I call the spectator-as-listener. The methodological and theoretical implications of this study unsettle categorical and medium-specific divisions of visual art from sound art, instead leaving an open imperative to listen to visual works with acoustic dimensions that may not be easily audible. That is, I focus on visual works with acoustic dimensions that purposefully problematize listening, to produce new forms of attention in the spectator. These works call on the spectator to listen using a vocality purposefully made difficult to hear. By positioning the spectator-as-listener as straining toward and caring for that which may not be totally apprehended, these works cultivate specific forms of attention. In examining the spectator-as-listener—a position these works call for—a new methodology of listening emerges as not just a hermeneutic practice but also, and most importantly, an ethics of attention.

My research on listening is positioned to chart new directions for research and to reframe key debates on contemporary art, feminist art history, and histories of media and technology by making three major contributions. First, by recognizing vocality and its appeal to listening as a central component of contemporary art by feminist artists and artists of color, this project intervenes in how we understand the formal contributions of their art practice. The works discussed have been examined almost exclusively for their visual components, which reduces their complex engagements with history, race, and gender (among other concerns) to the visual register, thus reinforcing identity as something to be read on the surface. My project challenges us to address these works as not bound to one sensory modality. In other words, the affective and aural materiality that focus my study are both imbricated in the visual and in excess of the visual, illuminating complex and changing relationships between the visual and the aural.

Second, by extending the scholarship to critically account for vocality as technology of relation within the ecology of forms, figures, and materials of contemporary art praxis, I reveal

new approaches to media's relation to spectatorship. By expanding the field of inquiry beyond established categories of identity (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality) and genre (photography, installation, performance, film), I think about how the spectator's relation formed through the artist's use of media. More specifically, I consider how vocality places the spectator and artist in social relation and how this affects one's sense of self within social space.

And third, this research makes a conceptual intervention at the intersections of art history, sound studies, and postcolonial and feminist theory, developing the methodology of listening not just as a hermeneutic but also as an ethical and political practice with wide implications. Further, I bring art historical inquiry and sound studies into contact with formative work in postcolonial theory and black studies on sound, voice, and orality. My intervention is to think with these discourses *at the same time*. While one could easily critique the reification of a limited canon of sound art, it is not my intention to simply render this canon more diverse but, rather, to disarm the question of what works we listen to and to open up the possibility for listening across media. Ultimately, I demonstrate that sound is fundamental not merely as a quality of particular works, a difference of medium, or an alteration of sensory modality but as a change of address with the power to alter the terms of engagement by the appeal to listening.

### *Literature Review*

In answering this call to listen, it has proven essential to return to key debates in art history, sound studies, and black studies—but also, and perhaps most urgently for my own concern, to review recent curatorial trends. Building on crucial work in retheorizing spectatorship, I ask us to think especially about how works of art that issue a call to listen and yet

make that listening difficult position the spectator as a strained listener held in suspension.<sup>19</sup>

While large-scale exhibitions focused on sound, such as the *Volume: Bed of Sound* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2000), *Bitstreams* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2001), *Art>Music* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2001), and *Sonic Process* (the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2002), have opened at institutions across the art world, within these projects, it is often confusing whether sound art is understood as a movement or genre that is distinct from other forms or as a medium. My dissertation takes the side of listening to contemporary art more broadly rather than attuning to a movement or genre.

One way that we might understand these exclusions is by examining the framework used to define sound art as a genre, as well as the relationship this establishes between sound art and technology. Studies have frequently separated works for their use of technology, and artworks using vocal materiality are often occluded from such studies and are not considered technological. As Alexander Weheliye's book-length study *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (2005) establishes, we must consider "the vexed place of writing—both in a limited and general sense—and orality vis-à-vis New World slavery, in order to come to grips with the singularity of black sounds as they ricochet between 'humans' and modern informational technologies."<sup>20</sup> Further, Weheliye's study presses and dispels the fantasy of ever separating the human from the technological, and vice versa.

This dissertation can be situated alongside recent curatorial efforts to foreground links between art and music, such as Naima Keith and Zoe Whitley's co-curated *The Shadows Took*

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<sup>19</sup> Within literature on spectatorship I align myself with work such as P.A. Skantze's *Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013) which develops a form of 'narrative care' that invites the reader to spectate alongside the writing "I" of the spectator / *flâneur*.

<sup>20</sup> Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 3-4.

*Shape* (Harlem Studio Museum, New York, 2013), Bennet Simpson's *Blues for Smoke* (LACMA, 2013), Naomi Beckwith and Dieter Roelstraete's co-curated *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music* (Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, 2015), *Endless Shout* (ICA Philadelphia's 2016-17 multi-artist performance project featuring George Lewis, Raul de Nieves, Danielle Goldman, taisha paggett, and The Otolith Group and coordinated with the ICA's installation of *The Freedom Principle*), and Risha Lee's *The World is Sound* (Rubin Museum of Art, 2017).

However, these exhibitions are reliant on deployments of musicality rather than vocality. Two of the most recent Venice Biennales have foregrounded orality and performative engagement of texts—for example, the central performance of reading of Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) directed by Isaac Julian in Okwui Enwezor's 2015 Biennale and 2017 curator Christine Macel's choice to focus the central pavilion on the relationship between artists and books. This trend in curatorial practice prompts a consideration of curatorial tactics to both work across media, and centralize a relation between artists and texts. The aesthetic practices studied in this dissertation engage texts not only as an appropriative move or citational reference but in conversational terms.

### *Sound in Contemporary Art History and Visual Studies*

Sound is ubiquitous in contemporary art, whether explicitly acknowledged in works identified as sound art or in other time-based media, such as video, film, and performance. A range of recent exhibitions and publications has begun to attend to the role of sound within the modernist colonial history and production of race. Scholars in the burgeoning area of sound studies have given attention to the role of sound in modernist art, and yet this scholarship has

been problematically held apart. Instead, sound as a topic in art history is most frequently approached through a narrative that maintains the strictures of a largely white, male avant-garde. For example, in Douglas Kahn's *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, he acknowledges the limited scope of his study, which reinterprets the artistic practice of already-canonized male sound artists.<sup>21</sup> In Caleb Kelly's *Sound*, he focuses the anthology of essays and artist writings by grouping them into thematic sections titled "Concepts of the Sonic," "Noise and Silence," "The Listener and Acoustic Space," "Bandwaves," and "Artists and Sound." Throughout, women and artists of color are largely left out and are mentioned nowhere in the introductory texts.<sup>22</sup> Further, in these texts, there is no critical discussion of race, reiterating the ways in which whiteness so often goes unracialized and discussions of race get mapped onto bodies of color. Again, in art historian Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, one finds apologies for the limitations of the study's scope and for the lack of attention to female artists or to a multicultural and international avant-garde.<sup>23</sup> "Four Perspectives on Sound Art: History, Practice, Structure, and Perception," a panel at the College Art Association 2015 Conference in New York, showcased varied methodological approaches to the subject, but it drew on a limited archive and repeated the male modernist narrative. My current study responds to the absences of women and artists of color in art historical discourse but does not strive to establish a revised and more inclusive canon but instead is a feminist, queer, and anti-racist project to disarm the question of which works we listen to by working

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<sup>21</sup> Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Caleb Kelly, *Sound: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press and Whitechapel Gallery, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

closely with three specific instances of works that as yet have not been attended to for their call to listening and their complex deployment of vocality.

### *Sound Studies and Philosophy*

The conceptual foundations of sound studies as a field situate sound as an assemblage of multisensory experiences and multivalent conceptualizations in which sound is at once embodied, social and political, and encompasses transdisciplinary scholarship that bridges cultural studies, art history, historical musicology, and anthropology, among other fields. The theoretical and practical concerns of sound studies are heterogeneous: sonic environment; sound recording, reproduction, and circulation; sound art; sound and hearing as an embodied sense; and the territory of critical theory on voice, listening, and the space between sound and language.

The field has drawn on philosophical and theoretical works by Aristotle, Kant, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Attali, Mladen Dolar, Jean-Luc Nancy, Adrianna Cavarrero, and Peter Szendy, among others. This work has attuned to the transformative and transportive qualities of sound, the profound relationality of sound as materiality, and sound as slippery signifier. Such concepts are vital to this project. It is the extrication of such work from discourses of identity and the body that is troubling. If sound is inextricably linked to a body that hears or vibrates, speaks or screams, this literature often fails to account for the specificities of body and flesh. Problematically, recent anthologies such as the *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012), *The Sound Studies Reader* (2013), and *Keywords in Sound* (2015) continue to displace discussions of gender, sexuality, race, and class, often figuring sound in the paradoxical position of a transcendent material that is culturally bound but exceeds specificity.

*Black Studies*

In my understanding of sound and voice as a raced, sexed, and gendered materiality that operates within regimes of representation, subjection, and identification, I draw directly on theoretical work in black studies and de-/post-constructionist critique from the 1980s to today, which I put into transformative contact with art historical discourse. Black studies became an institutional and disciplinary formation in the mainstream U.S. university in the 1960s but has existed since the eighteenth century as a set of intellectual traditions, propositions, and liberation struggles. Black studies represents a substantial critique of Western modernity and has often focused on the processes of racialization and the shifting configurations of blackness.

The theoretical and methodological reach of black studies has important implications for understanding the global contemporary and provides crucial viewpoints for the interpretation of artistic and life-making practice. At the same time that one might desire the voice to exceed the flesh and transcend the body, its enmeshment in both subjectivities and ideologies forms a key and compelling role in the relationship between vocal materiality and identity. Uncontainability, resistance to objectification, and slippery signification—matched in the U.S. with a national discourse that would seek to fetishize, solidify, and essentialize its subjects in raced, classed, sexed, gendered bodies—the voice would seem to hold the possibility to both sound and exceed these differences. In *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, Houston A. Baker describes the shift in his thinking from a centered subject to a decentered subject, from a “speaking subject” creating language to the language “speaking” the subject. This transition could also describe a moment in 1980s black literary studies and post-structuralism, exemplified by the works of Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hortense Spillers. However, in both of Baker’s formulations, the materiality and materializing potential of black voice is foundational.

This is not unique, rather, attention to voice and its manifestation in the critical study of race and black music in the United States can be tracked across many texts, surfacing in Frederick Douglass's articulation of subjection and description of the transformative effects of song in his *Narrative*, W. E. B. DuBois's structuring of narrative through the Negro folk song in *The Souls of Black Folk*, or Amiri Baraka's equation of blues music and black consciousness in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. However, rather than equating the presence of discussions of voice with evidence of continuity, revisiting specific instances of its appearance yields instead something of its construction as recognizable or salient in the first place.

### *Methodological Intervention*

Let me turn here to listening as method and as a method inextricable from its object. In developing listening as a methodology, I extend composer Pauline Oliveros's and philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's work to understand listening as a practice of attention and attunement that relays between the external and the internal, the self and the other.<sup>24</sup> By using the term *vocality*, this dissertation shifts from the problematic presumption that sound is simply *heard* to call ethical and political attention to works of art that experiment with the potentials and limitations of voice in speech, breath, and sounding, as interiorly and exteriorly materialized. In doing so, I expand the work of poet and proponent of "black study" Fred Moten, specifically his argument for an understanding of voice as animative materiality that possesses "aesthetic, political, sexual

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<sup>24</sup> Pauline Oliveros, "Forward" in Monique Buzzarté and Tom Bickley, ed. *Anthology of Essays on Deep Listening*. (Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2012); Pauline Oliveros, *Software for People: Collected Writings 1963-1980* (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1984); Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

and racial force.”<sup>25</sup> In considering the appeal to listening issued by works of art, my research demonstrates the relational pull exerted by what I have termed *the call*. Even when inaudible, vocality becomes a force of potential. This is also what distinguishes my project from a general theory of spectatorship: I theorize with works that extend a particular call.

As part of my research that responds to and works with the call that these artworks extend, I underwent training in “deep listening” through the Deep Listening Institute founded by Pauline Oliveros at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. This one-year intensive course based on Oliveros’s methodology of listening entailed coursework, fieldwork, and practice, which I completed in the fall of 2016. This experience allows me to apply a participant-observation approach to interpret artworks and archival materials and contributes to my methodology. As described by the Deep Listening Institute, Oliveros’s methodology “explores the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the voluntary, selective nature—exclusive and inclusive—of listening. The practice includes bodywork, sonic meditations, interactive performance, listening to the sounds of daily life, nature, one’s own thoughts, imagination and dreams, and listening to listening itself.”<sup>26</sup> In particular, the aspects of deep listening that I incorporated into my project are the understanding of listening as a form of attention, the focus on exclusive and inclusive listening, and “the listening to listening itself,” as I return again and again to ask: How does the difficult call of these artworks position us? What is the ethics of attention that these artworks demand?

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<sup>25</sup> Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>26</sup> <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about>

Yet, with this work in mind, it is important to note that listening itself is not necessarily apolitical or ethical and can be textured by paternalist, surveilling, and invasive tendencies. Scholars have noted the ways in which both sound and listening are used towards violent, militaristic ends.<sup>27</sup> Listening and sounding also construct relations between the public and private social spheres, as demonstrated by Johanna Linsley and Rebecca Louis Collins's project *Stolen Voices*, which was inspired by eavesdropping.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, placed in a position to choose some works to highlight over others, curatorship can be examined for the deeply fraught and political tasks of display and inclusion in the first place. If it is my desire to amplify (rather than displace) the voices of those most at risk and most vulnerable, then it is my responsibility to be accountable for which artists and artworks I include and how I include them; I am accountable to their work and the futures towards which it might aim. I am accountable to care for and thus not reduce their challenge to us. The logic that drives this constellation of case studies is an outgrowth of my desire to care for works that are not easy to hear. This difficulty is variously articulated across the project.

The demands of the call drive my inquiry. The object of inquiry is remade by engaging the artworks with a subtle shift in forms of attention (following Jill Casid's work on the global in her essay "Turning the Fearful Sphere") to orient my understandings of space, time, place, and

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Schuppli, "Uneasy Listening" in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 381-392; Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012); Juliette Volcler, *Extremely Loud: Sound as a Weapon*, trans. Carol Volk (2011; repr., New York: New Press, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> This ongoing collaborative project between Johanna Linsley and Rebecca Louis Collins was initiated as part of the Live Art Development Agency's DIY artist-led workshop scheme, see: <http://www.jhlinsley.com/projects/stolen-voices/> and <http://www.yourstolenvoice.com> (Accessed January 20, 2018)

movement and to situate contemporary global art practice as neither unitary or static.<sup>29</sup> My project aligns with Casid’s prompt of “potentiality in and from the surround—even just a little.” Indeed, what may seem like a tiny shift of attention—a shift prompted here by vocality—can have great consequence.

This method of listening does not presume to speak *for* the artists or artworks considered but instead desires to speak *with* them. As such, the neologisms I develop—that is, *vocality as a technology of relation*, *spectator-as-listener*, and *the call*—do not seek to constrict or define the limits of what the artwork can do within a scene of encounter but, instead, to think with the work of art and to participate in dialogic conversation with the artwork.<sup>30</sup> Such conversation is fraught with risk. Indeed, as Gayatri Spivak’s seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” warns us, “Ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern is the left intellectual’s stock-in-trade.”<sup>31</sup> Following Spivak’s critique and the implications of work in affect theory, my project departs from speech and instead listens to and for a vocality that would not simply seek to be “recovered and included” but that would rework our orientation to it in the first place.<sup>32</sup> This is an attempt to

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<sup>29</sup> Jill H. Casid, “Turning the ‘Fearful Sphere’: Propositional Tactics in and for the Global” in *In the Wake of the Global Turn*, Jill H. Casid and Aruna D’Souza, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 213-227.

<sup>30</sup> This formulation draws directly from Kobena Mercer, who writes “If the ‘responsibility of the artist’ lies in the quality of his or her response to what calls for thinking, criticism contributes to the conversation not by imposing the closure of its own conceptual system but by entering into a critical, dialogic, inquiry into the voices that do the calling.” Kobena Mercer, “Black Art and the Burden of Representation” *Third Text* (Spring 1990): 78; quoted in Jennifer González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 20.

<sup>31</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>32</sup> José Muñoz extends Gayatri Spivak’s question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” to ask *How does the Subaltern feel?* correlating a relation between speech, vocal expression, and feeling. José Esteban Muñoz, “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position” *Signs* (Vol. 31, No. 3, New Feminist Theories of Visual Culture, Spring 2006), 675-688, 677. This helps shift from a focus on identity politics to what Jennifer Nash calls affective politics “to describe how

avoid what Susan Sontag describes in her 1967 essay “The Aesthetics of Silence,” wherein she proposes that “a person who becomes silent becomes opaque for the other; somebody’s silence opens up an array of possibilities for interpreting that silence, for imputing speech into it.”<sup>33</sup>

It is my hope that my method attends to the artworks’ critical call via the deployment of vocality, rather than imposing upon or ventriloquizing the marginalized voice.<sup>34</sup>

It is also crucial to clarify that this method of listening is not the same as hearing. Via Oliveros’s philosophy of deep listening and work in philosophy on the senses, I understand listening as a form of attention not isolated to the ear. That is, listening is an attention to resonance, vibration, phonic, psychical, and affective substance, and this attention can be a felt practice through the transfer of vibration and affect across surfaces (psychic or material), bodies, and forms. This definition of listening relies on an understanding of the senses as mutually imbricated. That is, sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell might not be so easily delegated or isolated to an attendant organ.<sup>35</sup>

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bodies are organized around intensities, longings, desires, temporalities, repulsions, curiosities, fatigues, optimism, and how these affects produce political movements (or sometimes inertias).” See Jennifer Nash, “Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality” in *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, volume 11, no. 2, 2013), 1-24, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Sontag, “The Aesthetics of Silence” in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 16.

<sup>34</sup> This consideration could be taken further by working closely with Ashon Crawley’s distinction between xenolalia and glossolalia which he develops in his chapter “Tongues” to critically think with a divide of translation/interpretation. See: Ashon Crawley, “Tongues” in *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 197-250.

<sup>35</sup> Here, I would like to flag a desire to develop my engagement with disability studies in future iterations of this project. For example, see: Sarah Mayberry Scott, “Re-orienting Sound Studies’ Aural Fixation: Christine Sun Kim’s “Subjective Loudness” on *Sounding Out!* (June 5, 2017) <https://soundstudiesblog.com/category/disability-studies/>

This method of listening is an embodied practice that attends to the material dimensions of vocality. However, while vocality might seem to be the material through which we might articulate our most specific selves where voice functions as an indexical form that emerges from the body, such a totalizing understanding delimits the possibilities for deep ambiguity, conflict, and unresolvable difference within the self and within vocal materiality. That vocality might yield intelligible translation of a subjectivity is not the point of this project. Rather, how the address of vocality brings entities, bodies, and singularities into relation is the question upon which this project lingers. The uses of vocality in which intelligibility is troubled require that we exert attention toward the artwork in specific ways and towards divergent ends.

I understand vocal materiality to have affective, racial, gendered, and sexual force that is related to both the fleshly body from which vocality is issued and the body toward which vocality is cast, bringing their forms into relation. At the same time, vocality exceeds the two bodies forming a differentiated assemblage. But this relation is not necessarily empathic; it can also be a dissonant and troubled relation. I am reminded of Sylvia Rivera's speech at New York City's Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally in 1973.<sup>36</sup> In footage made available to me by trans activist and filmmaker Reina Gossett, Rivera appears to rush the stage as she screams into the microphone: "I may be"—which is quickly swallowed by the crowd's booing. Rivera screams back, "Y'all better quiet down..." (See Appendix A for a full transcript of the speech). This imperative to quiet down is her own way of saying "Listen up!" Her scream asks the crowd to listen. Sylvia Rivera's screams channel the failed desire in which increased representation, a

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<sup>36</sup> Sylvia Rivera, "Y'all better quiet down" (1973), The Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/SylviaRiveraYallBetterQuietDown1973> (accessed October 17, 2017)

For full transcription see Appendix A.

platform, and indeed a microphone might yield gay power, or at least the gay rights that she calls for.<sup>37</sup> To centralize trans women of color and a call to quiet down and listen up does not necessarily make anyone more heard or freer.

Within the question of methodology comes the question of temporality and history. This project tracks reverberations between the 1970s and the present and falls within what art history calls “the contemporary.” However, what this means is highly debated. Both the time period considered “contemporary” and the area of specialization in “contemporary art” can seem a contradiction in terms. In her recent book *Becoming Past*, Jane Blocker brings us up against both the awkwardness and the banality of this problem, while at the same time challenging us to consider art objects as not just within history but as history.<sup>38</sup> Following this line of attention to art practice as historical practice, as a praxis of “worlding,” this project is focused on how these works issue a call beyond the moment of their making and how the unanswered resonances of the 1970s may still issue in the present. This follows Michael Jay McClure’s claim that “conceptual art” is not yet over and Christina Sharpe’s consideration of living in the wake of slavery and colonialism, and it further dispels presumptions about linear temporality.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Jill Casid writes, “The futures we can imagine are already in the process of being conceived in the monstrous overlaps of the anachronistic, the unfounded, and the ostensibly past,

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<sup>37</sup> For an extended analysis of this speech see: Samuel Galen Ng, “Trans Power! Sylvia Lee Rivera’s STAR and the Black Panther Party” *Left History* 17.1 (Spring/Summer 2013) 11-41; Ruth Osorio, “Embodying Truth: Sylvia Rivera’s Delivery of *Parrhesia* at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally” *Rhetoric Review* Vol 36, No. 2, (2017), 151-163.

<sup>38</sup> Jane Blocker, “Introduction: History as Prosthesis” in *Becoming Past: History in Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 1-29.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Jay McClure, “Notes on Adhesion: The object of art and the work of art after conceptualism” in *Performance Research* (12:4, 2010) 14-23; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

including that of the colonial. If time will tell, it is through the volatile, materializing power of figuration, which crosses and makes a chimera of time itself.”<sup>40</sup> This chimerical temporality is not unrelated to the fact that the call from the 1970s to which I attend continues to position our attention and rework our history.

### *Chapter Summaries*

Chapter 1, “Echo Effects: Listening to Adrian Piper’s *Food for the Spirit* (1971),” responds to *Food for the Spirit*’s appeal to listen by asking how we might listen to a work that appears inaudible, silent, or at best incomplete. In the summer of 1971, conceptual artist Adrian Piper undertook intensive study of Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Piper recorded audio of herself reading passages of the text aloud and photographed her mirrored reflection. This performance implicates and exceeds the sensorial dimensions of the visual. And yet the political, aesthetic, sexual, and racial force and materiality of the performance is most often read based exclusively on its visual components in the display of photographs. The fact that the audiotapes were lost or “inadvertently destroyed” is generally cited as a justification for ignoring the sonic dimensions of the performance. Yet, I argue that the photographs demand that we listen. Building on the work of philosophers Adriana Cavarero and Fred Moten, I think with Piper’s *Food for the Spirit* to propose a practice of listening that attends to the acoustic dimensions and phonic substance of photographs and that includes, rather than delimits, internal dialogue, immanent materiality, and affective resonance. By recognizing the enmeshment of the phonographic and the photographic as a central component of *Food for the*

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<sup>40</sup> Jill H. Casid, “Chimerical Figurations at the Monstrous Edges of Species,” in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry, and Ken Hiltner, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 82.

*Spirit*, this chapter contributes to the development of critical listening as a vital methodology. I argue that *Food for the Spirit* produces an echo effect with ethical implications that enfold the spectator-as-listener.

Chapter 2, “A Call to Breath: Ana Mendieta’s *Grass Breathing* (1974)” turns to cross-media artist Ana Mendieta’s lesser-known film work *Grass Breathing*, in which we are presented with a full frame of green grass cut short like a lawn. Almost immediately, the grassy ground begins to rise and fall, to breathe as the title describes. The frame does not move for the duration of the film, which is just over three minutes. Instead, we are given a consistent camera angle, and the wind creates a subtle shift in the upper left. As I demonstrate, *Grass Breathing* unearths the contingency of breath across matter—the earth, the rock, the dirt, the grass, and the body breathe together—a movement between and across substances, rather than a single vocality. This contingent collectivity forms a call to breathe that includes us and to examine her tactic of situating the spectator, as well as her registration of breath’s contingency across matter and as a difficult vocality.

Chapter 3, “Political Resonances of Dissonance through Pauline Oliveros’s *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation* (1970),” responds to the material dissonance of Pauline Oliveros’s composition produced after reading radical feminist and experimental writer Valerie Solanas’s *SCUM Manifesto* (1967). I argue that the composition asks that we listen through desperation-as-dissonance, what might seem to be an incoherent vocality, prompting a practice of listening that requires attuning to multiple vocalities at once. Recognizing the enmeshment of affective, temporal, and tonal dissonance, I begin with a consideration of how collaborative duo Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz’s eponymous visitation of Oliveros’s score reworks this circulation of power and history and asks for a

haptical listening. I then return to Oliveros's score, to Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*, and to Marilyn Monroe's poetic writing to listen closely to the reverberation of their desperation and the implications it has for embodied listening to desperation-as-dissonance.<sup>41</sup>

The artists I consider directly confront issues of erasure and loss of voice across their work. Thus, to study their use of vocality is to confront the problematics they stage in a call for listening across media that does not reduce to a simple pedagogy or hermeneutics of listening that might render them clear and audible. Indeed, in emphasizing the difficulty, I foreground two key aspects of what is conveyed through this difficulty. First, the artists with whose work I engage are producing work within a U.S. context (which immediately means that they are producing in the wake of transatlantic slavery and indigenous genocide), yet they have attachments, origins, and work that exceeds national boundaries: whether Cuban-born and subject to Cold War diaspora and displacement through the Peter Pan program, as in the case of Ana Mendieta; or having found the conditions of anti-black racism in the U.S. to be unbearable and seeking refuge elsewhere, as in the case of Nina Simone, who relocated first in Liberia and then to France; or in the case of Adrian Piper's refusal to reenter the United States after being placed on a post-9/11 watch list by the U.S. government; or in the transnational feminist collaborations of Berlin-based duo Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz and U.S.-based Pauline Oliveros. While this is a contemporary project, I understand these pasts and histories to be implicated and still active in our present. But this is also to say that these routes, these articulations of diasporic displacement are part of the ensemblic forces that situate their distinct vocalities and draw varied circumstances into relation.

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<sup>41</sup> This term comes from Boudry and Lorenz, folding together film and performance. See: Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, "500 Words" in *Art Forum*, September 23, 2014. <https://www.artforum.com/words/id=48312> (accessed July 20, 2016).

Second, such alienation and even isolation produce difficult vocalities. These vocalities are not always easy to hear. Indeed, the case studies in this project attend to vocalities that emerge from instances of isolation, refusal, desperation, (existential and material) precarity, and positionalities of diaspora: Adrian Piper, from within the isolation of her performative experiment, the alienation she exposes in her reading of Kant, and later her exile to Berlin; Ana Mendieta from within the ground in which she has entombed herself and her exile from Cuba as formative for her aesthetic production and oeuvre; Pauline Oliveros's positioning of Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas as figures who emerge as dissonant within a popular culture that at once regards them as beautiful and fierce, dangerous and criminal, and who are disregarded for their desires. I diagram a situation that holds implications for a larger problematic; purposefully complex and difficult to hear, the vocality deployed by the artists central to this project (Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, Pauline Oliveros, and Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry) are not always audible and certainly not "easy to listen to." This might prompt the spectator-as-listener to lean in and simultaneously feel pushed away.

In the preface to *Hold It against Me*, Jennifer Doyle discusses Linda Montano's performance *Mitchell's Death* (1978) as "carved from the rhythm of the artist's breath," which also figures the tone and pace of the drone-like piece.<sup>42</sup> Doyle goes on to observe that *Mitchell's Death* both "pushes the spectator away and draws her in at the same time." This ambivalence of the relationship between artwork and spectator contributes to what Doyle sees as the difficulty that unites the works of her study. She goes on to say that "as hard as they are (in subject and in

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<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Doyle, *Hold it Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), ix.

tone), all three are deeply moving (for some, including myself).<sup>43</sup> This simultaneity of pulling one in closer and pushing away by making it difficult to engage is also present in the complex vocality that centers my own project. In part, the work foregrounded by each chapter of this dissertation makes listening difficult. This difficulty arises in various forms—from the question of audibility and locatability in Adrian Piper’s *Food for the Spirit*, the affective dissonance of collective desperation in *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe*, and the call to breath as a quiet register of vocality in Ana Mendieta’s film work *Grass Breathing*. In describing the difficulty of writing about such works and the care we must take in responding to difficulty so that we don’t fall victim to false oversimplification, Doyle makes clear that she will not define or extricate the terms *affect*, *difficulty*, and *emotion* from one another. Ultimately, what Doyle calls for is a careful attention to the methods of what such difficult work “actually *does*.” She writes, “If we want to hear what this work is about, we need to listen to it more carefully and allow ourselves to be moved.”<sup>44</sup> I am less interested in whether or not we are moved and more invested in a praxis of listening as a willingness to be vulnerable to the affects and effects the work performs, including the potential that we might feel rebuffed and unmoved. Indeed, the works examined in this dissertation may prompt discomfort in that they ask the viewer to lean in, to get close, while at the same time they withhold or proliferatively produce, making it difficult to hear. This is to assert that objects can call on us and that art objects are agential, performing forces in the world. Further, this difficulty is one that, I argue, we must hold on to rather than reduce. As scholar Tina Campt points out, “All sound consists of more than what we hear. It is an inherently

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., xvii.

embodied modality constituted by vibration and contact.”<sup>45</sup> This sense that sound—including, I would argue, vocality—is always in excess of what might be apprehended can be understood both as a matter of physics and of its psychical materiality and affective potential. Indeed, Jacques Lacan describes voice as the *object a*, the partial object, indicating a sense of unknowability and vibration between absence/presence. This problematizes assumptions that voice equals a knowable or conceivable subjectivity or message or that any such stability should be postured in the first place.<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately, I argue that while at times the call of the work may not be produced for *you*, it is also the case that even when the call is apprehended, received, and heard, *its difficulty is not dispelled* because its tactics work through its own excess and movement. To arrest or stop the call is not to hear it. It is this difficulty that refuses to settle that drives the call. To issue the stop required to pretend that one has “mastered” it and “captured” its meaning would be not merely to incite colonizing, disciplining violence all over again but also to endeavor to foreclose the call that extends beyond our present.

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<sup>45</sup> Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 7.

<sup>46</sup> For a nuanced study of Jacques Lacan’s treatment of the voice as *object a* see: Licia Fiol-Matta, “Getting Off...The Nation” in *The Great Woman Singer: Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 16-66.

## Chapter One

### Echo Effects: Listening to Adrian Piper's *Food for the Spirit* (1971)

#### I. *Food for the Spirit* as the diffuse parts that remain

In the summer of 1971, artist and philosopher Adrian Piper undertook intensive study of Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Undergirded by the physical constraints of fasting and yogic practice, Piper photographed her mirrored reflection and made audio recordings of herself reading passages from Kant's *Critique*. Since this initial durational performance, *Food for the Spirit* has taken on multiple configurations, and the objects used to represent the piece vary depending on the iteration. Rather than referencing an originary event from which a chronology of the object of performance can extend, Piper stages the scene of address again and again. In each iteration, in each configuration, Piper confronts the viewer in what she calls the 'indexical present', or the here and now. One could say this is always the case of an object-spectator relation, and yet, we can also understand this as a function of vocality and Piper's use of the 'call to listen' that is a constitutive part of the work. This catalytic and enfolding relation of the call to listen or attend is one which Piper persistently pushes across her oeuvre.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For example, in one of her most recent performances *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1-3* (2013) she asks spectators to become participants in the formation of a social contract wherein we might begin to establish greater trust. At three gold desks visitors are asked to sign a contract—the single sentences read “I will always be too expensive to buy” “I will always mean what I say” and “I will always do what I saw I am going to do.” Here, we are implicated in an ethical relation, asked to respond, and instructed in what an ethical action might require. Most recently this was exhibited in Berlin at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart (February 24, 2017-September 3, 2017); see also Tavia Nyong'o on Adrian Piper as critic, “Adrian Piper's Critical Investigation” in *Los Angeles Review of Books* (October 11, 2015). <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/adrian-pipers-critical-instigation/#!>

By using ‘vocality as a technology of relation’ as a framing mechanism, I resituate *Food for the Spirit* as a relational and ongoing performance of what I call echo effects. I use the term echo effects to refer to the relay and return of Piper’s address that functions across *Food for the Spirit*’s dispersed parts to both shape and challenge the methodological engagement of the spectator. I suggest that *Food for the Spirit* should be understood as using this echo effect to address the spectator as a frustrated-listener. Attention to this address has significant implications for shifting how we understand the way *Food for the Spirit* works and Piper’s use of vocality therein. This chapter positions *Food for the Spirit* as a case study that foregrounds the relational play of ‘vocality as a technology of relation’ across media that I unfold in chapters two and three through a focus on works by Ana Mendieta and Pauline Oliveros. This chapter proceeds in three parts. First, I attend to *Food for the Spirit* via the diffuse parts that remain, focusing particularly on the ‘full’ set of photographs held by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Second, I follow Piper’s feminist critique of Kant via the writing she has produced around the performance of *Food for the Spirit*, and in her scholarship on Kant. And third, I return Piper’s tactics of performance in *Food for the Spirit* to study what the ‘echo effects’ continue to do.

*Food for the Spirit* first circulated publicly as a descriptive essay by Piper published in *High Performance* in 1981 (Appendix B).<sup>48</sup> The essay gives us a narrative view of Piper reading Kant’s *Critique* and coming to passages that prompted, as she articulates it, ‘a fear of losing myself.’<sup>49</sup> Piper then describes a ritual of going to the mirror in her apartment, photographing herself, and recording the passage on an audio-cassette. These audio tapes however, were lost or

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<sup>48</sup> Adrian Piper, “Food for the Spirit July 1971” *High Performance*, (Spring 1981), 34.

<sup>49</sup> Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight I, Selected Writings in Meta-Art 1968-2002* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996), 55.

destroyed. Mistakenly the essay was published alongside four unlabeled photographs from a different performance creating an odd dissonance between image and text which is revealed when one is already familiar with *Food for the Spirit* and returns to this publication (figure 11). The images included in the spread are from *Concrete Infinity Documentation Piece* (1970), a performance that results in similarly composed photographs that picture Piper with more expansive range in facial expression and hand gestures, and produced out of a different set of conceptual bounds. For the unsuspecting viewer however, the text and image would easily be read together. In 1987, Piper exhibited *Food for the Spirit* for the first time as a part of her retrospective at the Alternative Museum. The piece was displayed as a ring binder of drug-store printed photographs mounted on black paper alongside annotated pages from Kant's *Critique* (figure 12).<sup>50</sup> Following this retrospective that produced an illustrated catalog, Lorraine O'Grady cited Piper's *Food for the Spirit* as a 'catalytic moment for the subjective black nude' in her essay, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity."<sup>51</sup> The recirculation and recitation of Piper's performance are indicative of its continuing and shifting relevance and the ways in which it is viewed and received at particular historical moments. This has consequences for how we understand spectatorial relations over time and the shifting place of the object. As I will develop, I would emphasize also that this reiterative quality of the work, the way in which it

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<sup>50</sup> The John Weber Gallery catalog includes a small reproduction of one photograph from *Food for the Spirit*. While there is not a complete checklist included the gallery confirms the binder was exhibited in its entirety. John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 290.

<sup>51</sup> Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity" in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action*, edited by Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven. (New York: Icon Editions, 1994), 152-170. First published in 1992 and then later extended.

is recited contributes to the reverberative force of the echo effect which we can chart both within the content of the work, and in its temporality, and circulation.

In 1997, Thomas Erben Gallery reprinted fourteen photographs from *Food for the Spirit* in an edition of three and along with the ring binder of annotated pages from Kant's *Critique*, the gallery exhibited the gathered objects as "Adrian Piper: *Food for the Spirit*—July 1971".<sup>52</sup> Subsequently the editioned photographs were sold, both individually and in complete sets.<sup>53</sup> The Whitney Museum of American Art holds a full set in their Collection of Photographs,<sup>54</sup> while the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Rhode Island School of Design have partial editions. In 1999, a second major retrospective of Piper's work was collaboratively mounted by Maurice Berger then at the Fine Arts Gallery at the University of Maryland and Dara Meyers-Kingsley. Meyers-Kingsley's contribution "MEDI(t)Ations: Adrian Piper's Video's, Installations, Performances, and Soundworks 1968-1992" offers significant insight into the range of work Piper has done across media but does not include *Food for the Spirit* within this frame.

Recently, *Food for the Spirit* was displayed via the series of photographs in *America is Hard to See* (2015), the Whitney's inaugural exhibition at the Renzo Piano Building in the Meatpacking District. In this iteration, the series of photographs were displayed in a two-row sequence on a single wall alongside 1970s video and performance works by Joan Jonas, Lynda Benglis, Cindy Sherman, Howardena Pindell, Asco, and Ulysses Jenkins. Set within this context,

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<sup>52</sup> Exhibition titled "Adrian Piper: *Food for the Spirit*—July 1971" was on view at the Thomas Erben Gallery from December 11, 1997-January 31, 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Artnet reports that the photographs were available for purchase as a set (for \$21,000) or singly (for \$1,800 each), Rosetta Stone, "Gallery Yenta: Peek-a-boo," (28 January 1998), [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com).

<sup>54</sup> The Whitney holds a complete set, 98.28.3a-n, purchased with funds from the Photography Committee, Department of Photographs, Whitney Museum of American Art.

the display of *Food for the Spirit* runs the risk of paying lip service to diversity, representing a token black female subjectivity, restrictions that delimit the work. As part of the museum programming, scholar and curator Adrienne Edwards (who has since joined the Whitney as its Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance) gave a public gallery talk that brought us to the work through Piper's critique of Kant in her two-volume work *Rationality and the Structure of the Self* (figure 13).<sup>55</sup>

In MoMA's comprehensive retrospective *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Institutions, 1965-2016* (2018), curators Christophe Cherix, David Platzker and Connie Butler display *Food for the Spirit* as a series of photographs in a two-row sequence accompanied for the first time in its exhibition history not only with a spread from the folio of Piper's annotated pages torn from her paperback of Kant's *Critique* but also with an accompanying screen offering digitized scans of the complete folio. This choice to display the photographs alongside the annotated folio not only specify Piper's engagement with Kant's text that grounds the performance of *Food for the Spirit* but also highlights their place as what the exhibition wall text describes as "the only lasting embodiments of this 'private performance.'"<sup>56</sup> MoMA's accompanying publications do well in situating Piper in terms of what she calls the three hats she wears: an artist, a yogi, and a philosopher. As a result, this new scholarship attends to Piper's relation to Kant, and *Food for the Spirit*'s relation to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* more than ever before. And, yet, Piper's use of vocality in the private performance and across these 'lasting embodiments' goes unmentioned.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.artnews.com/2018/02/22/adrienne-edwards-named-curator-performance-whitney-museum/>

<sup>56</sup> The wall text in *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Institutions, 1965-2016* is refreshingly brief. While the destruction of the audio tapes is noted, the resonance that remains of their sonic materiality is not discussed.

Let us turn to consider the photographs (figure 14). In each there is a figure. A woman stares at us, or herself in a mirror, and holds a camera against her body. The walls on either side of her body indicate an interior space. In some we get indications of the architectural setting, bookshelves, the sheen of glossy paint on the white plank ceiling; a light switch, a latticed-metal grate or door. The scene repeats. The fourteen black and white images are relatively small, grainy, atmospheric. The woman is variously dressed—sometimes fully clothed, sometimes nude. The photographs are taken in low lighting, they are underexposed, the edges are vague and ethereal, ghostly. We never see a book or tape recorder. Flecks of light appear celestial, otherworldly.<sup>57</sup>

In some of the images the figure's hair is largely indistinguishable from her surroundings; light catches her flesh. She is the pale against the dark grey. Across the fourteen images—roughly square in format—Piper is variously nude, clothed in high-waisted dark underwear, a striped shirt, and nondescript clothing. I enumerate these details partially because discussions of this work so often remain transfixed with the nude images and skip over the variation and multiple presences/outfits within the series. In several frames, filled bookcases come into focus behind Piper's body. From Piper's 1981 description, we understand that the photographs were made over a period of several months. Set in the sequence in which they are arranged in the folio, the figure in the photographs recedes becoming more and more ethereal and less discernable. About this threat of disappearance, Kobena Mercer asks “when Piper's self seems to

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<sup>57</sup> This description is based on the prints in the collection of the Whitney. It is interesting to note however that the set held by MoMA and on display for *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Institutions, 1965-2016* demonstrate noticeable variation because of the way that retouching has been handled on the atmospheric passages in the prints revealing an almost painterly approach to dust spots that for example in the Whitney set appear as flecks of light. This formal comparison could hold greater consequence in future iterations of this project but currently is of note for the ways my scholarship is shaped by particular ephemera from the performance.

be pushed to the threshold of disappearance, what does she make visible to us about the material conditions of gendered and racial embodiment? If object and subject do not always remain still, in a fixed dualism, then who is being pushed, and who does the pushing?” Here, Mercer goes on to argue for identity as a “process phenomena rather than an unchanging property of the self.”<sup>58</sup> I would qualify this and add that we can see in Piper’s performances that identity as “process phenomena” shape shifts in relation to the structure of her conceptual bounds but in and through its ongoing direct address to the spectator.

The diffusive properties and multiple iterations of Piper’s *Food for the Spirit* importantly constitute what I call the ‘echo effect,’ an address to the spectator that is both material and relational in its iteration and echo across objects, an address for which, I argue the lost audio dimension is critical. One can appreciate the material relay in the way *Food for the Spirit* iterates and echoes across a range of objects: Piper’s writings, photographs, audio tape recordings, and their circulating histories in arts publications, reviews, scholarship, and exhibitions. The performance lives on in what might be seen as the queered evidence—an evidence bound to the concept of ephemera, or what José Muñoz describes as the “trace, the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumor.”<sup>59</sup> We know that at one point there were audio recordings, that Piper went through the process of making the recordings, but now they are lost, absent, or destroyed, and yet still known to have been.<sup>60</sup> While the audio recordings remain impossibly

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<sup>58</sup> Kobena Mercer, “Contrapositional Becomings: Adrian Piper Performs Questions of Identity” in *Adrian Piper: A Reader*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 103.

<sup>59</sup> José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 65; Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 31.

<sup>60</sup> In his discussion of *Food for the Spirit*, Berger mentions that “(the tape recordings were inadvertently erased by a boyfriend in the mid-1970s).” Maurice Berger, “Styles of Radical Will: Adrian Piper and the Indexical Present” in *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Press, 1999), 18.

distant, lost, or destroyed, the loss of the audio tapes still creates a recessed trace. Piper's recitation, her spoken words remain immanent as sonic substance of the photographs.<sup>61</sup> Kant's words may be identified, if we turn to Piper's annotated pages in the folio held in the private collection of Thomas Erben, the installation of her 1997 show which displayed Piper's copy of *Critique* replete with her transcriptions on display, or most recently to the digitization of Piper's annotated pages on display in *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions* on view at MoMA at the time of this writing.<sup>62</sup> And yet, as performance studies scholars have demonstrated, the performance of their vocal recitation continues to exceed its documents.<sup>63</sup> By insisting on thinking with the address of this trace, my ambition here is not to restore lost sound but, rather, to think with the ephemeral trace of these audio recordings as a critical part of *Food for the Spirit* as a complex assemblage that calls on the spectator-as-listener.

Let us begin with the echo of Adrian Piper's words. We note from the start that Piper's narrative account locates *Food for the Spirit* in the past tense: "This piece was performed in my

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<sup>61</sup> See Moten on phonic substance in *In the Break* and see Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) for a discussion of temporality within Moten's argument.

<sup>62</sup> This retrospective is expansive and long overdue. Curated by Christophe Cherix, Cornelia Butler and David Platzker *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965-2016* opens at the Museum of Modern Art (March 31-July 22, 2018) and travels on as *Adrian Piper: Concepts and Intuitions, 1965-2016* to the Hammer Museum of Art and Haus der Kunst in 2019.

<sup>63</sup> For a recent critique of the whiteness of feminist performance art scholarship see Uri McMillan's *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015) in which he proposes a purposeful self-objectification through his concept *performing objecthood* which he traces across a genealogy of black female artists. Within art history and performance studies see: Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2009); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998).

loft in NYC continually throughout the summer of 1971.”<sup>64</sup> We can infer from this that the performance of *Food for the Spirit* is composed not only of the study of Kant’s Critique, of yoga, and of fasting that is documented or made evident through photographs, annotations, or accounts but also of the remains that aren’t so easily locatable—and here I am thinking not only of Piper’s re-speaking of Kant but of the ephemeral of the work’s relational vocality, the seemingly scattered and diffused dailiness in its address. The desire to quote her description as a whole is reiterated in methods of display used in *America is Hard to See* (2015) where the object label recites the artist’s words. This reference, this recollection is repeated. While this recall, this return, recitation, repetition without reproduction, underscores varied understandings of temporality and history, I want to suggest that, from the very beginning, Piper’s *Food for the Spirit* performs a temporal lostness, pushing our present moment against not Barthes’s “that has been” but an action that is past from the start, as the scene of an already has been.

We can understand this temporal lostness as also signaling a kind of haunting that is constitutive of the work yet also understood as characteristic of performance art more generally. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan asserts, “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.” In other words, Phelan puts pressure on not only the temporality and locatability of performance but also on the means of its circulation via something like ephemera. In the case of Piper’s *Food for the Spirit*, the partial objects that remain may relay to Piper’s performance without reproducing it—or reproducing it in difference. Indeed, Phelan continues, “Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through

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<sup>64</sup> Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, 55.

disappearance.”<sup>65</sup> Phelan underscores the constitutive nature of disappearance in her formulation of performance. This constitutive quality of disappearance is not merely accretive but also exponential when thought in terms of what Piper called the “triple negation of colored women artists,” that is, in terms of the marginalization of black female artists from what is most often a Eurocentric narrativization of performance art and indeed histories of conceptual art which frequently occlude the presence of black artists and women of color artists.<sup>66</sup>

Further, *Food for the Spirit*'s performance of presence presents a problem of and for presence: museums display this series of photographs that document Piper's apartment performance in which she studies Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*—and while exhibition wall text indicates that the artist made audio recordings alongside the photographs—the audio recordings cannot be displayed. Any sense of the completeness of the work is left to rest on the visual as distinct or separate from the auditory and treated as though that is all that is necessary for display. The elision of not just the audio-tapes but also the performance as an appearance or address that rests on the vocal (including the photograph as a performance with an auditory dimension or sonic substance), opens up questions about what the primacy of the visual

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<sup>65</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

<sup>66</sup> Adrian Piper, “The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists (1990)” in *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Vol II: Selected Writings in Art Criticism 1967-1992* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 161-174. For a stunning and fresh critique of this phenomenon of erasure see Kenyan-born artist Wagechi Mutu's talk at the Brooklyn Museum during their exhibition *Global Feminisms*. See also Uri McMillan's *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Coco Fusco, “Performance and the Power of the Popular,” in Catherine Ugwu, ed., *Let's Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts; Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 158. Curator and scholar Valerie Cassel Oliver has curated multiple acclaimed exhibitions that complicate histories of black art since the 1960s. Here I am thinking especially of Valerie Cassel Oliver, *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* (2012); *Cinema Remixed and Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image* (2008) which she co-curated with Andrea Barnwell Brownlee; *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art since 1970* (2005); *Black/White Noise: Sound and Light in Contemporary Art* (2007).

in art criticism, history and curatorial practice distorts or renders impossible to apprehend. Much Piper scholarship attends to her performance works, photography, and philosophical inquiries and lists her audio work without attending to it. By asking us to listen to something that would seem not to produce sound this case study engages vocality as a potentiality to get at the acoustic address of *Food for the Spirit*, the way in which it calls for listening, and yet renders listening difficult.

One might object to this attention to the sonic trace as call, insisting that the photographs are sufficient unto themselves, even that they *are* the work, or that to listen to that which cannot be heard is to abandon the kind of material evidence that art historical discipline demands. One might take issue with an approach that seems to be founded on the inaccessible or the fugitive. However, I would argue that to reduce *Food for the Spirit* to the photographs and the photographs to the seeming closure of visual evidence is to miss the conceptual challenge of the work's address, an address that is not merely produced out of a performance method as challenge to epistemological practice but is issued as a challenge to method. It is critical to listen to *Food for the Spirit* precisely because of the way it poses method as *not* neutral but, rather, implicated in an ethics and politics of relation that demands a methodological engagement attuned to the work's implied sonic address. *Food for the Spirit* implies a sonic dimension, but does not materially produce it, and at the same time sonic immanence is central to its mode of address and the relation that address creates. Our methodological engagement is shaped by the mode of address that *Food for the Spirit* issues. This methodological relay as challenge to method is what I call the "echo effect." *Food for the Spirit* asks that we do the seemingly impossible, that we listen to that which is not readily available, that we revisit Piper's inhabitation of Kant, that we respond by listening to the photographs which are displayed, that we listen to the artists' voice

echo Kant.

Let us return to the photographs and reconsider the echo effect of their method as relational challenge to our method. The photographs both document Piper's performance and undermine the ability of photography to document. In Piper's writing, she indicates that the photograph and the audio recording are a means to record and anchor her physical presence. From her account, Piper repeats or in her words ritualizes this "reality check" (see Appendix B). These documents aimed to concretize her physical presence or in Piper's words, to "anchor [her]self in the physical world."<sup>67</sup> The photographs echo this ritualistic repetitive tone. Piper uses photographs to evidence a self through the confirmation promised by recording but in so doing, *Food for the Spirit* also undermines the potential for such fulfillment. Piper recalls reciting passages over and over until they became nothing but embodied presence: "I would repeat the passage from the critique over and over as a kind of a mantra... I repeated the passage until it became indexical; it became just words. You know, just what was going on right then, right now."<sup>68</sup> This repetition of the "passage" (as a passage) can be seen as repeating through until logos is loosed from sound, so that the function of language as a movement and vibration of the body exceeds its linguistic signification—a voicing in and through.<sup>69</sup> This is not to say that Piper's engagement with Kant becomes only a sensual embodied practice. Indeed Piper goes on to earn her doctorate in philosophy at Harvard where she continued her study of Kant which became the three-volume work now independently published. Rather, this is to say that within *Food for the Spirit*, Piper

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<sup>67</sup> Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight I, Selected Writings in Meta-Art 1968-2002* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996), 55.

<sup>68</sup> Adrian Piper, "Seminars with Artists" (Whitney Museum of American Art, March 27, 1990). Audio tape, Frances Mulhall Achilles Library Archives, Whitney Museum of American Art.

<sup>69</sup> Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

uses an echo effect of repetition and relay across incomplete recording as intervention in and for method.<sup>70</sup> Key to this echo effect of repetition and relay is the diffusiveness of Adrian Piper's *Food for the Spirit* and the challenge that issues to method in demanding specific forms of attention. The spectator-as-listener is called to a steady, slow, tracing of its multiple parts, bearing in mind that they are not held together but rather issue a dispersed echo relayed across time and location through the methodological challenge of recitation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

## II. *Food for the Spirit* as Call to Become Self-Reflexive Subjects

Piper's intricate and tightly looped script lace the pages of her 1965 edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, an English translation by Norman Kemp Smith.<sup>71</sup> The paperback is physically small, the cover is worn and emblazoned with a vividly kitsch abstraction: a lavender, magenta, and turquoise oval. Piper's marginalia include emphatic exclamations such as "NB!!!" Piper repeatedly underlines and circles the text, evidencing not only her engaged reading but a back and forth conversation. In some instances, Piper crosses out words or rewrites a passage in her own words. Kobena Mercer notes, "Far from meekly agreeing with Kant, Piper presents the detached pages from her paperback copy of *Critique of Pure Reason* as evidence of an intensely interrogative relationship to the text...the contents of the

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<sup>70</sup>Adrienne Edwards draws on Piper's critique of Kant to frame her lecture on *Food for the Spirit*, as a part of "99 Objects: Adrienne Edwards on *Food for the Spirit* by Adrian Piper" The Whitney Museum of American Art, May 29, 2015, accessed June 2015.  
[http://whitney.org/WatchAndListen/AudioGuides?play\\_id=1280](http://whitney.org/WatchAndListen/AudioGuides?play_id=1280)

<sup>71</sup> The cover of Piper's copy is included in the ring binder: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (St. Martin's Press, 1965).

*Food for the Spirit* ring binder testify to a struggle of a “me” who has tested the extent to which the artist’s socially embodied “I” can identify with the Kantian ideal: a transcendental self that overcomes all limitations of time and place in its quest for true knowledge.”<sup>72</sup> To be sure Piper’s description of *Food for the Spirit* and the remaining ephemera—photographs, writing, annotated pages from her copy of the *Critique*—appear as attempts to evidence or demarcate what she calls “the physically embodied Adrian Piper.” Piper writes, “The sight and sound of me, the physically embodied Adrian Piper, repeating passages from Kant reassured me by demarcating the visual, verbal, and aural boundaries of my individual self...”<sup>73</sup> This needed reassurance Piper produces in *Food for the Spirit* but also in *Catalysis* actions (1970-73) and *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City* (1970) is not confined to her praxis but is also evidenced in works such as Vito Acconci’s *Trademarks* (1970) and Chris Burden’s *Shoot* (1971) as Conceptual art abandoned material objects in favor of pure ideas.<sup>74</sup> In Mercer’s estimation, scholarship on Piper tends to be compromised in part because of a “historiographic imbalance” that separates discourse on minimalist and conceptual art from discourse on performance or body-art “along the lines of a mind/body split.”<sup>75</sup> Piper’s works actively shift these paradigms. To refer to Piper as an artist philosopher is not new. Piper addresses this in her essay “On Wearing Three Hats” wherein she discusses her practice as an artist, philosopher and yogi (since beginning this research, the Adrian Piper Research Archive in Berlin has also announced the forthcoming publication of a six-volume series of her collected writings in the areas of art, philosophy, yoga,

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<sup>72</sup> Kobena Mercer, “Contrapositional Becomings: Adrian Piper Performs Questions of Identity,” 127.

<sup>73</sup> Adrian Piper, “Food for the Spirit” see Appendix B.

<sup>74</sup> Mercer, “Contrapositional Becomings: Adrian Piper Performs Questions of Identity,” 121.

<sup>75</sup> Mercer, “Contrapositional Becomings: Adrian Piper Performs Questions of Identity,” 103.

and autobiography).<sup>76</sup> Notably, *In the Margins Behind the Lines: Collected Writings* offers a new approach to Piper's oeuvre, placing what have been previously fairly segregated bodies of work in art and philosophy side by side. As this title conjures, Piper is both working within and from, in the back, the beyond or 'behind', positioning herself in multiple locations. As these projects suggest, even to collect the dispersion of Piper's practice is to confront the site of the self/the work as dispersed, conflicted, and unsettled.

In *Food for the Spirit* we see both the use of recitation and recording to demarcate or produce a self and the use of that documentation as dispersal that moves toward a disappearance—as her figure fades sequentially across the documenting photographs, the audio tapes are lost or destroyed, and Piper has never made specification of which passages she recited part of the publication or display. Assuming the passages Piper repeated are culled from the pages torn from her copy of Kant's *Critique* and collected in the ring binder we might see her notations as a cue toward the mantra she selected. One might attempt to hear her voice repeating these passages—thinking *aha!* This sounds right! At the same time, it is precisely Piper's choice to withdraw the audio recordings from the scene that prompts consideration of the ways in which vocality issues queerly and amorphously across the media present in the space of the gallery.

If we can speak generally about Kant's first *Critique* we can understand it as a study of metaphysics which Kant defines as “the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience.”<sup>77</sup> For Kant, metaphysics is *a priori* knowledge, knowledge that is independent of experience which he associates with reason. On the other hand, Kant mistrusts *a posteriori* knowledge that is gained through the senses, deeming it unreliable and non-universal. This

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<sup>77</sup> “Immanuel Kant” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/#KanProThePurRea>

skepticism of the senses and commitment to reason can be understood as an expression of Enlightenment ideals while reconciling modern science (particularly Newtonian and Copernican) with modern moralism and religion. Kant argues that these domains can exist simultaneously and harmoniously. We might understand Piper's *Food for the Spirit* as a feminist critique of Kant's *Critique* through its method of inserting not only her body, but also her voice into Kant's *Critique* and using her vocality to differentiate and alter the material in an active reworking of his text. And we might take the radical re-working of Kantian rationalism to be a matter of Piper's method, her insertion not only of the documentation of the performance into Kant's text but the expansive inclusion in her durational performance of the everyday to challenge the exclusion of the non-universal, the experiential, and the sensual. But Piper's radical, feminist re-working of Kantian rationalism is not merely a matter of her method of performance as insertion but of her method of performance as dispersion, an echo effect of challenge to method that issues in the contingent relay of its call to us across what remains.

One of the things that remains is Piper's own writing on *Food for the Spirit* which first circulated in 1981, and her continued philosophical inquiry and scholarship on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* which she self-published as a two-volume work titled *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*.<sup>78</sup> Piper creates a formulation that does not allow for sight to be severed from the other senses. Piper's critical work with the senses foregrounds questions about access to the universal within Enlightenment discourse. This relationship between art and philosophy—within which I situate the terms of vocality and relation with ethical stakes—or the terms for listening, is one

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<sup>78</sup> Adrian Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self, Volume I: The Humean Conception* (Berlin: Adrian Piper Research Archive, 2013). This scholarship was previously under contract with Oxford University Press, for the details of the back and forth and subsequent publication by the APRA see: Adrian Piper, "Personal Chronology" in *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965-2016* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 312-324.

that extends across Piper's oeuvre. However, in *Food for the Spirit* these terms are made explicit in her engagement with Kant's text. *Food for the Spirit* performs both a study of Kant's *Critique* and an intervention in its terms. In Piper's writing on the performance (Appendix B) she describes the physical, affective, and psychological consequences of her rigorous study method and by relaying this information, she calls into question the formulation of the universal and its relationship to a particular body. Piper pushes Kant's formulation for transcendence, a formulation that might be seen as both unrealized and might seem to bar entry to a woman of color, and yet Piper's method produces a sounding through—a making out of the sonic excess that a woman of color's entry produces that relays to us. She both exposes the unworkability of the photographic index, of Kant's formulation through the evidence of her embodied experience, and works to loosen the ties of the particular so that some means of transcendence can occur. The loss of the self, giving up of the self, is both given and not and given out in a call to us.

Yet, the scholarship on the challenge of Piper's performance method rests on the contingency of Piper's critique of Kant's *Critique* on estimation of only one dimension of Piper's method, her insertion. In this critical work, we are presented with assessments of Piper's *Food for the Spirit* as either demonstrations of self-affirmation or demonstrations of the failure of self-affirmation. In his recent monographic study of Adrian Piper's oeuvre, art historian John Bowles argues that Piper's practice of photographing her reflection in the mirror and recording the recitation of passages from Kant's text both perform what Piper calls a 'reality check' and what he calls a crisis of Kantian subjectivity. That is, how can the social subject figured by Kant attain 'transcendental rationality'? Indeed, particularity poses a problem to Kant's universalist project. Bowles goes on to argue that Piper's performative actions in *Food for the Spirit* "unsettle both

Kant and Freud, if only for an instant.”<sup>79</sup> Bowles sets his reading of *Food for the Spirit* in contradistinction to the work of feminist scholars of performance such as Joanna Frueh, Peggy Phelan, and Amelia Jones who in his estimation have understood *Food for the Spirit* as successfully enacting self-affirmation.<sup>80</sup> Bowles provides a revisionist argument that considers Piper’s snapshots not as “proof of her agency and self-determination” but instead as “evidence of an unfulfilled desire to see them this way.”<sup>81</sup> Bowles’s critique situates Piper’s repetitive efforts as a demonstration of the failure of the photographic index. According to Bowles’s analysis of *Food for the Spirit*, Piper uses her personal experience to ground claims to Kant’s universality. Bowles links this practice with Butler’s feminist critique of Kant, in their questioning of the ways that particularity undoes the universalist project, revealing their incompatibility, “such that one requires the negation of the other.”<sup>82</sup> As Bowles points out, “these critiques open up the possibility for women and blacks to perform their exclusion from metaphysical discourse as a way of exposing and historicizing the silence it requires of them.”<sup>83</sup>

When curator and art historian Adrienne Edwards’ addressed *Food for the Spirit* in the context of the Whitney exhibition *America is Hard to See*, she took the opportunity to turn directly to Piper’s own writing by reading first the 1981 statement and then excerpts from Piper’s more conventional scholarship on Kant in the field of philosophy in her first of a two volume

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<sup>79</sup> Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, 221.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 206; Butler, “Restaging the Universal,” 23-24.

<sup>83</sup> Bowles, 206.

study, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, aloud.<sup>84</sup> These discussions of *Food for the Spirit* argue that Piper reveals the limitations of Kant's universalism, and the extent to which it disavows the presence of the black female body.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, philosopher Fred Moten writes that "Piper's performance work moves at the intersection of a feminist anti-slavery aesthetic and the emergence and convergence of conceptual and minimalist art."<sup>86</sup>

For black feminist photographer and scholar Lorraine O'Grady, the nude photographs that Piper made of herself mark "a paradigm for the willingness to look, to get past embarrassment and retrieve the mutilated body."<sup>87</sup> In his catalog essay for retrospective, Maurice Berger frames *Food for the Spirit* as a turning point in Piper's staging of relations between the author's body and the art object, a move that redirects attention from the "realm of the object or idea to include the body itself."<sup>88</sup> Berger's framing asks us to think *Food for the Spirit* and its movement between body and object in terms of black subjecthood and black subjectivities in post-Jim Crow era period. In contrast, Bowles's analysis of *Food for the Spirit* emphasizes that the work's repetition points to the central dilemma/conflict in the work—the claim to the universal via the position of a woman "who might or might not be black."<sup>89</sup> We can understand this phrasing as

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<sup>84</sup> Adrian Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self, Volume 1: The Humean Conception* (Berlin: Adrian Piper Research Archive, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Fred Moten, "Resistance of the Object: Adrian Piper's Theatricality" in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 233-254; John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Cherise Smith, "'The Politics of My Position': Adrian Piper and *Mythic Being*" in *Enacting Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 27-78; Uri McMillan, "Plastic Possibilities: Adrian Piper's Adamant Self-Alienation" in *Embodied Avatars*, 95-152.

<sup>86</sup> Moten, *In the Break*, 241.

<sup>87</sup> Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid," 156.

<sup>88</sup> Maurice Berger, "Styles of Radical Will." 18.

<sup>89</sup> Bowles, 206.

highlighting race both as a question, rather than a given, and as a cultural site of identification which Piper's work questions. Further, the categorization of art work within the constrictions of genre such as 'conceptual art' or identificatory terms—such as 'black art,' or 'feminist art' remain unresolved in the case of Piper, both because of the ways her work challenges such categorical terms and because her critical framing explicitly disarms them.<sup>90</sup>

This raises the problem of Piper's production of writing around her artwork, particularly after her 2015 decision to no longer talk about her work. Piper's work has too often been taken up as autobiographical rather than critical, and in my estimation, interprets her biography rather than listening or attending to the work itself. One can trace a fixation with interpreting the place of race and mapping it onto her body—or continuing to lay on the burdens of representation. Indeed Piper states, "Unfortunately, circulating those ideas within the shared discourse also had the unwanted side effect of sabotaging those ideas themselves, which mostly revolve around the concept of an unmediated relationships between subject and object in the indexical present—the immediate here and now..."<sup>91</sup> Instead, Piper wants to "hear what other people think about the work itself (not about me; about the work)."<sup>92</sup> Art historian Cherise Smith maintains that Piper's work has been ghettoized as work on 'identity politics' that forecloses possibilities for nuanced engagement.<sup>93</sup> And in cultural historian Uri McMillan's estimation, "the close adherence to Piper's words has resulted in commentary, however well intentioned, that too easily construes it

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<sup>90</sup> For example, Piper explicitly rejects such categorization in "Dear Editor, Please don't call me" January 1, 2003. [http://www.adrianpiper.com/dear\\_editor.shtml](http://www.adrianpiper.com/dear_editor.shtml)

<sup>91</sup> Adrian Piper, "Why I'm Not Talking About My Artwork (2015)" <http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/Piper2015OnNotTalkingAboutMyArtworkWebsite.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Cherise Smith, "'The Politics of My Position': Adrian Piper and *Mythic Being*" in *Enacting Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 27-78.

as what it has become—a think piece on race and racism in line with her work since the 1980s—at the expense of what it began as: a bodily and psychological experiment in transcending the boundaries between subjecthood and objecthood to become an art object.”<sup>94</sup>

To treat *Food for the Spirit* as an experiment in becoming art object may still enclose the work even if it is as artwork. If we treat the *Food for the Spirit* as experiment it raises the question of the sensory relation not just of *Food for the Spirit* to Piper’s body, to the way that social body is claimed as black and as woman, to Kant’s *Critique* and to Piper’s writing on art but also of its relation to the world and to us. The question of sensory relation to the external is raised in Piper’s earlier performance *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City, NYC* (April 1970) in which Piper experimented with sensory deprivation. In reference to *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City, NYC* (April 1970), Piper states, “I have always had a strong individualist streak. My solution was to privatize my own consciousness as much as possible.”<sup>95</sup>

If we consider the strategy of isolation and sensory privation as key to the experiment of Piper’s performance of *Food for the Spirit*, it raises the question of alienation as a social experience (something felt by Piper or not) and alienation as an effect of the exercise of isolation as a technique of an experiment—an effect that affects. Fred Moten’s insight into Piper’s performance of art objecthood as a being for the beholder as an entrance into a scene with others is especially useful here because it points both to the condition of the work and the way in which Piper’s work engages us. Writing about *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City, NYC* (April 1970), Moten asserts:

For Piper, to be for the beholder is to be able to mess up or mess with the beholder. It is *always* the entrance into a scene, into the context of the other, of the object. This is a very

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<sup>94</sup> McMillan, 101.

<sup>95</sup> Adrian Piper, “Untitled Performance for Max’s Kansas City,” in *Out of Order*, 27.

different experience of beholding, a very different experience of the beholder, then that offered by Fried.<sup>96</sup>

From Moten's radical rewriting of Michael Fried's formulation of the relation to the beholder, we can consider the technique of isolation and sensory reclusion as no less an effect with public reach, as "an entrance into a scene, into the context of the other, of the object" to affect us.

To consider the affecting force of the technique of isolation, we might compare *Food for the Spirit* to *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* in which Piper dances in public spaces to the music in her head while waiting on line with an implied gathering of others. Piper recounts:

I listened to Aretha's version of "Respect" until I had it completely memorized and could hear the entire song in my mind at will. Sometimes it "turned itself on" without my willing it. However, the piece was performed only at those times when I did will it. The piece consisted of my listening to the song in my mind and simultaneously dancing to it. I did a mixture of the bugaloo, the Jerk, the Lindy, the Charleston, and the Twist, with a high degree of improvisation. I performed the piece while waiting on line at the bank, at the bus stop, and in the public library.<sup>97</sup>

An experiment based not on spatial seclusion but the reclusion of the sound that prompts the dancing, we can think of *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* as making isolation present and active with others, as a means of experimenting with isolating herself from an audience while also reaching out to them such that the present absence of music within shared space and the sharing of music within psychic space may coincide.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>97</sup> Adrian Piper, "Moving from solipsism to Self-Consciousness," September 1972, in "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object," 1970-1973, in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight, vol. 1, Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968-1992* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 48.

Listening here is a form of attention directed by the sharable positioning and movement of the body to the interior sound of Aretha's voice. Listening to that which is not immediately available 'in the air' could be understood in contrast to something like Anahid Kassabian's "ubiquitous listening" which is about the routine consumption that evades primary attention sounded exteriorly.<sup>98</sup> But there is also a way in which the reference to sound serves as a frame within which to listen. That is, it prompts the spectator to attend to the acoustic from wherever it may be issued. In *Food for the Spirit* the cue is issued across its dispersed remains. Follow this through]

By contrast, if the call to attend to sound that cannot be directly heard is issued by the dancing body in *Aretha Franklin Catalysis*, *Food for the Spirit*'s use of the technique of isolation to exercise an experimental intervention into Kantian philosophy's potential severance of mind and body and its distancing of cognition from sensory distortion might seem to put us into the position of either witnessing Piper's use of her body as a contestation of the black feminine body's alienation from or silencing by Kantian philosophy or an interior and even anterior echoing of Kant's critique as monologue with Kantian philosophy that is addressed to itself in the mirror and to the extent that we are there it is only as potential reflecting mirror. But I want to think about the address of *Food for the Spirit* as contesting the mind-body-spirit division in the address of the echo of the hard to hear and indirectly felt as issuing from but also to a thinking body that is called to attend.

In thinking such a theory of attention I'd like to be careful not to underestimate the knowledge of the body and the unconscious, that is to say that this too is a form of thought and

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<sup>98</sup> Anahid Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

study. Licia Fiol-Matta's recent work on the 'thinking voice' can help us to return some of this logos to vocality.<sup>99</sup> The thinking voice calls us to thought.<sup>100</sup> Listening might not only be a practice of focus and attunement but also a tapping into the ways our bodies are already listening as a means of cognition. This is very relevant for the ways that Piper interjects her physical-sensorial responses to Kant's text—emphatically repeating the body in photographic documentation—the texture/grain of the voice and her textual account of cold sweat, dreams, and unconscious thought.

How this experimental call to an embodied listening as a process of cognition works might be understood to use the technique of isolation from the obvious intrusions of the social and political to question not just what body can be recognized to have access to “pure understanding” and transcendence in the sense of her body but also the question of ours. Piper has repeatedly underlined a passage wherein Kant articulates “pure understanding” in terms of recognition and understanding’s “necessary relation” to appearance: “We have therefore, to recognize that pure understanding, by means of the categories, is a formal and synthetic principle of all experiences, and that appearances have a necessary relation to the understanding.”<sup>101</sup> In the call of *Food for the Spirit*, Piper’s method interjects and troubles understanding in terms of appearance as a contingent matter of relation, disrupting the logic of transcendence that centralizes Kant’s *Critique*. Piper’s address extends—in 1971 to her image in the mirror, she addresses us through the photographs, her call—her query—and in turn, calls on us to become

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<sup>99</sup> Licia Fiol-Matta, *The Great Woman Singer: Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> Here I am also thinking with conversation at Alexandra Vazquez and Licia Fiol-Matta’s listening session “Overheard/Undertheorized: Feminist Listening” a Hemispheric Dialogue event held at the NYU Department of Performance Studies, Thursday, April 6, 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Piper’s annotations on her copy of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, 143.

‘reflexive subjects’. That is this initial call that Piper extends to us—a hailing into reflexivity—that occurs within *Food for the Spirit*, extends outward and implicates its spectators as listeners. To develop the call of the echo to become reflexive subjects as a social call for augmentation, I turn to the figure of Echo and her effects which I will address in five vectors.

### III. ECHO EFFECTS

#### 1. *Food for the Spirit* in terms of Narcissus versus Echo

The poet Ovid narrates the story of Echo alongside that of the more familiar Narcissus. While the story of Narcissus circulates widely via its foundational use in psychoanalysis, the story of Echo is often elided. We might see *Food for the Spirit* in terms of Narcissism and Narcissus’s half of the story, wherein Piper’s repeated return to the mirror and search for self-recognition hinges on misrecognition. By making an object of herself that she can judge as if seen by another, Piper uses the posturing of Narcissus to expose the alienated other within. But we might also read *Food for the Spirit* in terms of Echo’s elided part.

The mythology of Narcissus and Echo stages a larger thematic of enmeshment of sound and image. The division between them splits along the lines of gender and sense; the dominant, ostensibly separable or free-standing story of Narcissus which is sight or image, and the dependent, feminine, often elided Echo which is sound and speech. Echo’s ability to speak and sing freely has been revoked as punishment for having used ongoing speech to distract Hera, leaving Echo to repeat fragments of that which is already within circulation, that which has already been sounded. In Ovid’s account, Echo repeats back the ending of Narcissus’ call, a repetition fueled by a desire for love and recognition. Despite their absence, Piper’s audio recordings can be understood as an attempt to inhabit Kant’s *Critique* and establish the potential

for identification between Piper and Kant. Theoretical understandings of audio recording often linger on the ghostly status of a voice made both present and absent, highlighting the ventriloquizing nature of the audio tape as media, and the impossibility of making vocality fully available or present but instead drawing out the possibility of relation constitutes such a return.<sup>102</sup> While scholars have aligned *Food for the Spirit* with Adrian Piper's concept of the 'Indexical Present' it also presents a contradiction in the work because at the same time that Piper refers to the indexical potential of her technologies: photography and vocality, she also undermines their capacity for reliable confirmation. The anxiety of locatability is complicated by more than discourse. We can also understand this keeping from the listener as a form of opacity. Rather than negation, echo's trace lines the call. *Food for the Spirit* thus opens a way of thinking about not just self and other, but also self as other—that part of the othered self that might have a claim on the universal, and that makes an appeal to be seen and heard differently.

## **2. *Food for the Spirit* as a productive echo**

The work's referents do not cohere. Echo is productive without reproduction. Piper's repeated photographic and audio recordings, and their repeated failure of confirmation, incite a reverberative repetition fueled by Echo's effects—effects both in terms of the pieces that remain—the photographs, the first-person narrative of Piper's text, the having been or once was of her recitation—and effects as the continued implications of her sounding. That is, we find that in an effort to affirm the self, Piper repeats the loss of self. To relate the visual repetition of the

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<sup>102</sup> I am interested in developing this further, possibly in relation to Jill H. Casid's discussions of imaginative projection through contemporary uses of old technologies in her most recent book. See Jill H. Casid, *Scenes of Projection: Recasting the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) and especially the conclusion, "Queer Projection: Theses on the 'Future of an Illusion,'" 225-44.

photographs assembled to the acoustic echo that Piper produces is to reckon with the reverberation of phonic substance in the photograph. Piper's inflected vocality—as materiality with racial-gendered-affective force—returns Kant's text differently. That is, Piper's repetition of Kant's *Critique* produces an echo effect which does not reproduce his *Critique* but produces an echo with critical difference. This production, is also, a loss of a self; a being through negation, living through loss of self, and presencing through absence. In other words, echo's iteration reiterates with difference, the bounce is not total reflection but an effect that reverberates and thus fragments and intervenes.

### **3. *Food for the Spirit* in terms of Echo not just as repetition but as an initiating call**

In Adriana Cavarero's critique of the 'devocalization of logos' across the history of philosophy she proposes the embodied politics of the voice to reconfigure discourse. In her analysis, Cavarero suggests an agential interpretation of Echo as acoustic mirror that alters and invokes. Cavarero observes "echo thus makes itself into a resonance according to a musical rhythm. As a pure voice that refracts another voice. Echo makes the musicality of language sing."<sup>103</sup> Indeed, in the etymology of the Latin *vox*, we also find the meaning of *vocare* "to call," or "invoke." Cavarero asserts, "before making itself speech, the voice is an invocation that is addressed to the other and that entrusts itself to an ear that receives it."<sup>104</sup> Following Cavarero's understanding of echo, *Food for the Spirit* not only produces an alteration to Kant's *Critique* but also initiates a call to invoke and enjoin its spectator-as-listener to become a reflexive subject.

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<sup>103</sup> Adrianna Cavarero, "Echo; or, On Resonance" in *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans by Paul Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 165.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

#### **4. *Food for the Spirit's* issuing of echo's call as a call to ethics**

In her essay, "Echo," Gayatri Spivak returns to Ovid's story and to Freud's essay "On Narcissism" to demonstrate that the story of Narcissus is an instantiation of 'the construction of the self as an object of knowledge'. Against the Narcissus story, Spivak positions the story of Echo as opening the possibility of deconstruction and *différance*; thus, Echo is figured as not just repetition but invitational, as not just a relay but a call that asks for a response. Following Spivak, we can also understand this call as the call of ethics.<sup>105</sup> Spivak ventriloquizes Juno/Hera speaking to Echo, "you can no longer speak for yourself. Talkative girl, you can only give back, you are the respondent as such."<sup>106</sup> Spivak writes, "Ethics are not a problem of knowledge but a call of relationship (without relationship, as limit case). But the problem and the call are in a deconstructive embrace: Narcissus and Echo."<sup>107</sup> Here, rather than delineating right from wrong, Spivak points us to ethics as the problem and practice of relation. In listening to *Food for the Spirit's* call as a call to ethical relation, the address that Piper extends is social, it implicates us, asking that we listen to her call.

#### **5. *Food for the Spirit's* call to ethics as a working of methexis**

If *Food for the Spirit's* echo effect issues a call to ethics, Piper's use of vocality enfolds the spectator-as-listener into its ethical hold. Echo's repetition is also its own beginning in

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<sup>105</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Echo" in *New Literary History*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Culture and Everyday Life (Winter, 1993), 17-43.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 32.

calling for not just response but a joining in. We can understand this call as situated within what José Esteban Muñoz has called the “methexis” of queer media. In Muñoz’s words, “It is imperative to think beyond the representational and instead imagine a queer media that is methetic in nature.”<sup>108</sup> *Methexis* is an aesthetic term derived from Greek tragedy which describes how the individual participates in a larger form and in its original context literally means group sharing, accounting for the way in which an audience takes part in a drama, adding to it and augmenting it. Muñoz uses the term to manifest a commons within the space of performance. To frame *Food for the Spirit’s* call as queer is to call out the subaltern positioning of acoustics that Piper’s use of vocality enacts, and its torqueing across and through media. That is, rather than proposing the artwork as queer for its relation to an identity formation, this is to recognize Piper’s use of vocality as a call that paradoxically brings together and estranges. By turning to Muñoz’s formulation of a methexic queer media, we can in turn expose the relation that *Food for the Spirit* fashions with the spectator-as-listener as queer and as employing vocality as a technology of relation that produces. But further, the media to which we turn our attention—the vocality of the call—in its metamorphic instabilities and writhing potentials, could also be understood as queer. Muñoz continues:

Queer media must call for participation, vivification, and an expanded sense of a queer commons that is not quite present but altogether attainable. It is urgent that the lulling sound of the laugh track be put aside so we can engage in the production of a vitally methetic queer media that is equally turbulent and productive.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> José Muñoz, “Toward a Methexic Queer Media” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Volume 19, Number 4 (2013), 564.

<sup>109</sup> José Muñoz, “Toward a Methexic Queer Media” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Volume 19, Number 4 (2013), 564.

Piper's *Food for the Spirit* asks that we listen to that which 'is not quite present' and rather than producing the 'lulling sound' of the laugh track, or what Piper would refer to as easy listening art, Piper asks the audience to respond to its difficulty.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the difficult vocality and method of performance as dispersion that Adrian Piper deploys in *Food for a Spirit* produces multiple echo effects, multiple calls: a call to reflexivity, a call to ethics, and an ethics as a working of methexis. To consider the affecting force of Piper's technique of isolation, I compared *Food for the Spirit* to *Aretha Franklin Catalysis*, two works which call us in and ask that we consider how the body carries a sense of vocality, a vocality that might be felt but not directly heard. It might seem that in *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* it is easier to locate the distanced sound to which Piper dances. Here the motion of her dance becomes a form of listening and yet in *Food for the Spirit* the apparent stillness in which Piper photographs her reflection holds onto the sonic event that is breath—that is also what Kant understands as the animating principle of spirit, and what might connect the recitation of Kant's *Critique* to yogic philosophy, Piper's other form of study. Reverberating from *Food for the Spirit*'s call to reflexivity, in the following chapter I turn to a consideration of a call toward breath as a call to a body politic in *Grass Breathing* a short film work by Ana Mendieta. This micro-movement of breath also becomes a form of vocality that continues to call us in.

## Chapter Two

### A Call to Breath: Ana Mendieta's *Grass Breathing* (1974)

Alla cuando se muere  
la tierra que nos  
cubre habla

y cubierta de la tierra  
que me aprisiona  
se siente al muerto  
palpitar bajo ella

--Ana Mendieta<sup>110</sup>

In this poem first written in a 1981 journal and not published until decades after her death, Ana Mendieta writes of an earth that speaks; an earth that imprisons the writing 'I'. It remains unclear where the poem's addressed "we" (*nos*) and where its "me" are located. Indeed, position (relational, spatial, metaphysical, geopolitical) is troubled within the space of the poem. And this troubling of position also troubles both sensory apprehension and agency in terms of what feels, what moves, and what speaks.

In its movement from the first stanza to the second, the poem oscillates between a 'there' where the earth speaks and the inferred not-there but 'here' of its writing where the dead are felt palpitating. This flux of address and location also de-positions us by de-stabilizing our position

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<sup>110</sup> Ana Mendieta, journal entry from 20 March 1981, later reproduced in the 2013 exhibition catalog *Traces: Ana Mendieta* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 210-211. First written in Spanish in her journal, and later translated for an exhibition catalog, I have chosen to work with the Spanish because the positioning of *la tierra, nos, y yo* remain within open linguistically. I also include here my own translation which departs substantially from the one published in the catalog which I found to stray from the Spanish in distracting ways. My translation:

There when you die  
the earth that covers us  
speaks

and cover of earth  
that imprisons me  
you feel the dead  
Palpitate under her

as readers and addressees. Are we there or here? In the earth or above? Are we alive or dead? Does the second stanza represent an address to us as readers or to the earth? Is it the earth that feels the dead palpitate under her—and is the ‘her’ here the speaker or la tierra or both? What can be understood as the dis- and re-orienting work its enfolding address positions us as both listeners and participants, both above and within the earth. We are both hailed as an assembly (a “nos”) by the first stanza and yet a “we” that, if we are to receive what is spoken, are placed in the position of being with the dead in an earth that speaks (and perhaps palpitates the dead). What is received in this address is not so much heard as felt in that palpitation. As the poem performs that shift from an earth that speaks to an earth that covers and perhaps also feels with us in the earth and with the dead, this positional destabilization of who/what is speaking and who/what is feeling prompts an examination of interdependency. I take Mendieta’s poem to importantly position us as readers and listeners to feel; to feel toward the other—the earth and the dead-- as moving (palpitating) and speaking forms.

This poem and the trouble it offers to translation, the trouble of its address, the trouble of where it is located, and, even more, where we, the poems addressees are located in relation to it, what we are positioned to hear or not hear, feel or not feel, sets up what I argue is a device central to Mendieta’s 1974 film *Grass Breathing* and with implications for her larger oeuvre; a device of re-situating the spectator as frustrated in terms of what we can apprehend. Mendieta does this variously, but of interest to me is her configuration of a collective that is neither dead nor quite alive and that has a form of vocality beyond speech that is both hard to express and hard for ‘us’ to hear.

The geopolitical and relational trouble that Mendieta’s poem produces, by the disturbance of relation between figure, ground, and perspectival positioning of the spectator it develops,

helps us to understand the de-and re-positioning of the spectator as frustrated listener I argue is integral to *Grass Breathing*. Ana Mendieta made *Grass Breathing* while a graduate student in the Intermedia Program led by Hans Breder at the University of Iowa, a program which Breder describes as emphasizing the active engagement of the spectator as participant:

Intermedia engages the spectator as participant. It is collaborative, conceptually grounded, performative, ritualistic, site-specific. It exists in liminal space where the interplay of two or more media propagate new ideas, new forms, new ways of seeing and being.<sup>111</sup>

It was during this time in the Iowa Intermedia Program that Mendieta began her singular practice as a performance artist and developed her diverse oeuvre that can now be recognized for its influential contributions to the development of land art, performance art, film and video, and feminist practices of the 1970s and 80s.<sup>112</sup> Primarily shot with a Bolex Super 8 camera, Ana Mendieta's films are rarely any longer than a roll of film (approximately three minutes and twenty seconds) predominantly shot in color; and with one exception, Mendieta's films are cataloged as silent. The Bolex Super 8 camera Mendieta used produces 18 frames a second and does not record sound. But perhaps the least interesting way to understand their ostensible silence would be as a passive by-product of the medium. Instead, I approach Mendieta's *Grass Breathing* as a decisively composed film.

Within the context of Mendieta's oeuvre, *Grass Breathing* is distinctive and deserves attention for its particular difficulty in positioning of the spectator in a troubling, even

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<sup>111</sup> Hans Breder, "Intermedia: Enacting the liminal. *Performing Arts Journal* 17 (2/3), 112-20, 115. Quoted in Leticia Alvarado, "...Towards A Personal Will To Continue Being 'Other'": Ana Mendieta's Abject Performances, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 24:1, 65-85, 71.

<sup>112</sup> Mendieta adamantly rejected such categorization, terms, and movements. See conversation with Joan Marter (February 1, 1985), Ana Mendieta Archive. Quoted in Stephanie Rosenthal's essay "Ana Mendieta: Traces", 15. Michael Rush also addresses this rejection of categorization in his essay "Eros, Death, and Life: The Films of Ana Mendieta" in his catalog essay for *Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta* (University of Minnesota and University of California Press, 2015), 20.

dislocating way as a spectator unable to attain either a position of optical mastery or hear the breathing which the title and choreographed motion cue us to expect. In considering the problem of the ethical and geopolitical implications of this positioning, this chapter treats the film's call to breath in excess of language that asks the spectator to breathe with the grass, with what it may cover, and with what extends beyond the frame of perceptibility. This chapter proceeds by first spending time with the film. I then situate the film within the critical literature on Mendieta's film works. In the last section, I develop the implications of how the film positions the spectator as a frustrated listener who is called to breath.

In *Grass Breathing*, Mendieta positions the spectator above an area of grass. The frame is filled from edge to edge with green grass cut short like a lawn (Figure 15). The short color film, which is about three minutes and twenty seconds, begins with a moment of stillness; and then almost immediately, the grassy ground begins to rise and fall. The framing does not stray for the duration of the film which is just over three minutes; instead, we are given a consistent camera angle that positions us looking down on the grass as it moves. The rhythmic movement becomes increasingly rapid and appears more and more labored before slowing again and coming to a rest. With the motion, a subtle diagonal cut reveals the sod as a covering. The cut in the sod crosses the frame from the lower left toward the upper right and exposes a shallow dark recess. What the sod *covers* is not revealed, but importantly the grass/sod is revealed *as cover*.

While the repetition across Ana Mendieta's work of the use of her own body often merged with or covered by ground might lead us to presume that there is a human body breathing beneath the sod which makes the grass move, within the scope of the film, it importantly remains unresolvable what or who, if anything, is under the cover of grass. As the film's constraint allows us to find no human or post-human form that might produce the

movement as breath, the film produces the uneasy effect that, as the title prompts, it is the grass that moves and breathes.

The timing of the movement feels attuned to the length of the film, a calculated choreographed breath that sets itself in relation to the media in its pacing. Indeed, Mendieta's use of Super 8 gives a particular texture, coloring, and vibrational pull to her film works. The small size of Super 8 film and the way the camera arm advances the film yields a jumpiness and flutter to its appearance in projection. This subtle vibration adds to a sense of pulsing breath and energy in *Grass Breathing*. Since the first large scale public screening of Mendieta's film works in 1990 at Pat Hearn's gallery where they were screened on ½ inch video, *Grass Breathing* was transferred to ¾-inch U-Matic videotape, and later digitized as part of a collection compiled by Electronic Arts Intermix. The distinctive vibration is maintained across these multiple modes of reproduction. Even in instances such as *Grass Breathing* which is filmed from a fixed tripod, the frame jumps and vibrates ever so slightly. The vibrational movement of the Super 8 film echo's the movement of breath that heaves the grassy earth.

Further, Mendieta's use of the vibrational movement of Super 8 film brings attention to the surface and materiality of the film—not just as a tactile medium but as a medium that emerges out of temporality in motion. This pulsing, however fast, is repeated in the breathing motion of the ground. As there is a rhythm that is conveyed in the way that film records motion, the up and down, in and out of breath, in *Grass Breathing*, the effect is that of the film less registering the breathing motion of the grass than of its breathing with the grass.

To demonstrate what is distinctive about the material, posthuman agency of *Grass Breathing*, let us compare it to what might be understood as the most proximate of Mendieta's film work: Mendieta's *Burial Pyramid* also made in 1974 (figure 16). *Burial Pyramid* begins

with the view of a partially buried Mendieta beneath rocks laying diagonally on a grassy and rocky slope. The movement of her paced and labored breathing moves the rocks which begin to fall away from her body. From the beginning to the end of the short film, Mendieta's body becomes increasingly visible over the course of its roughly 3:20 minute duration (figure 17). There are certain key similarities: *Burial Pyramid* is also a short Super 8 film that proceeds as a choreography of paced but labored breathing. The camera angle governing the movement of both films produces a diagonal that crosses the frame.

However, the ways in which *Grass Breathing* and *Burial Pyramid* differ are not merely striking: attending to what makes *Grass Breathing* distinctive opens a path to a radically different assessment of Mendieta's work that can think beyond the artist's body to take seriously its experimentation with the address to and positioning of the spectator. *Burial Pyramid* works with the specific architecture at the site of a Zapotec city-state in Yagul, México, situated on the slopes of the Tlacolula valley in central Oaxaca.<sup>113</sup> Mendieta traveled to México to produce work in 1971-1977, and returned again in 1980.<sup>114</sup> Mendieta's *Burial Pyramid* activates this deeply historical terrain. It also produces a figure against its historically specified ground.

By contrast, *Grass Breathing* maintains the unresolvability of its ground. Not only is the location unspecified but the restriction of the frame and generic, stereotypical quality of the grass refuses the effect of naturalizing place. Rather than giving us referential anchor, the film produces a field of textural color. While both films are paced by breath, *Grass Breathing* clearly

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<sup>113</sup> Yagul is described by Archaeologists as containing pre-Columbian archaeological complexes, pre-historic caves, and rock shelters See: "Zona Arqueológica de Yagul" <http://inah.gob.mx/es/zonas/89-zona-arqueologica-de-yagul> "Prehistoric Caves of Yagul and Mitla in the Central Valley of Oaxaca" <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1352>

<sup>114</sup> In Mexico, Mendieta made work in Yagul, Mexico City, La Ventosa, Salina Cruz, and Cuilapan de Guerrero. See map p. 186 in *Traces: Ana Mendieta*. (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 186.

departs from the representation or outlining of a corporeal figure and hinges instead on a choreography of movement—that of the breath—across a textural field of grass without clear ground. To presume that the grass moves and breathes because Mendieta is underneath is to overwrite *Grass Breathing* with a projection of the figural which it explicitly resists.

What prompts the desire to locate Mendieta's body within the frame? What prompts the presumption that Mendieta is there? We don't know that Mendieta is there unless we read about the making of the piece or set it in the context of her performance works that position either her body or an imprint of her body within a larger frame. But *formally* it remains unclear who or what breathes—except for the title which cues us to turn to the grass. While *Grass Breathing* performs with both these material forms—earth and body—it does so in distinct ways that depart from the figuration and use of iconography that defines so much of Mendieta's work and shapes the criticism and discourse surrounding her oeuvre. I'd like to hold onto the tension created here—through the expectation that Mendieta's works will reveal a body, to the possibility that the grass is breathing (as the title cues), and to the potential that there is nothing underneath and that the earth is 'palpitating' to recall Mendieta's words. That is, I understand the unresolvability of the covering and its ground as all to the point. Here, as in the poem with which I opened, we cannot use sight for confirmation but instead must feel movement to infer presence. But further, the question of 'where is Ana Mendieta?' a question that haunts the discourse around Mendieta's work is not only unresolvable but also obscures what might be the more pressing and less often addressed question: what are the terms of her address to and her positioning of the spectator?

### **'Situating' Mendieta's Call**

To responsibly situate Ana Mendieta is the task that arrests much of the scholarship surrounding her work. As a performance artist born in Cuba, Mendieta uses complex cultural referents in much of her oeuvre to challenge notions of history, race, and nation her work in ways that have sparked much debate around questions of origin, essentialism/anti-essentialism, and intersectional feminism. Any account of Mendieta's work following her death in 1985 includes a paragraph, sometimes apologetically because of its requisite review of her 'origins' in Cuba, her dislocation at the age of twelve, a brief bit about her time in Iowa working with Hans Breder, and her violent death during what gets called a domestic dispute with her husband Carl Andre, a successful minimalist sculptor who went un-convicted for her murder. Mendieta died violently and unexpectedly. This you know. The telling of this can be accomplished with different words and to different ends; her biography has received as much attention as her aesthetic production to the point of eclipsing it.

Indeed, *Grass Breathing* lays such a lure for us with the tease of the visible seam of its layer of grassy sod as cover that would seem to direct us to search not just elsewhere but to Mendieta's own body for the source of the film's movement as breath. And, surely, we already know that the artist buried herself. To study her work is to know that Mendieta often builds an imprint of her body, indexing her presence/absence, or what José Muñoz calls "markings of world", "after-burns of mimetically generated intensity"—the pressing of force against a ground.<sup>115</sup> If we understand the ground of the work as Ana Mendieta's entombed, buried, or submerged body breathing it is human breath that moves through the dirt or earth and heaves the grass up and down. Taking Mendieta's body as the ground work positions her breathing for the

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<sup>115</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, "Vitalism's After-burn: The Sense of Ana Mendieta." *Women & Performance* 21, no. 2 (2011): 192.

earth/dirt and grass or as a mechanism for pointing out the vitality already present therein, using her breathing body to performatively point to the earth and grass as already breathing and speaking. But to situate Mendieta's body as the ground for *Grass Breathing* is not only to fall into the film's own trap but to, thereby, refuse to attend to its difficult call to the spectator.

Nearly all the scholarship on Mendieta seeks to locate her, the artist, but has rarely engaged the agency of the work itself and the ways in which she/it positions and thus locates us. Despite extended discussions of the sensuality of Mendieta's work there has been very little attention given to aurality or to her deployment of vocality.<sup>116</sup> Very little attention has been paid to *Grass Breathing* which can be seen as fairly exceptional within her larger oeuvre for its exclusion of figuration. However, it is also a work that uses a device of choreographed breathing that is repeated in other key works including *Burial Pyramid* (1974) and *Genesis (Buried in Mud)* (1975). Nonetheless, scholars have not yet directly addressed Mendieta's use of vocality and breath. Sustained consideration of these tactics is essential to understanding the ethico-political import of *Grass Breathing*.

In "Ana Mendieta: The Politics of Spirituality," art critic John Perreault analogizes what he characterizes as Mendieta's subjective camerawork, her style, to voice: "The camera, even without a soundtrack, speaks to us loudly and clearly in Mendieta's passionate voice."<sup>117</sup> In a description of *Sweating Blood* (1973) he describes the vibrating quality of the super 8 film in terms of breath: "there is a slight movement of breathing and the camera breathes too."<sup>118</sup> In a

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<sup>116</sup> Discussions of Isaac Julian's films have informed my reading here for the ways in which they have been said to elaborate a tangle of the senses. See Charlotte Ickes "Sonic Stiches: Isaac Julian, his mother, and her "Creolized" sound" *Women & Performance*, 24:2-3, 258-262.

<sup>117</sup> John Perreault, "Ana Mendieta: The Politics of Spirituality," in *Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

section subtitled “I can’t breathe,” Perreault describes *Grass Breathing* briefly alongside *Genesis (Buried in Mud)* (1975) and *Burial Pyramid* (1974) as examples in which “she explores the experience of arising from nature as well as dissolving into nature.”<sup>119</sup> Perreault draws direct relation between the use of breath and Mendieta herself as the origin and the end of the experience which, as I will argue, blocks recognition of how *Grass Breathing* avoids the figure to make its call to us the central subject.

Recent scholarship (Muñoz, Alvarado, León) has argued for Mendieta’s central role in intersectional feminism, underscoring her curatorial work in addition to her groundbreaking oeuvre. Still others have studied Mendieta’s work for its place within postmodernism’s turn away from the easily commodified single art object, and toward a dispersed and expanded aesthetic practice that is deployed across media (Blocker, Miwon Kwon, Bryan-Wilson). And though most widely known for her “earth-body sculptures” and *Siloueta Series*, over the past five years her relatively understudied films have received unprecedented attention. Raquel Cecilia Mendieta had all 104 Mendieta films digitally transferred, and with scholars Lynn Lukkas and Howard Oransky, curated the exhibition *Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta*, the first exhibition in the U.S. dedicated explicitly to Mendieta’s films. First on view in the Katherine Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota before traveling to UC-Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, the exhibition’s showcase of twenty-one of the artist’s approximately one hundred films makes a strong argument for Mendieta’s significance as a filmmaker for her exploration of the medium to address the themes of absence, presence,

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 39.

transience and permanence that haunt her oeuvre, helping to establish Mendieta as a leading artist in the history of 1970s and 80s film and video art.<sup>120</sup>

Scholars have traced the anxiety of displacement as foundational to Ana Mendieta's aesthetic practice as a Cuban diaspora artist subject to the displacements of Cold War politics. Scholars Jane Blocker, Miwon Kwon, and Rebecca Schneider (among others) set Mendieta's oeuvre in relation to aesthetic practices that highlight ephemerality and disappearance.<sup>121</sup> This is also endemic among artists pushing at the materiality of the art object during the 1970s—as the object of art is displaced, the loss of the object is retraced. The erasure of the body in Ana Mendieta's works is interpreted to investigate identity as unstable, impermanent, and “realized in dispersal” which is related to the ambivalence of post-modernity but also to the stuff of exile and diaspora. Indeed, Jane Blocker's monographic study of Mendieta's work argues that this sense of loss is central to Mendieta's oeuvre, and central to its meaning.<sup>122</sup> This is what Jane Blocker refers to as Mendieta's dissolutive practice, “performative practice of marking through disappearance.”<sup>123</sup> And I would add, it is not necessarily to understand it.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Guelda Voien, “The Remarkable Story of a Rebel Artist, Her Mysterious Death and Cult Resurgence” *The Observer*, November 30, 2015. <http://observer.com/2015/11/three-decades-after-her-sordid-death-ana-mendietas-work-is-finally-getting-its-due/>

<sup>121</sup> Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?*; Rebecca Schneider, “The Secret's Eye” in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2010), 535-545; Miwon Kwon, “Bloody Valentines: Afterimages by Ana Mendieta” in *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>122</sup> Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>123</sup> Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 30.

<sup>124</sup> Here it is useful to think with Sandra Soto's notion of de-mastery, see: *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer: The De-Mastery of Desire* (Austin: University of Texas-Austin Press, 2010).

In an essay published just before his untimely death, queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz offers an understanding of Mendieta's *Siluetas* as a “deeply symbolic indentation in the world” that manifest the “ontological force of brownness as a mode of particularity in multiplicity” rather than a figurative representation.<sup>125</sup> Muñoz argues for understanding the intensity and vitalism of Mendieta's work as expressing the potential of brownness, a critical concept central to his unfinished manuscript *The Sense of Brown*. Muñoz describes the *Siluetas* as roughly outlining “something that was once present and is now absent or entombed but nonetheless partially unconcealed and lingering, like a visual echo.”<sup>126</sup> While visual echo begins to get at the potential of aural activation, Muñoz does not follow up with a direct discussion of sound or listening in relation to her work.

This chapter builds on this scholarship which has largely assessed her films as silent and, in so doing, left unattended Mendieta's use of the vocality implied in breath. In this chapter I understand vocality as the felt call issued by the movement of air in the inhalation and exhalation involved in the process of breathing. While the passage of air in, out, or through may produce audible sound through friction, I am interested in taking seriously the address of *Grass Breathing* in the passage of its call on the spectator as a frustrated listener who is positioned to feel but not hear what moves. Methodologically, I stay close to *Grass Breathing* to listen for the resonances of relation to the implicated spectator-as-listener. In attending to the way *Grass Breathing* situates the spectator as frustrated listener, I elaborate the ethical and political call that the

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<sup>125</sup> The essay is part of a special issue of *Women & Performance* dedicated to Mendieta's work and marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of her death, see: José Esteban Muñoz, “Vitalism's after-burn: The sense of Ana Mendieta”, *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* (21:2, 2011), 192.

<sup>126</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, “Vitalism's after-burn: The sense of Ana Mendieta”, *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* (21:2, 2011), 193.

vocative address of her work extends, suggesting that, if there is a body, it is a body politic summoned through the call to breathe with.

### **Being in Excess of Speech**

Though catalogued as silent, *Grass Breathing* is permeated with the movement of breathing that registers a form of vocality. The cataloging of the work as silent is not technically false: there is no ‘soundtrack.’ However, this categorization produces another kind of silencing, stilling, and even mortifying effect. Silence is often equated to death, wherein the absence of noise or sound equals the absence of life. John Cage famously says, “Until I die there will be sounds.”<sup>127</sup> As Craig Dworkin notes, Cage’s words echo the argument that Jacques Attali makes in *Noise* or Michel Serres’ concept of the parasite in which noise functions as an indicator of life.<sup>128</sup> Media that would seem to be silent—photography in particular—are frequently aligned with death.

I consider misunderstandings of *Grass Breathing* as “silent” to be crucial to address because of the ways that such categorization delimits our recognition of vocality and the capacity of vocal address to extend beyond the audible. This has serious ethical and political implications as, if and when consigned to the silent, the address of the inaudible can be ignored, consigned to the status of object, or rendered as “mute.”

That there would be a stake in a vocality that is inaudible in Mendieta’s work seems undeniable. How could Mendieta’s deployment of a vocality that is difficult to hear not be understood in relation to the overdetermined and repeated experience of not being listened to in

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<sup>127</sup> John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 8.

<sup>128</sup> Craig Dworkin, Ed, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 169n35.

the first place or, as Mendieta put it, “We will be ignored, but we will be here”?<sup>129</sup> Muñoz describes this ignored but here in terms of a striving or straining in the face of violence/negation: “it may indeed be a matter of building a cosmology that responds cogently to precarious histories of singular and multiple dispossessions that may seem different at first glance, like the histories of violence against women and the imperial subjection of Caribbean people. These histories of violence coalesce in Mendieta’s art practice, in her life and her iconicity. Mendieta’s work traded in captures of life as strivings in the face of negation.” However, in attending to the call of breath as movement that positions the spectator, I argue that it is vital to resist the lure of reading the grass as proxy for or cover under which we find Mendieta, the mute subject as object. It may be tempting to understand the film in terms of what Jane Bennet speaks of as the estranging “call of things”<sup>130</sup> or in terms of how ‘things,’ as W.T.J. Mitchell explains, “signal the moment when the mute idol speaks.”<sup>131</sup> Curator and scholar Adrian Heathfield calls this the “powerful muteness of the work,” work that “silently, passionately continues to speak *with* us.”<sup>132</sup> While I concur that Mendieta’s work is indeed relational, even conversational, I push off from Heathfield’s assessment of the works ‘muteness.’ Emphasis on the potential speech or muteness of the thing risks foreclosing once again the question of the relation to and positioning of the spectator as listener by limiting the capacity of the work to engage the spectator to, if not speech, then its

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<sup>129</sup> For example, in a statement “Art and Politics” that she delivered at the New Museum in 1982 she says with confidence “And so the question of integrity in aesthetics is coming up again historically. It is a personal question, which each artist faces. It is a constant struggle. Hard times are coming, but I believe we who are artists will continue making our work. We will be ignored but we will be here.” Reprinted in *Traces*, 219.

<sup>130</sup> Jane Bennett, “The Call of Things” talk at the Vera List Center of Art and Politics at the New School, September 13, 2011. <https://www.wnyc.org/story/160778-call-things-jane-bennett-vera-list-center/>

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>132</sup> Adrian Heathfield, “Embers” in *Traces: Ana Mendieta* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013) 21.

variant: eloquent muteness. In an effort to clear the presumption that *Grass Breathing* is either mute or it speaks, and that the only agency is in speech, I consider Mendieta's *Grass Breathing* as working with a vocality of breath that works as a technology of relation in terms of movement and touch rather than speech that helps us to make room for a different ethics and politics in which vocality—a sounding which is not or is in excess of speech—makes an appeal or call to attend, to listen, to be attuned that is neither a turning away nor a speaking in the place of or on behalf of but a breathing with.

The title and movement of the ground in *Grass Breathing* serve to indicate breath and imply something that might be heard, yet their categorization as silent obscures their mode of address, that is, their address to the spectator as a frustrated listener or a listener who has to strain across at least two kinds of blockages—that of sight withheld by the covering of the earth, and what is implied as given to sound (by the movement of that earth) but withheld in another way (the visual recording that implies sound as potential, as that which could be heard if only it had been directly registered). These blockages or withholdings are both what call on us to listen and frustrate or strain that listening. *Grass Breathing*—challenges us to attune to how breathing is registered through movement, suggesting that vocality might be felt through movement, rather than 'heard' with the ear. Neither mute nor speaking, *Grass Breathing* registers movement across substance; the passage of air in and out, passage that is felt as it moves. As breath moves through bodies and substances (here ambiguously non-human and human) it exists, it passes, it touches, even enters and permeates even if it is not heard. As I will demonstrate, Mendieta's *Grass Breathing* unearths the contingency of breath across matter—the earth, the rock, the dirt, the grass, and the body breathe together—this is a movement between and across substances rather than a single vocality: this contingent collectivity forms an address that extends to and through

us. And I want to consider that is address as an agency with the power to change us, alter our engagement with the space the film makes in the room and in our bodies and as a collective body by its call to breath.

### **A Call to Breath**

*Grass Breathing* issues an ethical and political call that develops from Mendieta's formal choices and aesthetic tactics. Through her tight frame, précising length, and downward angle onto the heaving ground, Mendieta focuses our attention on breath and its movements. The pace and movement of the breath further focuses the spectator's attention, drawing the spectator into intimate relation with their own embodied breath so that one might sense that they are breathing in or out of sync with Mendieta. This attention and attunement to the movement of her breath is a practice of care for the self and the other. We are called to a form of care for the other.

What does it mean to listen to the breath of another? For Luce Irigaray to listen to another is to respect their breath. "Listening to the other, sparing them some silent time, is respecting his or her breath, too. Only a mother breathes for her child. Once born, we all must, should, breathe for ourselves. For this to be so, the relations between breathing and other acts, including speech, have to be reconsidered."<sup>133</sup> Importantly, Irigaray places ethical responsibility on listening to and making time for the breath of the other; breath and its relation not only to responsibility but to speech in this configuration. So too, thinking with Mendieta and Irigaray, I'd like to consider *Grass Breathing* as issuing a call to breath with. But this is a call not easily received, or easy to hear. To attune ourselves to the difficult to hear and recognize breath of the other is to care for and value the breathing of the other, support the breathing of the other.

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<sup>133</sup> Luce Irigaray, "A Breath That Touches in Words" in *i love to you: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, translated by Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1996), 121.

Mendieta purposefully makes breath visible through labored movement, pacing from slower to faster to slower barely visible breath. In her study *The Place of Breath in Cinema*, film theorist Davina Quinlivan analyzes the space of what she calls the ‘haptic logic of a breathing body’—a breathing dimension of film that is “brought to life in the mind and body of the viewer precisely through the way in which the images invite us to consider relations between sight and the unseen; breathing comes to stand for this aspect of the film which tends to gesture towards an (im)material realm: a space which conjoins the living and the dead, the visible and the absent.”<sup>134</sup> Underscoring the use of visible movement of the breath, Mendieta points to breath as vocality as movement and vibration a patterning back and forth, rising and falling. In Fred Moten’s essay “The Blur and Breathe Books” he develops breath as forming a spatiality and pacing both within and between works by Charles Gaines and a collaborative piece between Gaines and Hoyun Son.<sup>135</sup> In *Grass Breathing* this extends into the space and body of the spectator. This space also indicates a relation between multiple temporalities—the space and time of breath in the performance, in the film, and in the spectator.

### **I Can’t Breathe With You, I Can’t Breathe Without You**

At this moment, we cannot talk about breath without talking about the death of Eric Garner who repeated “I can’t breathe,” eleven times while police “accosted him, grounded him, chocked him.”<sup>136</sup> At this moment, I cannot talk about death without talking about the violence of

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<sup>134</sup> Davina Quinlivan, “The Haptic Logic of a Breathing Body” in *The Place of Breath in Cinema*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 51.

<sup>135</sup> Fred Moten, “The Blur and Breathe Books” in *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 245-269.

<sup>136</sup> Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentacostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1.

white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy (bell hooks) that produces the precarity of black lives, trans lives, those most vulnerable within what is a carceral state at war on the impoverished, on people of color, on queers. As I study *Grass Breathing* and attend to its call to breath I cannot write without also hearing its resonance with the ongoing political consequence of Eric Garner's call "I can't Breathe." As Ashon Crawley proposes Eric Garner's call charges us to do something, "to perform, to produce a world otherwise than what we have. We are charged to end, to produce abolition against, the episteme that produced for us current iterations of categorical designations of racial hierarchies, class stratifications, gender binaries, mind body splits."<sup>137</sup> The call extends outward, but also calls us in. I can't help but chart the relation of my own breath to the movement of *Grass Breathing*—at times my breath lines up, I breath with the grass for a moment before anxiously not quite lining up and catching my breath in dissonant relation to the grass. In the production of a call to breath we find that we can't breathe together, and we can't breathe without each other. By challenging our ability to hear what is implied by motion as the audible inhalation and exhalation of breath, Mendieta prompts our consideration of supporting, attending, caring for breath in ways that may make the difference between a life that is liveable and a life that is dismissible, extinguishable. If instead, we turn to the multiple of the grass—rather than the singular—we are asked to consider the ways in which our breath is dependent on one another, and moves through the multiple. In her poem, Mendieta gestures to an imprisonment within the earth, and to a breath that may exceed the living or the dead. Might this breath instead extend across the living and the dead? In the poem, Mendieta positions herself as able to breathe even as she is imprisoned, and proximate to death.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

Eric Garner’s call indisputably signals the violence of modernism which is to say the violence of slavery and capital which is to say the violence of valuing one subject’s right to breath over another’s. Indeed, as Crawley argues this cry, “I can’t breathe” is a call for abolition against that which would consign one breath against another (as in its my breath OR yours, you are a threat to my life or breath and either I extinguish yours or I can’t breathe or the I can’t breathe as a stop trying to extinguish my breath). As a call to breathe together would mean the recognition of the ways our breath is interdependent.

Such interdependence, solidarity, intersectionality foregrounds the aims of “The Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists” a curatorial project of Mendieta, Zarina Hashmi and Kazuko Miyamoto that included works by eight artists—Judith Baca, Beverly Buchanon, Janet Henry, Senga Nengundi, Lydia Okumura, Howardina Pindell, Selena Whitefeather, and Zarina.<sup>138</sup> In her introduction to the exhibition catalog Mendieta writes:

The white population of the United States, diverse, but of basic European stock, exterminated the indigenous civilization and put aside the Black as well as the other non-white cultures to create a homogenous male-dominated culture above the internal divergency...Do we exist... To question our cultures is to question our own existence, our human reality. To confront this fact means to acquire an awareness of ourselves. This in turn becomes a search, a questioning of who we are and how we will realize ourselves... This exhibition points not necessarily to the injustice or incapacity of a society that has not been willing to include us, but more towards a personal will to continue being “other.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> My attention was brought to this exhibition by the inclusion of related archival materials in *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-85*, and the reprinting of the exhibition essay and part of the A.I.R. catalog in the accompanying book: *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-85 A Sourcebook*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley (Brooklyn Museum and Duke University Press, 2017), 210-230. See also: Aruna D’Souza, “Zarina, A life of permanent exile: recent work from a founder of global feminism” in *4 Columns*, January 26, 2018. <http://www.4columns.org/d-souza-aruna/zarina>

<sup>139</sup> *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists* (New York: AIR Gallery, 1980, n.p.

This personal will to continue being “other” exerts pressure on the conditions that would produce a call like Garner’s. Here we can understand Third World Feminism as a form of intersectional feminism imbricated in women of color feminism and queer of color critique. Leticia Alvarado observes that Mendieta and her sisters’ “renegotiation of themselves as racialized subjects” upon entering the U.S. is in relation to blackness.<sup>140</sup> Consideration of Mendieta’s racial identity points to the need to consider both Cuban and U.S. racial hierarchies, and the ways Latinidades are shaped by blackness and other racialized groups. Indeed, what has been recognized as the success of *Dialectics of Isolation* is the way in which it affirms “individual voices allied in a joint struggle for recognition.”<sup>141</sup> Rather than calling for assimilation, Mendieta calls for an interdependence that emerges *from* difference.

### **Echolocation: Breathing in a Commons**

The call to breath extends to the spectator, the call asks us to breath with and for the other, to listen to the breath of the other. Mendieta’s call to breathe with one another is to issue the call of a kind of echolocation that dis and re-orient us relationally and environmentally to other more-than-human bodies. By projecting outward an echo that moves, bounces, and returns

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<sup>140</sup> Leticia Alvarado, “...Towards A Personal Will to Continue Being “Other””: Ana Mendieta’s Subject Performances” in *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 24:1 (2015), 65-85.

<sup>141</sup> Stephanie Weissberg, “Ana Mendieta’s Dialectics of Isolation” in *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-85 A Sourcebook*, edited by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley (Brooklyn Museum and Duke University Press, 2017), 213.

across space, the call to breathe with summons into a commons of and with blades of grass that move, giving out, taking in.

We could understand this echolocating work as a kind of re-landscaping practice, and set in relation to Jill Casid's work on landscaping as a performative, and verb; understanding the landscaping—short grass, pieces of sod—as agential, as a sounding that summons together singularities into a common space.<sup>142</sup> *Grass Breathing* might be understood to call a commons into being without foreclosing something like “freedom and difference.”<sup>143</sup> The movement, the breath, works with and against the breath of the spectator such that, in and through this breathing with, singularities ‘converge in the common while keeping their freedom.’<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that *Grass Breathing* uses a device of re-situating the spectator as frustrated in terms of what we can apprehend while presenting a form of vocality beyond speech that is both hard to express and hard for ‘us’ to hear. Though catalogued as silent, *Grass Breathing* is permeated with the movement of breathing that registers a form of vocality. This chapter has engaged the terms of Mendieta's address and the way in which *Grass Breathing* positions the spectator—disarming the too often asked question of ‘where is Mendieta?’ I investigate where she positions us.

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<sup>142</sup> Here, I am thinking with Jill Casid's “Epilogue: Landscape in, around, and under the performative” in *Women & Performance* 21:1, 97-116 and “Chimerical Figurations at the Monstrous Edges of Species” in *Environmental Criticism for the 21st-Century*, eds. Ken Hiltner, Stephanie Lemenager, and Theresa Shewry (London: Routledge Press, 2011), 61–83.

<sup>143</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, “Vitalism's After-burn: The Sense of Ana Mendieta.” *Women & Performance* 21, no. 2 (2011): 197.

<sup>144</sup> Negri, *Art and Multitude*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2011), 121.

If in this chapter I have argued that *Grass Breathing* extends a call to breath, that opens out as a call to a commons, a collectivity that brings together multiple and singular breaths, the following chapter works more closely with the rub of that multiplicity. The frictional rub of “I can’t breathe with you, I can’t breathe without you” resonates with Pauline Oliveros’s deployment of desperation-as-dissonance in her composition *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in recognition of Their Desperation* to which I turn in Chapter 3. In both instances, we find that vocality produces a technology of relation which moves across bodies and matter but does not ask that they conflate their differences but rather use that difference, or dissonance to motor on.

### Chapter Three

#### Political Resonances of Dissonance through Pauline Oliveros's

#### *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation (1970)*

Antigone, you do not,  
 any more than John Cage, aspire to a condition of silence  
 you want us to listen to the sound of what happens  
 when everything normal/musical/careful/conventional or pious  
     is taken away  
 oh sister and daughter of Oedipus  
 who can be innocent in dealing with you  
 there was never a blank slate

we were always already anxious about you  
 perhaps you know that Ingeborg Bachman poem  
 from the last years of her life that begins  
 "I lose my screams"  
 dear Antigone,  
 I take it as the task of the translator  
 to forbid that you should ever lose your screams  
 —Anne Carson<sup>145</sup>

In dedicating this chapter to thinking what I call the work of desperation-as-dissonance in Pauline Oliveros's *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970), I start with the question of what tasks of listening and translation it may take to recognize desperation, to not lose the scream. *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* was commissioned by Hope College and first performed there in September 1970 by a fourteen-piece ensemble with Oliveros on synthesizer. Oliveros was compelled to express resonance with its egalitarian feminist principles set out in Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) and with the surfacing women's movement, and subsequently writes the score.<sup>146</sup> Since the score's publication in 1977 by Smith Publications of American Music, it has

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<sup>145</sup> Anne Carson, *Antigonick* (New York: New Directions, 2012), 5-6.

<sup>146</sup> In her introduction to the republication of *The Scum Manifesto*, Avital Ronell describes the manifesto as filled with Ronell describes the manifesto as having "indexes of rage, murderous intention, finality and telic purpose." See: Avital Ronell, "Deviant Payback: The Aims of Valerie Solanas" in *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso Books, 2004), 6-7. We can also think of the violence of Solanas' text in relation to the

been performed in varied modes of interpretation and with many configurations of performers. In her poem “the task of the translator of Antigone,” Anne Carson makes the work of translation a dedication to a kind of hard attention, a listening to and for the scream. She traces Antigone’s desire for us to listen to what’s left in the remove of decorum or convention which Carson proposes is not “a condition of silence” nor a blank slate but the event of Antigone’s scream.<sup>147</sup> Here Antigone stands as a figure of the defiant woman who confronts the state, a figure that Judith Butler describes as fraught with risk.<sup>148</sup> This scream could be heard as mournful, enraged, or as a form of desperation. As Roslyn in *The Misfits*, Marilyn Monroe says: “It’s like you scream and there’s nothing coming out of your mouth, and everybody’s going around: ‘Hello, how are you, what a nice day’...and you’re dying.” The scream is emitted but not necessarily heard. Further, to bring up the scream conjures not only the scream of Frederick Douglass’s Aunt Hester but also Fred Moten’s continued amplification of that scream. This is not to equate Antigone’s scream to that of Roslyn or Aunt Hester or to reduce the scream to a universal

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killing of public figures during the era (this is by no means an exhaustive list: the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, and Bobby Kennedy in 1968; Malcolm X assassinated in 1965, John Kennedy in 1963. Demonstrations, marches and riots: Washington 1963, Selma to Montgomery 1965, Compton Cafeteria Riots of 1966, Stonewall in 1969. The many unnamed deaths and the very real risks she faced at various times in her life as a woman subjected to abuse, later in her life as a patient at the mercy of the prison and medical industrial complexes, and as a destitute and isolated drug addict.

<sup>147</sup> Fred Moten, *In the Break*. Moten returns and reflects on the ways in which her scream “cannot be emptied of the content it pours out in excess and disruption of meaning” which is to say that the trauma of “materiality of her violation and the violence that makes that beating possible and legible and, in the view of the violator, necessary—is carried and transmitted by Aunt Hester’s scream.” “Preface” in *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), ix. For more on the scream see: Jenifer Lynn Stoeber, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016) see especially “Screaming in the Vacuum Unheard: Du Bois behind the Scenes” 256-262; Glissant also addresses the scream of genocide and colonialism in *Poetics of Relation*.

<sup>148</sup> Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kindship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Luce Irigaray also asks that to listen to what Antigone has to say about the polis: *Speculum of the Other Woman* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 70.

materiality. Rather, this is to hear her scream, and not lose the scream, and to understand the multiple screams as accumulative in difference and affective dissonance. Hearing difference, and yet relation at the same time, is part of the work of dissonance. In other words, dissonance is one way to bring singular experiences of desperation together, and not ask them to sound the same. Desperation is not at all tethered to one sense or another. Yet, I will argue that the unheard, lost scream that unhinges decorum is the kind of vocality with affective force that haunts the desperation-as-dissonance that fuels Pauline Oliveros' *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation*. Of the effort to attend to and resonate with desperation as the source of a kind of feminist energy, Oliveros writes:

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... 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.<sup>149</sup>

Aligned with her desire to express resonance with the 1960s and early 1970s women's movement, and composed at the time of a renewed fight for the still as yet to be ratified women's Equal Rights Amendment, Oliveros uses dissonance as a technique to amplify the desperation she identifies in the figures of Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe.<sup>150</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>149</sup> *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation* was written in 1970 and first performed by a small ensemble at Hope College in September 1970 with Oliveros on synthesizer. Later, the score was published. See: Heidi Von Gunden, *The Music of Pauline Oliveros* (Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1983), 39-45; Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970). (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications American Music, 1977); Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2004).

<sup>150</sup> The women's Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in 1923, reintroduced in 1970 and passed by the senate on March 22, 1972 however it has failed to receive the ratification by state legislature. In 2011, Representative Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin proposed to remove the ratification deadline so that

Oliveros signals an “inequality” and dissonant relation between Solanas and Monroe in terms of their reception and visibility in the public sphere, while she aligns their desperation and desire for recognition from within a shared condition of inequality lived under the patriarchal state. The desperation which Oliveros attends can be understood as public and expansive in its direct relation to patriarchy, and functioning within the realm of affects because of its relational tendency and its movement as detached from one particular subject, but as functioning across subjects.<sup>151</sup> This shared condition of inequality is pressed by Oliveros’ insistence that to recognize desperation would require a coming together in spite of or through our dissidence, That is a feminist movement that transforms power structures but does not re-inscribe that power by issuing an equality that dictates sameness. Oliveros uses desperation-as-dissonance to propose this new structuring of power.

As I will argue, this unsaid, or indirectly said of an affective force of desperation-as-dissonance forms the ground for Oliveros’ resulting composition. The non-notated prose score makes dynamic use of improvisation and non-hierarchical power dynamics to choreograph a channeling of dissonant tonalities chosen by performers (Appendix C). The prose score, an increasingly popular form in experimental music throughout the 1960s and 70s and a form that Oliveros used throughout her career, outlines a series of parameters that we could understand in direct relation to systems of instruction deployed by conceptual artists. Oliveros asks performers to choose five pitches with one pitch “in a different dissonant relationship to the others.”<sup>152</sup> The

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the bill would become constitution when ratified by three additional states. “March 22, 1972: Equal Rights Amendment for Women Passed by Congress.” March 22, 2012. *The New York Times*.

<sup>151</sup> Here I am drawing on Jonathan Flatley’s formulation of affective mapping as distinct from drives or emotion. See: *Affective Mapping: Melancholy and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>152</sup> Pauline Oliveros, “500 Words” in *Art Forum* (April 30, 2012).

parameters at play leave open significant freedom for interpretation and improvisation to individual performers. Rather than following prescribed notation, performers are asked to listen to the sound produced and respond with a sense of responsibility by attuning dynamic levels to meet that of any player who emerges as in excess of the ensemble, the score reads “If a player is too loud it is the responsibility of the ensemble to raise the general dynamic level.”<sup>153</sup> The possibility of such evenness, or consensus spurs consideration of ‘noise’, timbre, volume, and pitch. This strain toward one another, I argue emphasizes a coming together or form of solidarity within dissonance and across difference.

Considered through this question of dissonance as the condition for possibility, Oliveros’ score gives explicit direction for performers to select five pitches without consulting one another, two of the pitches are to be non-diatonic, in other words, in dissonant relationship to the other three pitches. “The basis of this composition is the performance, by all players, of very long tones and any possible modulation or variation of any part of the tone which does not change the fundamental frequency of the tone. [original emphasis]”<sup>154</sup> This produces a long dissonant drone.

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<https://www.artforum.com/words/id=30860> (accessed July 20, 2016). We can also think of the prose score in relation to Fluxus and Neo-Dada movements. For a recent and productive consideration of the aesthetics of information in Conceptual Art see: Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). For more on the non-notated prose style score and its history within the context of experimental music/contemporary music history see: Thom Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology and Composition* (London: Routledge, 2002); Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn, ed. *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde, 1966-1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Benjamin Piekut, ed. *Tomorrow is the Question: New Directions in Experimental Music Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Gillian Siddall and Ellen Waterman, ed. *Negotiated Moments: Improvisation, Sound, and Subjectivity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

<sup>153</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970). (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications American Music, 1977).

<sup>154</sup> See Appendix C for stylistic decisions including the underlining of this section.

The long tones are modulated in volume, articulation, and timbre; vibrato or regular tonal fluctuations are permitted. Oliveros' score provides a set of conducting hand signals, in addition to a series of colored light cues which signal performers to move from one pitch to another.<sup>155</sup> For example, while the red-light shines performers are to introduce pitch number one, after the first white flash performers gradually introduce pitches two through five in any order, in the yellow light section they borrow pitches and modulation techniques from one another. During the blue-light, you gradually return to your own five pitches and modulation techniques and after the second white light flash, you gradually return to your own pitch number one.

According to Oliveros, "Structurally, the piece is based on Solanas's exposition about equality and overall it is nonhierarchical."<sup>156</sup> The dynamic, tempo, and style of the attacks and releases signaled by downbeat and cutoff respectively, are open to the interpretation of the performers, however, the score is explicit about placing personal responsibility on individual players "to influence the overall timbre of the piece for the most part blending sounds rather than dominating." Timbre is the tonal quality that offers the ability to distinguish one sound or voice from another, even if they share the same pitch and volume. Timbre is then key to distinguishing a sense of singularity within the group. And yet while players push their timbre they are instructed not to dominate with volume. The score states "If a player is too loud it is the

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<sup>155</sup> This could prompt extended analysis of the use of color and light, its connections to modernist transcendence, synesthesia, (think: Wagner total work of art, Kandinsky) and its racial encodings. This is a line of inquiry that I hope to pursue in future iterations of the project. For more on light, color, and projection see: Jill H. Casid, *Scenes of Projection* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), especially "Queer Projection: Theses on the "Future of an Illusion"", 225-244. Carol Mavor, *Black and Blue: The Bruising Passion of Camera Lucida, La Jetee, Sans Soleil, and Hiroshima* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); *Blue Mythologies: Reflections on a Color* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2013).

<sup>156</sup> Pauline Oliveros, "500 Words" in *Art Forum* (April 30, 2012).  
<https://www.artforum.com/words/id=30860> (accessed July 20, 2016).

responsibility of the ensemble to raise the general dynamic level.”<sup>157</sup> This dual positioning of emphasis on individual voice and the positing of responsibility onto the players resonates with the terms for responsible action in Solanas’ manifesto.<sup>158</sup> Indeed this asks performers to negotiate both the production of dissonance and a sustaining level of resonance that works across that difference in tonality.

This tonal dissonance creates the conditions for possibility within the score.<sup>159</sup> Dissonance forms the ground within which the collective ‘they’ or the ensemble is instantiated. The being together of the ensemble comes out of the frictional rub of dissonant relation.<sup>160</sup> And out of

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<sup>157</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970). (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications American Music, 1977).

<sup>158</sup> For contextualization of the manifesto form/genre see: Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) see especially “A Second-Wave Problematic: How to Be a Radical” 168-202; Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Hemispheric Institute of Politics and Performance Encuentro: Manifest! Choreographing Social Movements in the Americas, Concordia University, Montreal, 2014 <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/enc14-home> (accessed December 20, 2016); Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1977) in *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), 13-22; Lesbian Avengers Civil Rights Organizing Project, “Out Against the Right: The Dyke Manifesto” (New York, ca. 1994).

<sup>159</sup> Karen Shimakawa and José Muñoz convened a working group “Being Together in Turbulence” at HEMI Encuentro Montreal. The group was conceived out of their engagement with Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010); Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010)—and Muñoz’s work on a Brown Commons. On December 3, 2013 Muñoz passed away unexpectedly, and so the working group was led by Karen Shimakawa and Joshua Chambers-Letson. Many of the participants were advisees of José Muñoz and in many ways, the working group was a site of mourning and commemoration of the work of Muñoz. This working together in turbulence seems relevant for thinking the terms for being and feeling together in dissonance that Oliveros’ work asks of us.

<sup>160</sup> Here I am also thinking with Jean-Luc Nancy’s formulation of ‘Being Singular Plural’ wherein meaning does not come out of being, but rather out of being-with-one-another. Nancy’s work also offers the possibility of an ensemblic space that does not require sameness. This depends in part on Nancy’s attention to a contiguity rather than continuity, which might be correlated with and against the work of dissonance as shared affective material in *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe*. As Nancy puts it, “the law of touching is separation” the coming up against one another, coming into contact with, and producing through a frictional rub of contact. See: Jean-Luc Nancy *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 5.

dissonance comes a specific beat. The Oxford English Dictionary defines this phenomenon of a beat produced by dissonant tones as “a throbbing or undulating effect taking place in rapid succession when two notes not quite of the same pitch are sounded together; the combined note alternates rapidly between the minimum of sound produced by the mutual interference of their vibrations, and the full effect produced by the coincidence of their vibrations.”<sup>161</sup> *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* produces this beat as vibrational energy out of the tonal dissonance it requires. Consequently, we can understand Oliveros’ composition of desperation-as-dissonance as producing a catalyzing force. This is significant because despite what might seem to be the off-beat of the experimental, the negative, and the affective, there is none-the-less a beat that can be recognized and might pace a movement or action.

By using dissonance as a structural component of the piece, the spectator-as-listener is asked to listen to and through difference. The composition simultaneously asks that we listen—indeed even produces a beat to which we might move—but frustrates that listening through the means of its production: dissonance. This chapter attends to the registers of affective, temporal, tonal and material dissonance in the score’s structure to examine the difficulties it poses for listening but also the possibilities for hearing dissonance as a call toward the recognition of desperation and activation of political resonance as a call to action. I respond to and think with the call of Oliveros’ *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* which I argue asks that we listen through tonal and affective dissonance, prompting a practice of listening that requires attuning to the dissonance of multiple vocalities at once. This

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<sup>161</sup> "beat, n.1". OED Online. June 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/16604> (accessed July 20, 2016).

answering to a sounded note of desperation holds the potential to create political solidarity or ‘illegitimate collaboration’ not just across space or compositions but also across time in ways that act on the present and for the future.

Before she died, I was in e-mail correspondence with Pauline Oliveros. I asked her about the role of dissonance and the relationship between the dissonance that is so central to the score and to the listening asked of the performers and the spectators. Does tonal dissonance facilitate the grounds for attentive listening across difference? Oliveros responds, “I understand “desperation” as “dissonance”.<sup>162</sup> Oliveros continues, “Dissonance creates the need for resolution if you are listening. It might be specifically tonal if you are trained musically. If not trained, one might feel the need bodily.” Correlating the affective with the tonal, Oliveros points to the imbricated relation between the material of dissonant intonation and the affective force of that intonation. While this doesn’t necessarily function as a means of trans-historical recognition relaying back to Solanas and Monroe, it does both amplify and intensify tones of desperation across and between times and bodies in a way that suggests solidarity in the answering of a call with resonance in our present.

In Oliveros’ score, desperation-as-dissonance becomes a tactic for amplification, intensifying and relaying tones of desperation, across and between multiple times and bodies in ways that bring them together. This tactic suggests that a form of recognition might come through the attention that listening requires. Dissonance creates an energizing force that amplifies political resonance and might be a way to respond to the call for recognition.

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<sup>162</sup> Pauline Oliveros, e-mail message, July 27, 2016. Pauline Oliveros was a generous teacher and my sense is that she would engage with any student who was curious enough to ask a question. As a participant in Deep Listening training I had the opportunity to meet and practice Deep Listening with her and thereafter we began what was a brief e-mail correspondence. Pauline Oliveros died on November 27, 2016.

### *Performing Dissonance*

I want to think the call of this dissonance not just between the first performance of *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* in 1970 and Monroe's suicide in 1962 and Solanas's incarceration in 1968 after shooting Andy Warhol but also between the 70s and the resurgence of interest in the score in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When Pauline Oliveros passed away in 2016, she was memorialized as an experimental composer, a 'champion of deep listening', a pioneer of electronic music, and a radical lesbian feminist who reimagined the Western Canon as made up entirely of lesbians in disguise.<sup>163</sup> Engaging this discourse allows an opportunity to better understand the return of the score to popularity in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

In 2011, Roaratorio released recordings from the 1970 premiere of the score at Hope College and a 1977 performance at Wesleyan University by a forty-three-piece orchestra.<sup>164</sup> In 2012, CRiSAP, Electra Productions, and the Tate organized *Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic*, a symposium at which Oliveros gave a keynote address and a solo performance, and a group of fourteen musicians conducted by Claudia Molitor performed *To Valerie Solanas and*

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<sup>163</sup> Steve Smith, "Pauline Oliveros, Composer Who Championed 'Deep Listening,' Dies at 84" in *New York Times*, November 27, 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/27/arts/music/pauline-oliveros-composer-who-championed-deep-listening-dies-at-84.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/27/arts/music/pauline-oliveros-composer-who-championed-deep-listening-dies-at-84.html?_r=0) (accessed November 28, 2016); "Remembering Pauline Oliveros, Composer Known for 'Deep Listening'" National Public Radio, November 27, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/2016/11/27/503520832/remembering-pauline-oliveros-composer-known-for-deep-listening> (accessed November 28, 2016); "Experimental Pioneer Pauline Oliveros Has Died at the Age of 84" VICE, November 25, 2016. [https://thump.vice.com/en\\_us/article/experimental-pioneer-pauline-oliveros-has-died-at-the-age-of-84](https://thump.vice.com/en_us/article/experimental-pioneer-pauline-oliveros-has-died-at-the-age-of-84) (accessed November 28, 2016); Pricilla Frank, "We Need Experimental Music to Teach Us How To Listen, Now More Than Ever: In Memory of Avant-Garde Electronic Composer Pauline Oliveros" in *The Huffington Post*, November 29, 2016. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/pauline-oliveros-deep-listening\\_us\\_583c4797e4b000af95eeel37](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/pauline-oliveros-deep-listening_us_583c4797e4b000af95eeel37)

<sup>164</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (Minneapolis: Roaratorio, 2011). LP Audio Recording. <http://roaratorio.com/uncategorized/pauline-oliveros-to-valerie-solanas-and-marilyn-monroe-in-recognition-of-their-desperation/>

*Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* at the Tate Modern.<sup>165</sup> Also in 2012, Opera Povera (established by LA based composer and director Sean Griffen) staged a performance of the score featuring Juliana Snapper and the People's Microphone Camarata (an experimental choir active in 2012 and founded by Elana Mann and Juliana Snapper) for the New Original Works Festival of REDCAT.<sup>166</sup> In 2017, artist Christopher Willes and Public Recordings Performance Projects invited a group of artists to develop a new interpretation of the score while in residence at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto. This is part of research for an upcoming show at the Music Gallery slated for 2019.<sup>167</sup>

In 2013, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz collaborated with six musicians to produce a filmed performance of the score, this film is held in collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, and has been screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and exhibited in "Portrait of an Eye" curated by Daniel Baumann at Kunsthalle Zürich in 2015, in "Loving, Repeating" curated by Maria Lind at Kunsthalle Vienna in 2015, in "Patriarchal Poetry" curated

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<sup>165</sup> Conducted by Claudia Molitor, and performed by Rachel Aggs (violin), Viv Corringham (voice), Angharad Davies (violin), Sharon Gal (voice), Naomi Graham (recorder), Holly Ingleton (laptop), Caroline Kraabel (alto sax), Cathy Lane (EMS synthesizer), Lina Lapelyte (violin), Sarha Moore (baritone sax), Maggie Nicols (voice), Greta Pistaceci (theremin), Lucy Railton (cello), Verity Susman (tenor sax). For details see: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/her-noise-feminisms-and-sonic/artist-talk-and-performance-pauline-oliveros> Documentation of the performance available at: <https://vimeo.com/43169124> For a nuanced review of this performance see Salomé Voegelin, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

<sup>166</sup> For more information on Opera Povera see: <https://sites.google.com/site/operapovera2/home> as well as Sean Griffin's site: <https://sites.google.com/site/seangriffinworks/home> For clips from the 2012 performance see: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muh1YHZUG\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muh1YHZUG_k) For more on the People's Microphone Camarata see: <https://www.elanamann.com/project/peoples-microphony-camerata>

<sup>167</sup> This project is supported by Public Recordings, The Music Gallery, the Toronto Arts Council and The Feminist Art Museum (a multi-site project conceived by Xenia Benivolski and Su-Ying Lee). For details see: <https://www.gardinermuseum.on.ca/event/sonic-meditations-performance/> See also: <http://publicrecordings.org/valerie/>

by Anja Casser and Nadja Quante at Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe in 2013.<sup>168</sup> In 2014, the Museum of Modern Art in New York hosted a screening of the filmed performance followed by a discussion between Pauline Oliveros, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz moderated by Gregg Bordowitz. This event coincided with Pauline Oliveros' inclusion in the 2014 Whitney Biennial where she installed "Deep Listening Room" and held performances with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE).<sup>169</sup> The three artists (Oliveros, Boudry, Lorenz) were also brought together for an event at nyMusikk, Norway's center for New Music and Sound Art, where Electra Productions director Irene Revell organized a concert with Oliveros and Kristin Nordeval, a screening of Boudry/Lorenz' filmed performance, a Deep Listening workshop with Oliveros, and a conversation between Oliveros and Revell.<sup>170</sup>

If we understand Oliveros' composition to issue an appeal towards a listening that rubs against the grain of difference—both difference in terms of inequality between Solanas and Monroe, difference in terms of the not-the-same that makes dissonance, and difference with causal relation to the desperation it sounds, it is useful to attend to one performance more closely. I'd like to turn to Boudry and Lorenz' filmed performance for the ways that their queer feminist aesthetic practice pulls the political resonance of inequality at work in Oliveros composition into our present.

### **Haptic Listening in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's filmed performance**

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<sup>168</sup> See: <https://artmuseum.pl/en/kolekcja/praca/to-valerie-solanas-and-marilyn-monroe-in-recognition-of-the>

<sup>169</sup> See: <http://96.126.110.191/Exhibitions/2014Biennial/PaulineOliveros>

<sup>170</sup> See: <http://nymusikk.no/en/hva-skjer/pauline-oliveros>

Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz' eponymous filmed performance of *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* queers and makes sensationally palpable a desperation that exceeds the figures of the initial score while also asking us to attend to the call to listening through desperation-as-dissonance that Oliveros' score issues. Boudry/Lorenz filmed performance begins with the slam of a slate followed by meditative panning shots of Funkhaus Nalepastraße, the former German Democratic Republic radio studios in Berlin where the performance is filmed.<sup>171</sup> The space is filled with whimsical bird songs and the fuzzy ambient noise of a room, slowly a deep warm base-y accordion draws out a slow melody that subtly hints at "Black Boy's on Mopeds" the 1990 Sinéad O'Connor ballad. Quickly this vibe is cut into by the slow screeching tonal rub of artist Ginger Brooks Takahashi who dressed in a purple spandex jumpsuit and bondage straps securing a guitar and small PA to her body, grinds up on the architectural columns of the space, on Rachael Aggs's knee, and performs a full body rub as she slowly ascends a staircase (figure 18). The movement is decidedly erotic and casually performed. Boudry/Lorenz' filmed performance presents seemingly disparate temporal referents—Pauline Oliveros' 1970 score, the Sinéad O'Connor ballad from 1990, and later, widely circulated press photographs of Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe, from 1962 and 1968 respectively. These bits or referents cohere to form a trans-temporal presence of queer feminist history in the film and create what Boudry/Lorenz term "illegitimate collaborations" by revisiting works trans-temporally and "looking at forgotten or

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<sup>171</sup> In the artist bio for *Bring Your Own Body* a recent group exhibition curated by Jeanne Vaccaro and Stamatina Gregory at the Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery at Haverford College, Boudry/Lorenz mention the location where this was shot, see: <http://exhibits.haverford.edu/bringyourownbody/artists/>

disavowed queer moments, affects, acts, or leftovers” to stage an imaginary meeting with composers, writers, and artists.<sup>172</sup>

In perhaps the most radical departure from Oliveros’ score and substantive extension of temporal and historical referents, singer and performer Peaches, enjoins with Sinéad O’Connor’s ballad “Black Boys on Moped’s”:

"Margaret Thatcher on TV  
Shocked by the deaths that took place in Beijing  
It seems strange that she should be offended  
The same orders are given by her  
I've said this before now  
You said I was childish and you'll say it now  
Remember what I told you  
If they hated me they will hate you"

Sinéad O'Connor's song continues where Peaches cuts off,

"England's not the mythical land of Madame George and roses  
It's the home of police who kill black boys on mopeds  
And I love my boy and that's why I'm leaving  
I don't want him to be aware that there's  
Any such thing as grieving"

The song lyrics reference the death of Colin Roach a 21-year-old black British man who died from a gunshot wound (ruled as suicide but determined as not logistically possible), a song about death, about murder, about racial terrorism, about the desire to escape a world of racist patriarchy.<sup>173</sup> The lyrical fragment lays a political tone into what is already the ground of the architecture, of the space and the relational pull of the performers within it. Dressed in a green

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<sup>172</sup> Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *500 Words* in *ArtForum* September 23, 2014.  
<https://www.artforum.com/words/id=48312>

<sup>173</sup> Sinéad O'Connor, *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* (London: Ensign and Chrysalis) Recorded in 1989, released in 1990. For more on Colin Roach’s death and the outcry that followed the ruling of suicide see Isaac Julian’s first film *Who Killed Colin Roach?* (1983) a documentary which was recently screened at the Tate with followed by a conversation between Isaac Julian and Paul Gilroy. See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/rewind-sankofa/isaac-julien-territories-and-who-killed-colin-roach>

leather jacket, Peaches sings this fragment against a bank of windows on which the title "To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation" is spray painted in an erratic combination of green and blue lettering. We glimpse Peaches' 'Deep Lez' t-shirt as she checks and adjusts her pitch with a harmonica and then exits on the right (a direct reference to Oliveros' score in which she states that anyone with perfect pitch may sing in its production). Vocality within this context could be understood exclusively around Peaches voice but I'd also like to consider Peaches voice as intensifying the dissonance-as-desperation both tonally and temporally also as the potential and production of resonance from the figures present in the room and the ghosts that haunt it. That is, Peaches' vocality pulls out and extends to the production of desperation-as-dissonance; both through its melancholic starkness drawn from O'Connor's melody, its lyrical content, and reference to another pop icon we can understand in relation to Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas.<sup>174</sup>

The screen goes black and we reenter in what appears to be an interior room of the same building. Six performers begin to fill the space with the durational drone of Oliveros' composition (figure 19).<sup>175</sup> The camera moves dynamically in a continuous circulating shot that seems to mirror the circulation of power toward which Oliveros aspired in the structuring of the score, and which is derived from Solanas' manifesto and its propositions toward a 'groove' rather than a hierarchy of power.<sup>176</sup> This circulation also relates the filmic loop or construction of a

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<sup>174</sup> For a popular account of Sinéad O'Connor's complex history as a public figure see: Amanda Petrusich, "The Feminist Trailblazing of Sinéad O'Connor" in *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2016. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-feminist-trailblazing-of-sinead-oconnor>.

<sup>175</sup> Pauline Oliveros underscores the role of duration in composition, "As Cage said, composing is organizing sounds in time—and you are a composer if you are organizing the way sounds manifest in duration." Pauline Oliveros, "500 Words" in *Art Forum* (April 30, 2012). <https://www.artforum.com/words/id=30860>

<sup>176</sup> Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2004), 53.

repeated performance via the filmic construction of the loop as Lorenz/Boudry install the piece in the gallery. The screen on which we watch the piece, is also repeated within the scene, as two screens flank the performers, walling off the space in washes of shifting color—first red, then yellow, then blue (as directed by Oliveros' score). At one point the whole frame is consumed by the blue screen which then slowly begins to shift and reveal the silhouette of the camera and its operator. This reflexivity on, and exposure of, the making of the scene and its constructed elements, exposed lighting, sound, and film equipment is emphatic and self-aware. As Oliveros' score lays out, light and color play distinctive roles in creating the atmospheric and affective environment of the piece. The composition is divided into three sections signaled by colored light—the first is red, the second yellow, and the third blue. These colored sections are cross-faded by a lighting operator and punctuated by “high intensity (strobe or photo flash) white flashes” in the second and third sections.<sup>177</sup> In Oliveros' score this flash acts as a distinguishing movement from one moment to another might recall the emblazoned afterimage that shocks the eye, or the transformative work of profane illumination of which Walter Benjamin writes—this transformative rub of one moment against another—the coming up against difference also, brings into being a point of common contact. Oliveros writes, “Ideally, the color changes should cover the entire auditorium, audience as well as performers.”<sup>178</sup> The shedding of light on both the spectator and performer brings the two further into a shared and immersive event.

In Boudry and Lorenz' iteration they ask the camera to observe listening by showing musicians as listeners—but also in the camera movement as attention from one intonation to

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<sup>177</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970). (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications American Music, 1977).

<sup>178</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970). (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications American Music, 1977).

another. In a letter to Mathias Danbolt, the artists address this choreography as they describe “we decided to consider the camera as a seventh performer, as an ‘individual part of the community.’”<sup>179</sup> Considering the camera movement that results in filming the performance in one take Boudry/Lorenz describe “the camera not only shows performers in action, playing, but also waiting and listening. Our idea was to let the camera reflect the process of listening.”<sup>180</sup> Indeed, at one point the camera movement brings us behind a screen of blue, so that the entire image area acts as a color field through which we listen, after a few moments the camera emerges out the other side re-entering the figural space of the performers.

Boudry and Lorenz often work collaboratively with artist and musician friends. This performance features Rachel Aggs in yellow jumpsuit on electric Guitar.<sup>181</sup> Aggs alternately bows and strums her electric guitar, producing textured tone. Peaches in white, black and gold on vocals. Catriona Shaw in a red dress on accordion.<sup>182</sup> Verity Susman on synthesizer.<sup>183</sup> Ginger Brooks Takahashi in purple suit effects pedal attached to her leather harness which also straps on an inverted guitar against her body.<sup>184</sup> Berlin based artist William Wheeler in a green dress

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<sup>179</sup> Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, *Aftershow* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), n.p.

<sup>180</sup> Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, *Aftershow* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), n.p.

<sup>181</sup> London based guitarist Rachel Aggs plays with *Shopping* and *Trash Kit*, she also performed in the 2012 performance of Oliveros' score in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/talks-and-lectures/artist-talk-and-performance-pauline-oliveros> (accessed July 20, 2016)

<sup>182</sup> Information on performance history of Berlin-based Edinburgh ex-pat Catriona Shaw aka Miss Le Bomb can be found at: [misslebomb.net](http://misslebomb.net) (accessed July 20, 2016).

<sup>183</sup> Roland Juno 6, an analog synthesizer came out in 1982 described as having six voices of polyphony.

<sup>184</sup> Brooklyn based artist and musician, Ginger Brooks Takahashi is band member and collaborator in performance collective *MEN*, a shifting group that has included *Le Tigre* members JD Samson and Johanna Fateman, artist Emily Roysdon and others. See: <http://brookstakahashi.com/museotamayo> (accessed December 5, 2016).

and veil on electro-theramin.<sup>185</sup> The catalog *Aftershow* culls stills and documentation from Boudry/Lorenz' filmed performances and a selection of fifteen letters written to artists and scholars (including Jack Smith, Sharon Hayes, Yvonne Rainer, José Muñoz)<sup>186</sup>. The letters perform variously; they express gratitude for influence and legacy (letter to Jack Smith), establish critical relationship to artistic contemporaries and fellow travelers (to Sharon Hayes), and often discuss concepts of temporality and history working through concepts of reference, re-enactment, and anachronism. Through the letters, the reader is generously invited into their collaborative process of making work and the questions at the heart of their creative practice. In a letter to Hendrik Oleson, Boudry and Lorenz affirm "We are interested in the relation between silence/erasure/the ephemeral and difference. These methodologies of producing an archive of queerness construct difference as specificity and as opaque."<sup>187</sup> In the case of this piece, Boudry/Lorenz's reiteration of Oliveros's score enfolds these temporal complexities and complexities of presence. Further, that the performers would be recognizable to some spectators is also key—both in its resonance with the inequality of exposure that Oliveros' pairing of Solanas and Monroe and for the ways in which identification and recognition figure in the spectator-as-listener's practice. This refusal of historical space as separable or distinct from that of the present is central to its enactments of a politics.

In their 2009 filmed performance *Salomania*, Wu Tsang's voice calls multiple figures

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<sup>185</sup> Initially developed in 1928 by Russian inventor Лёв Сергеевич Термён (commonly known in the U.S. as Léon Theremin) the theremin is an early electronic instrument. For one extended history of the theramin see: Albert Ginsky, *Theremin: Ether Music and Espionage* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

<sup>186</sup> Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *Aftershow*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Badischer Kunstverein, 2014), n.p.

<sup>187</sup> Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *Aftershow*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Badischer Kunstverein, 2014), n.p.

into being. “I am Oscar Wilde... I am Alla Nazimova .... I am Salome.” Artist and activist Gregg Bordowitz writes that performer Wu Ingrid Tsang ‘is simultaneously’ Oscar Wilde, Alla Nazimova, and Salome. Tsang both performs and ‘is’ these figures, which lays open the constructions of and conditions for something we describe as ‘identity’ or ‘self’ but also gender, sexuality, and race. Bordowitz continues, “Performers mimic modes of dress and style to signal time period, gender, race, class or social position. In some instances, performers instruct each other on how to move and act according to existing choreographies.”<sup>188</sup> This inclusion, self-awareness, and attention to choreography calls out the ways in which such differences are performed and have the power to materialize. We get the sense of an underground network of performers with whom Boudry/Lorenz continue to work—Werner Hirsh and Ginger Brooks Takahashi for instance appear again and again across their oeuvre. Bordowitz offers, “In Boudry/Lorenz’s work, transgender people, lesbians, women and queers become self-determining subjects constantly evolving through performance as a mode of being.”<sup>189</sup> This mode of being cites history and returns it by refusing constructions of temporality that would relegate history as something in the past tense and emphasizing the presence of history in our present. Recitation and reiteration produce change and difference. In *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* the performers do not speak to us linguistically but rather intone a vocality coproduced with instruments (with the exception of Peaches who sings an opening riff). Understanding this production as a form of vocality insists that voice is not something exclusively human and can be something coproduced. Vocality as a

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<sup>188</sup> Gregg Bordowitz, “Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz” in *Afterall: A Journal of Art* (September 2012, Issue 31), 12-25, 19.

<sup>189</sup> Gregg Bordowitz, “Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz” in *Afterall: A Journal of Art* (September 2012, Issue 31), 12-25, 25.

material with affective force is pressed into the ways that Oliveros' composition asks the performer to sustain desperation-as-dissonance.

This rub, extends beyond the tone-to-tone dissonance of Oliveros' score, or the grinding of bodies on stairs, to the temporal rub brought within the frame. In Oliveros' configuration of historical figures and in Boudry/Lorenz' return to the composition rework ways of doing history and temporality. Consider a still which pictures Ginger Brooks Takahashi moving across the frame which also pictures a screen on which a black and white photograph of Valerie Solanas at the time of her arrest (figure 20). Boudry/Lorenz are acutely and consciously engaged in their aesthetic practice as history, and history as aesthetic practice.<sup>190</sup> This bringing together of figures again flashes by quickly as the projector changes to an image from the scene of the hotel room where Marilyn Monroe was found dead. This felt friction and dissonance erupts from the desperation that the score evokes. In Pauline Oliveros' estimation "The shared "desperation" has only become more essential...Pauline and Renate's piece shows their understanding; Sean Griffin's operatic version shows his understanding. I appreciate their interpretations of my score."<sup>191</sup> What seems to be important for Oliveros is the recognition and amplification of this desperation by the performers of the score. Enjoining the desperation of Solanas and Monroe through the amplification of dissonance not only intensifies and relays their individual suffering but also proffers possibilities for recognition. How is this recognition performed? We can understand recognition as the basis for enacting political change, for solidarity, for trans-temporal alliance, performed listening to and for desperation-as-dissonance of these figures that

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Christy Lange "Imitation of Life: Animating archives in the 'queer archaeology' of Berlin-based duo Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz" Frieze, January 11, 2013 <https://frieze.com/article/imitation-life> (accessed December 1, 2016).

<sup>191</sup> Pauline Oliveros, e-mail correspondence, July 27, 2016.

would seem to be dead (Oliveros, Solanas, Monroe) and allowing oneself to be moved by the catalyzing force of their desperation-as-dissonance. And how might we understand Oliveros' use of 'essential' to designate desperation? One way would be to say that desperation has only become increasingly urgent or important to attend to. We might also understand this use of essential as a gesture toward desperation as increasingly constitutive or fundamental to being. That is, desperation as increasingly a condition of being in something that we so often term precarious. Further, as Oliveros designates this is a *shared desperation* that has become more 'essential'. This sharing leads us again to the realm of affects in terms of a shared condition.

We could understand Boudry/ Lorenz's iteration as introducing a haptically informed practice of sounding and listening, in that the performers emphatically use the rub of bodies to produce tones. This frictional rub plays out in the performers movement.<sup>192</sup> Most markedly in Takahashi's ascension of the staircase, and rub up on bodies and architecture, but arguably each of the performers rubs up on their instrument, creating an erotics of co-production that delivers the additional rub of dissonant tones. What does this touch, or rub offer for works that challenge our ability to hear with our ear? That is, how might a touching, feeling relation, also bring out listening as embodied practice? The etymological root of *haptic* draws from the Greek *haptein*, which means to take hold of an object, fasten onto, or to touch it.<sup>193</sup> We can understand the haptic in relation to Boudry/Lorenz's interpretation of the score, but also constitutive of the dissonance that grounds Oliveros' score and the ways in which Oliveros develops her practice of

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<sup>192</sup> "Stop interruptin my grindin"—Beyoncé, "Sorry", 2016  
 "I'm gonna kiss up and rub up and feel up  
 Kiss up and rub up and feel up on you"—Beyoncé, "All Night" *Lemonade*, 2016.

<sup>193</sup> "haptic, adj. (and n.)". OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84082?redirectedFrom=haptic> (accessed July 20, 2016).

Deep Listening (we will return to this). Further, haptic as the touching of senses up against each other becomes key in understanding the ways in which vocality might not be so easily relegated to a single sensory mode.

Film studies scholar Laura Marks' elaboration of "Haptic visuality" emphasizes the ways in which seeing or knowing exceed singular conceptions of sense in sight, smell, taste or hearing.<sup>194</sup> Extending this critical work, Rizvana Bradley's special issue "The Haptic: Textures of Performance" proposes "to theorize the haptic as a visceral register of experience and vital zone of experimentation" and "direct us to somatic forms of knowledge attuned not only to contemporary bodies and spaces, but also to the worlds and imaginations that have conditioned and surpassed the body in and of performance."<sup>195</sup> In their recent collaboration *The Undercommons*, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney offer 'hapticality' to describe what they theorize as "the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment," and the "feel that which is to come is here."<sup>196</sup> Returning to Moten and Harney's essay "Fantasy in the Hold" I get caught up in a word, a turn of phrase, and the unexpected switch in linguistic rhythm. "Hapticality, the capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem." I read the sentence again, and find myself stuck in the 'Hapticality, the capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you' at first, it seemed that it must be a typo—must have been the capacity to feel *through* others, for

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<sup>194</sup> Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>195</sup> Rizvana Bradley, "Introduction: Other Sensualities" in "The Haptic: Textures of Performance" Special Issue *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* (July 2014, Vol 24.2-3), 129-133.

<sup>196</sup> Fred Moten and Stephano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 98.

others to feel through you...’ and yet pausing longer to consider the text as it is—‘though others’ is all to the point of the project, that is *an assertion of feeling in spite of being others*, others whose feelings are discounted or, as those relegated to the not-human or not-fully-human, are imagined not to feel or not to feel in ways that matter. It is the assertion of this feeling that the paragraph unfolds—and this feeling is what continues to go ‘unregulated’ by a state. The feel in the hold, turning both on the affective and haptic dimensions and expanses of feel—is not accessible, visible or audible to everyone, indeed it structures the terms or frame of access.

The circulation of power that Oliveros’ score proposes is one way in which we could understand the affective intonation as one that works against the grain, and deploys dissonance toward anti-racist and anti-patriarchal ends.<sup>197</sup> The press release for Boudry/ Lorenz’s performance of the score state quotes Oliveros, “if anyone becomes dominant, the rest of the group should come up and absorb that dominance back into the texture of the piece Oliveros states “expressing at the deep structure what the *SCUM Manifesto* meant...it was really out of that understanding of both community and the individual-which was in her manifesto- that became the principle, or the philosophy, of the music that I began to write.”<sup>198</sup> The instructions are chosen in order to insist on “a continuous circulation of power” between listening and sounding, “a give and take that requires, as Oliveros says, an unusual attention to the relationship between oneself and others.”<sup>199</sup> Attuning ones attention towards this relational movement is the difficult work of listening in the composition.

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<sup>197</sup> Thank you to Cindy I-Fen Cheng for asking me to be explicit about this during our residency at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, UW-Madison.

<sup>198</sup> Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, “To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation, 2013” press release, Kunsthalle Zurich.

<sup>199</sup> Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, “To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation, 2013” press release, Kunsthalle Zurich.

Debates on the differentiations between hearing and listening are ongoing. According to Oliveros, “To hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived both acoustically and psychologically.”<sup>200</sup> This understanding highlights the interior subjective components of listening, while also leaving room for listening as a practice through the skin and the flesh, across heterogeneous bodies and not only as a function of the ear.<sup>201</sup>

For Oliveros, listening is an embodied practice. Thus, rather than an exclusively cerebral relay between brain and ear, listening becomes a form of attention practiced by the body and all the senses. The prompt to listen to as much as possible that grounds Oliveros’ practice of Deep Listening, can be aligned (and differentiated from) mindfulness and other meditation techniques. Indeed, a series of Sonic Meditations composed by Oliveros in 1971 form the basis for Deep Listening.<sup>202</sup> Oliveros describes these compositions as based on patterns of attention that propose ways of listening and responding.<sup>203</sup> That is, Oliveros’ practice of Deep Listening comes out of understanding listening and sounding as imbricated processes. Over the years, Oliveros has taught Deep Listening—encouraging community around the practice. First, as a research project at UCSD, then from 1991-2001 as week-long retreats at Rose Mountain in Las Vegas, New Mexico with Heloise Gold, and Ione, and then via positions at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in

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<sup>200</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer’s Sound Practice*. (New York: Deep Listening Publications and iuniverse, inc, 2005), xxii.

<sup>201</sup> This is a point where I’d like to flag work done in disability studies and relation to works that comment/play with this such as Christine Sun Kim oeuvre but also the Deaf Club work. This also signals a point in the project to be further developed in future iterations.

<sup>202</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations* (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications, 1971).

<sup>203</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer’s Sound Practice*. (New York: Deep Listening Publications and iuniverse, inc, 2005), xxii.

Troy New York, and Mills College in Oakland, California. As part of my research for this project, and with the encouragement of Linda Montano (Oliveros' former partner) and my advisor Jill Casid, I undertook the study of Deep Listening as a participant in the Deep Listening certification program through the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.<sup>204</sup> As a result, I had the opportunity to work directly with Pauline Oliveros and other Deep Listening practitioners and students. For a year, a cohort of seven students and six instructors met two Sunday's a month to engage in communal Deep Listening practice. Teaching instruction, discussion, creative practice and performance were all vital components of these sessions. Through these Deep Listening sessions lasting connection and community were formed.

These forms of solidarity and community emerge from the dynamic relation between sounding and listening that Oliveros' methodology calls for. Further, these forms of collectivity rise up as a means toward recognition of desperation-as-dissonance that might seem particular to the score at hand, and yet, it seems important to consider the timing of this practice and the timing of the composition, that is the early 1970s as the ground from which both emerge. The community that Oliveros' Deep Listening practice produces, the dissonance of her compositional strategy and the poppy-camp aesthetics of Boudry/Lorenz' filmed performance produce an energizing rub that gains catalyzing force across time. Boudry/Lorenz's interpretation of the score produces desperation-as-dissonance affectively and tonally while simultaneously envisioning queer solidarity out of the erotics of haptic listening. Their enactment of gender play, poppy visualization of queer bodies, and the lack of consensus as extending queer subjectivities

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<sup>204</sup> On the occasion of her visit to UW-Madison in October of 2015 Linda Montano enacted her durational Chicken Woman performance. In this iteration visitors were invited to have a visit with the Chicken Woman and to ask any question about your art or life. I asked the Chicken Woman about listening practice, and she said unequivocally that I must pursue the study of Deep Listening with Pauline Oliveros.

beyond a homo/hetero divide, are key to amplifying the rub of the political resonance of desperation-as-dissonance across time—that is, between the 60s and the 70s and between the 70s and the early 2000s, between then and now.

### **Affective Dissonance as Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas's Call**

We can say that *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* produces a call to listen, a call toward recognition (as the title implies) of Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas' shared desperation. But how does Oliveros' score do this? How does Boudry/Lorenz' iteration of the score do this? As I hope I have established, Oliveros structures a relation between affect and intonation, specifically desperation and dissonance in her score. Desperation manifests itself via this dissonance, and this dissonance builds on the haptic rub. By attending to the aesthetics of the haptic rub in Boudry/Lorenz' filmed performance we can understand how dissonance can be catalyzing, and materialize a kind of electrifying beat or current of solidarity. The composition of sounding and listening manifests a recognition or regard for this shared desperation through the production of the beat. Indeed, Oliveros understands dissonance and desperation as deeply interrelated terms. And in Oliveros' estimation this dedication to a shared desperation has become ever more urgent.<sup>205</sup> Rather than a desperation that was symptomatic of a particular moment in women's liberation movement in the U.S. or a particular wave of feminist discourse, Oliveros proposes that the volume of such desperation is only increasing, has continued presence, and continued effects in our present, which might prompt us to attend to the as-yet of Marilyn Monroe's poetic writing, and to Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* to listen closely to the reverberation of their desperation and the

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<sup>205</sup> Pauline Oliveros, e-mail correspondence, July 2016.

political resonance it has for the power of listening to affective dissonance to politically galvanize.

The question of translation with which I began this chapter, could be carried through to the ways in which reiteration matters in terms of the SCUM Manifesto and Marilyn Monroe's fragmented writings. What passages could be affectively changed by staging them as a type of music? Here we can understand Oliveros's composition to draw in the histories and vocalities of Solanas and Monroe but how too does the composition play back on their work? Said differently, what is the shift that happens when we listen to Solanas or Monroe's work through Oliveros composition? If we are listening to Oliveros as channeling Solanas and Monroe? Affective circuits don't move in only one direction, non-chronological, and feel incalculable for the ways they continue to volatize both a past that is not yet over, and a future that is not yet. Indeed, to work with desperation as dissonance is to work with affect and difference that have ethical stakes.

Pauline Oliveros acknowledges the influence of reading Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) on her compositional strategy for *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation*, but we can also understand this more broadly in terms of how Oliveros continues to engage the relationship of the individual to the collective across her compositions and her philosophical inquiry. What has garnered less attention is Marilyn Monroe's writing which has until recently gone largely unrecognized despite her star status in Hollywood. Posthumously we can look to the ways in which Monroe's writing indeed has chilling resonance with Oliveros' listening praxis.

In 2012 Marilyn Monroe's collected writing was published in *Fragments* which sets facsimiles of the original writing in little notebooks, on napkins, hotel stationary, alongside typed

transcriptions on the facing pages. *Fragments*, which also includes selections from Monroe's personal library, reveals a figure for whom writing and reading are lifelines amidst what continually surfaces as a tormented and tumultuous life. Critic Jenny Hendrix writes:

Monroe's messy handwriting complete with spelling and grammatical errors, give them a vulnerability characteristic of Monroe on film. This is heartbreaking, not least for feeding the myth of the dumb, blond "sweet angel of sex" (as Norman Mailer once put it). But Monroe also emerges in these pages as a surprisingly strong writer, capable of conveying very clearly and beautifully, in vivid images, her own pain.<sup>206</sup>

The Monroe typecast as a fragile, frail, "dumb blonde" is a figuration against which Monroe struggled—fiercely determined to expand her repertoire and break away from such casting—and as a voracious reader who self-educated—her writing speaks directly to this dissonance.<sup>207</sup> In a black notebook dated circa 1951 (figure 21-22), Marilyn Monroe writes:

Actress must have no mouth  
no feet  
shoulder  
girdle hangs light  
hanging  
so-o-o  
loose  
everything  
focus my thought on  
the partner  
feeling in the end of  
my fingers

~~Nothing must come~~  
~~Between me and my~~  
~~Part my feeling~~  
~~Concentration~~  
The feeling only  
Getting rid of everything

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<sup>206</sup> Jenny Hendrix, "Fragments of Marilyn" in *The New Yorker*, October 12, 2010. <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fragments-of-marilyn> (accessed January 12, 2017).

<sup>207</sup> Monroe as a reader is the subject of some discussion to various ends. Griselda Pollock re-reads Eve Arnold's photographs of Marilyn reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* to re-visit the double agency of these two women see: Griselda Pollock, "Monroe's Molly: Three Reflections on Eve Arnold's Photograph of Marilyn Monroe Reading *Ulysses*" in *Journal of Visual Culture* Vol 15(2), 2016: 203-232.

Else  
 My mind speaks  
 No looks  
 Body only  
 Letting go-face feeling  
 Mind  
 Spirit

Here, internal speech, internal vocality but also the space of the mind both as psychological terrain and of clairvoyance emerges. Monroe negates the mouth but maintains speech and vocality. Monroe continues:

No attitude  
 Listening to the body  
 For the feeling  
 Listen with the eyes  
 Buoyancy  
 Tension  
 Loose-having no brakes  
 Letting go of everything.  
 Feeling only—all I have to  
 Do is think it. How do  
 I hear the melody-the  
 Tone springs from emotion  
 Tone-groans and moans- “I’m  
     (animals—“down to the hogs”)  
 so sick”—hums from  
 with cat-hum-nice kitty soft

starts from below my feet  
 feet—all in my feet.

What is pantomime playing with  
 How is my head?<sup>208</sup>

Monroe proposes listening as embodied practice: both a ‘listening to the body’ and through the body, ‘listen with the eyes’. Hearing is not isolated to the ear, but instead ‘starts from below my feet—all in my feet’ a hearing of tonality that ‘springs from emotion’ and pushes us against the

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<sup>208</sup> Marilyn Monroe, *Fragments: poems, intimate notes, letters*, edited by Stanley Buchthal and Bernard Comment (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 36-37.

affective materiality of the ‘tone-groans and moans’. Monroe locates the hum in her feet. Here her feet function both as a site of vocal emission, and as source of hearing, listening.

Significantly, one of Oliveros’ most commonly referenced Sonic Meditations instructs us to “Take a walk at night. Walk so silently that the bottoms of your feet become ears.”<sup>209</sup> This mode of listening through the feet rather than the head that Monroe and Oliveros lead us to is perhaps counter-intuitive and at the same time, prompts a consideration of the ethical stance of listening—that is. Listening as not passive, but as a form of recognition that can move into action. Further, Monroe aligns *tone* as moving forth from emotion. Monroe is also talking about tonal and affective dissonance—in the ‘groans’ and ‘moans’. This proposition, is followed on the next page by the lines:

“as if I might never  
speak move”

Here Monroe’s subjunctive draws out the precarity of her vocality but also its assemblage: “As if I might never speak move.” Monroe’s placement of speech alongside movement lays them down softly beneath her question of pantomime. Pantomime as both gestural force where gesture might intone too, as Monroe proposes feet might hum.<sup>210</sup>

Marilyn Monroe’s breathy voice sexualized and associated with smooth seduction, comes also from her stutter. The ‘breath speech therapy meant to ‘correct’ her stutter also produces what becomes her iconic and breathy voice. Her stutter is a productive dissonance; her stutter becomes her iconic breathy voice and creates a proliferation of filmic takes. Taken by Marilyn Monroe’s handwriting—reproduced in *Fragments*—Phillipe Parreno made *Marilyn* (2012) a film

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<sup>209</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations* (Sharon, VT: Smith Publications, 1971); also quoted in her NYTimes Obituary.

<sup>210</sup> The hum holds sonorous space both in Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake* and in Tina Campt’s *Listening to Images*.

installation that stages Monroe's movements, her handwriting, voice, and point of view in her room at the Waldorf Astoria (figures 23-24). The machinic production of a voice and a mechanical hand perform a cyborg-like assemblage of movement and voice and point of view. This is an assemblage which Monroe anticipates in her subjunctive.

Such attention to intonation and reproduction stretches or torques Monroe's voice temporally as well as tonally. Tone which comes from the Latin *tonus* and from the Greek *tonos* 'tension, tone' from *teinein* 'to stretch'. An attendant question might be, how is this stretching tension related to the torque of queerness? Is this a way to pull out the queer potentials of intonation? In her essay, "Turning the 'Fearful Sphere': Prepositional Tactics in and for the Global" Jill Casid conjures Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges image of universal history as "the history of the different intonations given a handful of metaphors" to draw out the difference of relation from which she builds her five prepositional tactics for the exploded global.<sup>211</sup> Intonation was also taken up as a queer potential of the voice in *Queer Voice* (2010) an exhibition at the ICA Philadelphia featuring works by ten artists that lingered on what it means to 'sound strange.'<sup>212</sup> The vocality in *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* produces a relation that is one of dissonance that in turn produces additional tonalities on top of ones chosen by performers. In Parreno's *Marilyn* the reveal of an algorithmically machinated voice of a 'ghostly machine Marilyn' performs a paranoid exposure of the assemblage of technologies from which vocality emerges.<sup>213</sup> That is, while affective

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<sup>211</sup> Jill H. Casid, "Turning the 'Fearful Sphere': Prepositional Tactics in and for the Global" in *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, ed. Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza. Sterling and Francis Clark Institute distributed by Yale University Press, 2014), 215-216.

<sup>212</sup> Exhibition description see: <http://icaphila.org/exhibitions/1714/queer-voice>

<sup>213</sup> Jill H. Casid, "Interpreting 'Screen Time'" *Oxford Scholarship Online*, OUPblog, December 2015. <https://blog.oup.com/2015/12/scenes-of-projection/> (accessed June 20, 2016).

intonation would seem to be the stuff of the material human, we continue to find its roving presence/absence as vibrational movement across media.

When Marilyn Monroe's collected and undated poems are gathered together and published for the first time in *Fragments*, Jacqueline Rose observes "the poetic form, or more generally the fragment, allowed her to express short, lightning bursts of feeling—but who could hear that frail voice, the very opposite of the radiant star?"<sup>214</sup> In reading Monroe's work, both cinematic and poetic—what voice emerges? What do we hear? *Is it* a frail voice? Critic Jocelyn Heaney observes, "despite the poems' emotional rawness, her word choice, punctuation, and line breaks demonstrate consideration and intent."<sup>215</sup> Such criticism is often cringe worthy with its palpable surprise infusing its description of Monroe's ability. This 'frailty' is a projection onto a muffled voice.<sup>216</sup> But what if we were so transfixed by Monroe's mouth that we had forgotten to listen to her feet?

It is tempting to make a recuperative return to the figures Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas—that is to place them within a triumphalist historical frame that allows them to 'finally be heard' and that recognizes the power of their work, which risks a glossed account of the oppression and ill treatment they received from the largely male dominated and often misogynist fields of art and film. Instead, Oliveros' composition stages recognition through the trouble, the difficulty, and through the dissonance. What if we understand affective dissonance as their call?

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<sup>214</sup> Jacqueline Rose, "A Rumbling of Things Unknown" *London Review of Books*, Vol 34 No. 8 (26 April 2012), 29-34. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n08/jacqueline-rose/a-rumbling-of-things-unknown> (accessed January 12, 2017)

<sup>215</sup> Jocelyn Heaney, "Marilynalia" *LA Review of Books*, May 10, 2011, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/marilynalia/> (accessed September 13, 2017)

<sup>216</sup> We can also think towards feminist Barbara Johnson's work on 'Muteness Envy' or Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence."

A swell of recent scholarship within queer theory and queer studies also attempts to return to the ambivalent and deeply mixed histories and affective tenor of those figures that don't so quickly cohere to a neoliberal gay politic of assimilation or inclusion.<sup>217</sup>

### **Dissonance as a call to action**

#### **Or, In recognition of “Their call to Action”**

The bringing together of what might seem to be the oppositional figures of Marilyn Monroe's iconic and luminescent glam and Valerie Solanas's radically defiant lesbian feminism is not accidental. That is the structure of dissonance extends from the composition to its title—juxtaposition, shift, and at the same time, a sharing out of desperation. This shared desperation which Oliveros points to makes ground for a commons that does not insist on a type or figure, and a ground for shared affect. Instead, the shared singular plural of *their* desperation makes possible a feminism with utopian capacities of inclusivity and love.

Etymologically desperation can be understood as the undoing of hope. Here, the hopeless, despair, depressed and desperate might seem to be tied to the negative, lack, or loss and yet Oliveros figures the production of desperation as a proliferation of dissonance. We might consider this undoing and its rub with proliferation as producing the rub of the haptic. This negativity need not mean passivity, negative dissonance can forge a different kind of movement.

Out of desperation, or loss—the pushing to extremity—the bringing together creates the possibility for another beat, the beat of dissonance. If we understand queerness as in excess of a homo/hetero binary, and instead oriented toward something like desperation-as-dissonance or

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<sup>217</sup> For example: Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

even madness, we might understand this shared terrain as a queer-feminist ground.<sup>218</sup> One could of course construct a comparison of these two figures, Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas—their shared circumstances of impoverished youth, sexual abuse, and estrangement from family, both were known for their beauty, wit, intellect, industrious work ethic and tragic deaths. Both women died alone, Marilyn to probable suicide, and Valerie isolated, destitute and by most accounts strung out on meth. Marilyn died lying face down on her bed by overdosing on barbiturates, and Valerie died kneeling before her bed—only discovered days after her death, her body filled with maggots.<sup>219</sup> There is something overtly political and almost scandalous in the juxtaposition of these female figures—further the structural inspiration coming from Solanas’ manifesto makes it a fascinating case study for ways of doing history, theorizing in sonic dimensions, music as feminist theory that has continued political resonance for a current moment; while the poetry of Monroe seems to foreshadow Oliveros’ later motivations in *Deep Listening*.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Desireé Rowe and Karma Chávez forward queer performativity of madness out of Valerie Solanas’ rhetoric and her performance of a series of slippages in their co-authored article “Valerie Solanas and the Queer Performativity of Madness” *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 11 (3) (2011), 274-284.

<sup>219</sup> Breanne Fahs, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)* (New York: Feminist Press, 2014), 329; Donald Spoto, *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*. (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 574-577.

<sup>220</sup> Reference current threshold in terms of calling out public figures for rape and sexual assault and harassment. For recent assessments see: Lauren Berlant, “The Predator and the Jokester” (December 13, 2017), Jane Ward, “Thinking Bad Sex” (November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017), Jack Halberstam, “Wieners, Whiners, Weinsteins and Worse” (October 25, 2017), <https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com>. See also Sara Ahmed’s post positioning her work on complaint as a form of diversity work in relation to sexual harassment and sexual abuse: “The Figure of the Abuser”(November 5, 2017), <https://feministkilljoys.com/2017/11/05/the-figure-of-the-abuser/> For an analysis of interpersonal and intra-community conflict see Sarah Schulman, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility and the Duty of Repair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016) in which she makes an argument for restorative justice as a way to reroute reliance on the state for mediation and punishment and form solidarity and toleration of difference.

In *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* Oliveros attempts to create a score that circulates power within and across the group, rather than a replication of patriarchal and hierarchical power structures. Improvisation as a structural technique facilitates this. Monroe points us to the ensemblic force of listening through one's feet. In Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* she also asserts a lateral sovereignty that might emerge with the elimination of the patriarchy,

“In fact, the female function is to relate, groove, love and be herself, irreplaceable by anyone else...in actual fact, the female function is to explore, discover, invent, solve problems crack jokes, make music—all with love. In other words, create a magic world.”<sup>221</sup>

Again, Solanas reiterates that the end goal is love: “A woman not only takes her identity and individuality for granted, but knows instinctively that the only wrong is to hurt others, and that the meaning of life is love.”<sup>222</sup>

From the beginning, Valerie Solanas stages her manifesto from the perspective of responsibility. Solanas begins:

Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.<sup>223</sup>

Solanas defines the male as an incomplete female—folding the lack that psychoanalysis so often places on the female back onto male, “Being an incomplete female, the male spends his life attempting to complete himself, to become female.”<sup>224</sup> In a continued explication of this

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<sup>221</sup> Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2004), 47

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 53

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

confusion and misrecognition across genders, Solanas states:

Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy. When the male accepts his passivity, defines himself as a woman (males as well as females think men are women and women are men), and becomes a transvestite, he loses his desire to screw (or to do anything else, for that matter; he fulfills himself as a drag queen) and gets his dick chopped off. He then achieves a continuous diffuse sexual feeling from "being a woman." Screwing is, for a man, a defense against his desire to be female.<sup>225</sup>

While in some ways Solanas' manifesto displays limited visions of gender, of masculinity and femininity, and discussions of drag, that are conservative in comparison to current understandings of drag, trans embodiment, intersex, and non-gender conforming bodies, we can also look to Solanas's work disarming both man and woman.

Solanas provides a critique of the family unit characterizing it as an isolating and fearful structure that prevents/inhibits the possibility of other forms of 'true community' which instead would consist of "individuals—not mere species members, not couples—respecting each other's individuality and privacy, at the same time interacting with each other mentally and emotionally—free spirits in free relation to each other—and cooperating with each other to achieve common ends. Traditionalists say the basic unit of "society" is the family; "hippies" say the tribe; no one says the individual."<sup>226</sup> By placing emphasis on the individual as the basic unit of community, Solanas reorients modes of collectivity. SCUM, "Society for Cutting Up Men" could be taken metaphorically and understood as a rearranging, a decoupage, an undoing of patriarchy, an elimination of leadership. Cut up—in slang can also mean to make fun of, or to fuck—to get down, or to make a scene. Avital Ronell aligns Solanas with Jacques Derrida in a reconsideration of both their aims to eliminate the unity of man. Ronell writes, "SCUM is a kind of receptor site: it has received news of man's demise and sets itself up as a broadcast system,

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 49.

signaling from the future of an enormous transmutation.”<sup>227</sup> Here, listening is also sounding, or resounding, transmission and transmutation. This is the stuff that brings the hum to Monroe’s feet as both humming and hearing, transmitting and receiving—the relay that attempts not to lose the scream, the listening in and to the difficulty of the hard to hear.

This sharing of their desperation—*their* as a gender neutral and possessive pronoun is useful in creating terms for a feminism and anti-patriarchy that doesn’t ‘belong’ to any particularly gendered body—but might be shared across bodies—or body parts (as in the head to the foot, the front to the rear) grounds a feminism that maintains the potential to be explicitly inclusive of trans women and non-gender conforming and genderqueer people. But also, an across-ness, and a collectivity that doesn’t require the dissolve of difference but emerges out of that difference—that is, the beat of dissonance. The desperation intoned as dissonance in *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* produces continued political resonance felt in our present. Listening to desperation-as-dissonance as Oliveros asks us, listening with our feet as Monroe proposes, and understanding the signaling or calling as galvanizing transmutational and affective power in Solanas’ *SCUM Manifesto* move us towards a feeling of political resonance of the scream emitted not just from the mouth but also through the rub of one body against the next, the foot against the ground, these are ways to begin such recognition. Indeed, reading Solanas’ manifesto as an avant-garde text means a refusal of the separation between manifesto and her shooting Andy Warhol, instead inscribing the famous assault within her performative project.<sup>228</sup> Yet, to subsume Oliveros, Solanas, or Monroe within

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<sup>227</sup> Avital Ronell, “The Deviant Payback: The Aims of Valerie Solanas” (p. 1-34) in Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2004), 12.

<sup>228</sup> John Harding asserts Solanas’ alignment with the avant-garde tendency see: John Harding, “The Simplest Surrealist Act: Valerie Solanas and the (Re)Assertion of Avantgarde Priorities” 2001. *TDR*. Vol. 45, No. 4 142-162. For an argument of Solanas’ as part of a queer “rear-guard” see: Marit Bugge,

the avant-garde may indeed to enact the violent simplification that has proved so detrimental to civil rights movements—that is, as Judith Butler points out “to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims” is to lose Antigone’s defiance, or as Anne Carson forbids “to lose the scream.” In the case of *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation*, we can understand these cautionary remarks as a call to hang on to the desperation-as-dissonance. Rather than resolving or subsuming, we might hold fast to the catalyzing energy of the beat of dissonance to move towards recognition—which might not be from the head or the ear at all, but from the foot. Moving from the head to the foot might align us with Sara Ahmed’s proposal for the rear-guard wherein transformative political force might come from behind, or Monroe might say from our feet:

We have to walk differently: it is not that those behind come to the front, but that staying back gives you the time to question, to ask rather than tell. A politics of the rear is still a movement. When the wretched are walking, the feet are talking. To keep walking, to keep going, to keep coming up, is a certain kind of talking, talking *to* not talking *at*.<sup>229</sup>

Ahmed’s orientation of a movement from behind, a movement wherein the feet are talking, draws out the implications of re-attuning to *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* through our feet as a form of recognition of their call to action. That is, when the desperate, the marginalized, “the wretched are walking, the feet are talking.” To centralize the desperation-as-dissonance, to hold onto the scream, is also ‘a certain kind of talking’ with deep political resonances in our present moment.

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“Writing Violence: The Feeling Politics of Valerie Solanas” in *Feral Feminisms*. Issue 3, Winter 2015. [www.feralfeminisms.com/writing-violence/](http://www.feralfeminisms.com/writing-violence/) (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>229</sup> Sara Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of the Vanguard,” *Feministkilljoys*. January 1, 2014. <http://feministkilljoys.com/2013/12/01/a-phenomenology-of-the-vanguard/> (accessed December 15, 2017).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Oliveros' *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* proposes a new structuring of power, through an affective force of desperation-as-dissonance that forms that asks the spectator-as-listener is asked to listen to and through difference. As I argue the composition asks that we listen—indeed even produces a beat to which we might move—but frustrates that listening through the means of its production: dissonance. Here we are asked to listen to and through dissonance. In my response to the call of Oliveros' *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* I followed the prompt of attuning to multiple vocalities at once. That is, if answering to a sounded note of desperation holds the potential to create political solidarity or 'illegitimate collaboration' across time I have asked that we consider the propositions of Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas as working not only across Oliveros' composition but also on us with yet unrealized future force. This tactic of amplification and intensification of tonality and affect has the potential to both draw us in and to repel us. That is, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* simultaneously pulls us in to listen, and pushes us away or frustrates that listening through the use of dissonant and experimental tonality. That hook, that call, asks that we return to this difficulty and rather than resolve, quiet, or displace it, that we care through the attention that listening requires.

## Conclusion

Maybe we can reorientate caring from caring for someone's happiness to caring what happens to someone or something: caring about what happens, caring whatever happens. We might call this a hap care rather than a happiness care. A hap care would not be about letting an object go, but holding on to an object by letting oneself go, giving oneself over to something that is not one's own. A hap care would not seek to eliminate anxiety from care; it could even be described as care for the hap. Caring is anxious—to be full of care, to be careful, is to take care of things by becoming anxious about their future, where the future is embodied in the fragility of an object whose persistence matters. --Sara Ahmed, *To Live a Feminist Life*<sup>230</sup>

This dissertation is an exercise in theorizing with and attending to works of art that issue a difficulty that refuses to settle and continues to call on the spectator to listen. This is not easy listening.<sup>231</sup> As I have argued these works forge relation through that difficulty that produces possible anxiety and frustration for the spectator-as-listener. Caring for such difficult vocalities makes me anxious, and yet, as Sara Ahmed proposes maybe this affective excess (anxiety) need not be eliminated. Indeed, rather than letting these artworks go—I have tried to give myself over to them in the process of uneasy listening. To care for these works is to be moved too in excess of speech. Anxiety as affective relation to their vocality in excess of speech is also to care. If to be a curator or to curate is to be anything at all, I'd like it to be a verb rather than a noun, a form of care for the difficult, the ostensibly marginal or partial, the uneasy, the off, the queer. I prefaced this dissertation with a potentially embarrassing overshare of vulnerability from which this project began, a search for forms of care that provide sustenance for both the patient and the caregiver. Rather than producing a text that describes what that sustenance should look like, or

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<sup>230</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 266.

<sup>231</sup> This statement echo's Adrian Piper's 1990 essay "Goodbye to Easy Listening" in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, 177.

how we should listen, I hope to have produced a text that describes the desiring call for an ethics of attention.

I care about what happens to these vocalities, what forms of attention they receive, and I believe that their persistence matters. Vocality, as I have traced it in this dissertation, offers itself as a potential, working in excess of speech. I use the gerund ‘working’ to signal the ongoing work of the call issued from these artworks; this call continues its work in excess of speech. This call is working in excess of speech and this ongoing work also offers itself as the technology of relation outward to me, to you, and to a yet to be future.

This dissertation offers a series of observations about the way in which these works got a hold on me. Cue: you really got a hold on me. The works of art I engage might seem to comfortably fit into media specific categories: photography, experimental music, experimental film or video art. Yet arguably to view them as such would also be to cut short or to ignore what can be understood as their most distinctive and persistent attribute and agency; the way in which they call on us, position us, and leave us without resolving their difficulty of address. This is not to say that on the one hand they issue a message which only has to be decoded, or that they issue a call which is indecipherable. It is to insist on *the work that they do on us* by asking us to remain in what is often uncomfortable suspension.

Chapter 1, “Echo Effects: Listening to Adrian Piper’s *Food for the Spirit* (1971)”, argues that Piper’s performance produces multiple echo effects which as yet have not been attended to for their affective and sonic materiality and force dispersed across the objects that remain. By asking us to listen to something that would seem not to produce sound this case study engages vocality as a potentiality to get at the acoustic address of *Food for the Spirit*, the way in which it calls for listening, and yet renders listening difficult. I argue that to reduce *Food for the Spirit* to

the photographs and the photographs to the seeming closure of visual evidence is to miss the conceptual challenge of the work's address, an address that is not merely produced out of a performance method as challenge to epistemological practice but is issued as a challenge to method. As I develop, Piper's radical, feminist re-working of Kantian rationalism is not merely a matter of her method of performance as insertion but of her method of performance as dispersion, an echo effect of challenge to method that issues in the contingent relay of its call to us across what remains.

Chapter 2, "A Call to Breath: Ana Mendieta's *Grass Breathing* (1974)", argues that this relatively unique film from Mendieta's oeuvre, a film that has been cataloged as silent, extends a call to breath, that opens out as a call to a body politic, a collectivity that brings together multiple and singular breaths. As such, this chapter considers Mendieta's tactics of position and dis- and re-orienting the spectator through perspectival and choreographed movements. As I argue, Mendieta's use of movement to register breath calls the spectator to breath with and against a ground that becomes a commons.

In Chapter 3, "Political Resonances of Affective Dissonance: Pauline Oliveros' *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* (1970)" I argue that Oliveros' composition proposes a new structuring of power, through an affective force of desperation-as-dissonance that asks the spectator to listen to and through difference. The composition simultaneously asks that we listen and frustrates that listening through the means of its production: dissonance. In the chapter I attune to multiple vocalities at once by drawing in the referential materials and propositions in the writing of Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas.

In exploring these works by Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, and Pauline Oliveros, I have argued that their deployments of vocality might be linked through the ways in which these works

of art challenge us to rework our methodology for engagement through their demands for specific ethics of attention. One implication of this ongoing work is that situating these works as ‘1970s feminist artworks’, as if they are static and complete would be to violently cut short the work and challenge they extend to us. That is, the call these works issue is to and for the future, the work they do is in excess of the 1970s and as such, to contextualize them as somehow about the 1970s would delimit their import and reach. The length of the call to the future, it would be a violence to cut it short, stop its persistence and Vocality functions as a technology of relation in these works by Piper, Mendieta, and Oliveros by insisting on a call that both exceeds the present and at time exceeds apprehension and comprehension.

If Piper issues an address with and through the tactics of dispersion and what I term ‘echo effects’ this difficulty of locating, and retracing of the object is also present in Boudry/Lorenz’s work in that there is a return to Oliveros’ composition and the use of dissonance to create a separate beat. Part of the difficulty of these vocalities is that they are transmitted in a kind of swerve—via the photograph, via movement, via a dissonant beat. They are hard to hear, and in part this is because there is something is slightly ‘off’ about them.

This project has been an exercise of theorizing with works of art—just as the artists with whom I am most closely engaged theorize with Immanuel Kant, a speaking earth, Marilyn Monroe, and Valerie Solanas among others. Following the lead of Adrian Piper, Ana Mendieta, and Pauline Oliveros requires that I cast what can sometimes feel like destructive and radical doubt back onto anything and everything I know. That is, rather than solidifying the world in which I find myself, their work actively remakes that world. To call up and to call in such doubt troubles what could seem to be the stabilizing effect of finding voice or issuing vocality.

That is, who am I to be doing the talking? To write a dissertation on listening, the challenge is to not stop the call but keep it going, that is, to call on listening because, as I have argued, this call to listen is crucial to the ethical and political aims of the work of women artists, queer artists, and artists of color. While I focus most closely on three works from the early 1970s, this dissertation responds to a wider phenomenon in contemporary art practice that defies the strict bounds of discrete periodization, media, and genre by issuing a call to listen that is rendered difficult or even impossible to apprehend and that has ongoing consequence in our present. I have considered some of the ways contemporary artists have experimented with difficult and complex vocality to produce multiple calls: a call to ethics, a call to breath, a call to action. Yet there are additional frameworks that I would like to explore in future iterations of this project.

Complex vocalities as they call in multiple yet specific histories outside of the experience of the artist—here I am thinking of the way in which Zoe Leonard’s *Strange Fruit (for David)* directly calls up the history of lynching and anti-black racism in the U.S. through its reference to the anti-lynching song made famous by Billie Holiday and the specific memorialization of a friend, artist David Wojnarowicz lost to the AIDS epidemic. *Strange Fruit (for David)* works with the history of the AIDS crisis and the history of anti-black racism at the same time. I was privileged to view *Strange Fruit (for David)* which is on display for the first time since 2001 as a part of *Zoe Leonard: Survey* the first large scale retrospective of Leonard’s work in a U.S. museum exhibition (curated by Bennett Simpson with Rebecca Matalon at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles). Assistant Curator Elisabeth Sherman who oversaw the Whitney’s installation of the show organized an event around *Strange Fruit* during which invited speakers Gregg Bordowitz, Jonah Groeneboer, Katie Hubbard, Fred Moten, Christian Scheidemann, and Cameron Rowland spoke to the relevance of this work today and its multiply

inflected histories. In a stunning performance of the way in which *Strange Fruit (for David)* calls up these multiple histories and how the work keeps calling, contemporary conceptual artist Cameron H. Rowland read passages from Ida B. Wells’ “Lynch Law” an anti-lynching report from 1893.<sup>232</sup> Rowland begins by saying,

Strange Fruit is remarkable for its capacity. It is somehow able to attend to multiple legacies of violence, understanding their relationship without resorting to equation or equivalence. This is part of what makes it remarkable. I’d like to orient my brief contribution here toward the history of lynching that the work refers to, with an understanding that this history is only one means of entering into the continuing expanse that the work outlines.<sup>233</sup>

I am humbled by the care and precision with which Rowland chooses his words to situate the vantage from which he speaks but also to distinguish that what he hears *Strange Fruit* giving out is only one history among ‘the continuing expanse that the work outlines.’ This way of presuming not that one’s vantage is the authority or end but that it is one among a proliferation is deeply inspirational for developing a methodology that forwards and maintains a careful and caring anxiety about its positioning. What about all the other anti-lynching songs the piece calls up? Or “the conditions that produce a song like that?” to recall Nina Simone’s injunction with which I began.<sup>234</sup> In future iterations of this project, I’d like to consider *Strange Fruit (for David)* for the continued urgency and relevance of both producing anti-racist, queer, and feminist work and for the ethics of attention it demands.

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<sup>232</sup> This text is accessible on “History is a Weapon” blog:  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/wellslynchlaw.html>

<sup>233</sup> A video of the event is available for viewing here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfD8iWicHB4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfD8iWicHB4&feature=player_embedded), Cameron H. Rowland’s contribution begins at approximately: 1:23:20.

<sup>234</sup> See Nina Simone’s performance of “Feelings” at the 1976 Montreux Jazz festival:  
<https://vimeo.com/163582550>

In the manuscript at hand I have not explicitly addressed either the implications this theorization has for Disability Studies or fully engaged extant literature in disability studies discourse that would seek to displace normative notions of vocality, listening, or hearing. I hope that in future iterations this conversation could be more explicit. These questions of choral vocality and assemblage also hold implications for the work of bringing artists into contact with each other—in the form of the dissertation and in the projected future forms of this project expanded as an exhibition and a book. My interest in developing this material toward a book manuscript and exhibition are catalyzed by what feel like the urgent nexus of issues at hand: vocality is complex, multiple, and not always audible; listening as a form of attention and care is political; and contemporary art that demands we reconsider these registers holds the capacity to remake our worlds.

## Appendix A

Sylvia Rivera, “Y’all Better Quiet Down” (1973)

(Transcription follows:)

**Sylvia Rivera:** I may be—

**Crowd:** [booing]

**Sylvia Rivera:** Y'all better quiet down. I've been trying to get up here all day for your gay brothers and your gay sisters in jail that write me every motherfucking week and ask for your help and you all don't do a goddamn thing for them.

Have you ever been beaten up and raped and jailed? Now think about it. They've been beaten up and raped after they've had to spend much of their money in jail to get their [inaudible], and try to get their sex changes. The women have tried to fight for their sex changes or to become women. On the women's liberation and they write 'STAR,' not to the women's groups, they do not write women, they do not write men, they write 'STAR' because we're trying to do something for them.

I have been to jail. I have been raped. And beaten. Many times! By men, heterosexual men that do not belong in the homosexual shelter. But, do you do anything for me? No. You tell me to go and hide my tail between my legs. I will not put up with this shit. I have been beaten. I have had my nose broken. I have been thrown in jail. I have lost my job. I have lost my apartment for gay liberation and you all treat me this way? What the fuck's wrong with you all? Think about that!

I do not believe in a revolution, but you all do. I believe in the gay power. I believe in us getting our rights, or else I would not be out there fighting for our rights. That's all I wanted to say to you people. If you all want to know about the people in jail and do not forget Bambi L'amour, and Dora Mark, Kenny Metzner, and other gay people in jail, come and see the people at Star House on Twelfth Street on 640 East Twelfth Street between B and C apartment 14.

The people are trying to do something for all of us, and not men and women that belong to a white middle class white club. And that's what you all belong to!

REVOLUTION NOW! Gimme a 'G'! Gimme an 'A'! Gimme a 'Y'! Gimme a 'P'! Gimme an 'O'! Gimme a 'W'! Gimme an 'E'! Gimme an 'R'! [crying] Gay power! Louder! GAY POWER!

## Appendix B

Adrian Piper, "Food for the Spirit" in *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Volume 1: Selected Writings in Meta Art 1968-1992* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1996), 55; First circulated in *High Performance*, 4, No. 1 (Spring 1981).

"This piece was performed in my loft in NYC continually throughout the summer of 1971. I had become very interested in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and spent the summer doing nothing else but studying it, doing yoga, and fasting. I didn't see other people at all, and went out only to shop and take walks for exercise. The *Critique* is the most profound book I have ever read, and my involvement in it was so great that I thought I was losing my mind, in fact losing my sense of self completely. I would read certain passages that were so intensely affecting and deep that I would literally break into a cold sweat. I could think of nothing else, and became obsessed with Kant's thought; I read it, talked about it, wrote about it, and even dreamed about it constantly. My friends became seriously alarmed when they would call me up and all I could do was babble incoherently about space, time, and the transcendental self. Often, the effect of Kant's ideas were so strong that I couldn't take it anymore. I would have to stop reading in the middle of a sentence, on the verge of hysterical, and go to my mirror and peer at myself to make sure I was still there. Since I was on a two-month juice and water fast at the same time, this seemed often to be a serious question. It felt as though I was on the verge of abdicating my individual self on every level, becoming Kant's analysis of the Transcendental Unity of Apperception in the Synthesis of Appearances according to Rules Given by the Understanding for Reflective Self-Consciousness. I have always had a strong mystical streak.

To anchor myself in the physical world, I ritualized my frequent contacts with the physical appearance of myself in the mirror through *Food for the Spirit*. I rigged up a camera and tape recorder next to the mirror so that every time the fear of losing myself overtook me and drove me to the "reality check" of the mirror, I was able both to record my physical appearance objectively, and also record myself on tape repeating the passage in the *Critique* that was currently driving me to self-transcendence. The sight and sound of me, the physically embodied Adrian Piper, repeating passages from Kant reassured me by demarcating the visual, verbal, and aura boundaries of my individual self, and reminded me of the material conditions of my mental state: that the *Critique* was a book with good ideas in it which I had chosen to study, and not (only? Necessarily? Really?) the entrance into a transcendent reality of disembodied self-consciousness."

## Appendix C

MUSIC  
M  
1970

5829153

055  
T6  
1977

**To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe  
In Recognition of Their Desperation - - - -**

by Pauline Oliveros

for any group or groups  
of instrumentalists (6 to  
large orchestra)

September 28, 1970  
Holland, Michigan

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A M E R I C A N M U S I C

## To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe

### In Recognition of Their Desperation - - - -

by Pauline Oliveros

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Any group or groups of instrumentalists, from small chamber ensemble to large orchestra, may be utilized. Singers who have perfect pitch (or a pitch pipe) may be included. Pipe organ, electrophonic instruments and electronic music systems may be used.

**ORCHESTRAL VERSION:** Divide into three or more groups, each with approximately equal strings, winds, brass and pitched percussion. Pipe organ or electronic music system is classed as a group. The groups are placed antiphonally in the space. Each group except the pipe organ or electronic music system must have a conductor.

**CHAMBER VERSION:** For each group of like instruments, one performer acts as the leader, i.e. string leader, brass leader, wind leader, etc. All performers occupy one area in the space.

**DURATION:** 30 minutes (3, 10 minute sections)  
 45 minutes (3, 15 minute sections)  
 60 minutes (3, 20 minute sections)

The duration of the three sections is controlled by a lighting system. Section 1 is all red light, Section 2 is all yellow light, and Section 3 is all blue light. The system capability must allow the operator to cross fade the different lights very gradually. The color changes act as cues for the performers. (These cues will be described under the performance directions.)

In addition to the three color changes, two high intensity (strobe or photo flash) white flashes are necessary. The first one happens after 2/3 of the time of Section 1. The second flash happens after 1/3 of the time of Section 3.

Ideally, the color changes should cover the entire auditorium, audience as well as performers. If this is impractical, then all of the performers must be covered by the light or at least aware of the color changes and the two flashes.

**PERFORMANCE DIRECTIONS:** The basis of this composition is the performance, by all players, of very long tones and any possible modulation or variation of any part of the tone which does not change the fundamental frequency of the tone. Variations of the long tones may be affected by independent or simultaneous modulations of amplitude (volume), articulation, formant or partials (timbre), or any other means within the capability of the performers. Vibrato or regular tonal fluctuations through the pitch center is permissible.

All players select five different pitches without consulting each other. At least two of the pitches must be in a non-diatonic or dissonant relationship to the other three pitches. Pitch choice should be influenced also by registers which are comfortable and afford the greatest variety of modulation.

An unmodulated long tone has a very soft or long attack and release and is sustained at one dynamic level.

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**CONDUCTORS' SIGNALS:** Conductors may use any combination of right hand and left hand signals.

Left Hand: Pointing at individual player means solo cue.

- 1 finger means strings
- 2 fingers means winds
- 3 fingers means brass
- 4 fingers means percussion
- 5 fingers means all

Right Hand:

- Circle made with thumb and first finger means long tones, unmodulated.
- Fist means long tones, modulated.
- Palm out with arm straight up means fade out slowly.

Downbeat means attack.

Cutoff means release.

**LIGHT CUES (all performers):**

- Red Light - introduce pitch number 1 on cue from conductor. Continue independently unless fadeout cue is given.
- White Light Flash - gradually introduce pitches 2, 3, 4, and 5 in any order.
- Yellow Light - borrow pitches and modulation techniques from other players. Also continue your own selected pitches and modulation techniques.
- Blue Light - return gradually to your own five pitches.
- White Light Flash - return gradually to your own pitch number 1. Fade out extremely slowly when there is no more blue light.

After the first white light flash, performers may play two or more of the selected pitches simultaneously or successively. Brass and winds could accomplish this by playing one pitch and singing another simultaneously. After the second white light flash each performer may sound only pitch number 1.

Conductors begin, after the red light fades up, to cue in players individually. The pace should be very slow. The conductors improvise according to what is heard by indicating ensemble attacks and releases at appropriate dynamic levels. Players should have some independence early in the piece also, i.e. players not involved in the ensemble attacks may continue independently unless fadeout cue is given.

Each performer and conductor should try to influence the overall timbre of the piece, for the most part blending sounds rather than dominating. If a player is too loud it is the responsibility of the ensemble to raise the general dynamic level.

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

Pipe organ - once selected, the pitch fundamental must remain the same although higher octaves may be introduced by registration. Use weights on the keys or an assistant to free hands for registration changes. Occasionally attack more than one pitch simultaneously or overlap pitches. Use variations in sound location if possible. Always blend with the ensemble.

Electronic music system - minimum equipment necessary: seven or more oscillators, waveforms optional; a voltage controlled mixer or five voltage controlled amplifiers; five or more attack generators; voltage controlled filters; pulse generators; keyboards, sequencers, and other devices as needed. Use at least four channels. Any process which does not change the fundamental frequency is permissible. Always blend with the ensemble. Speaker placement is very important with respect to the ensemble.

## Figures

### Introduction



Figure 1: Rashaad Newsome, *When You're Talking to Someone and You Know They Are Lying but You Keep Listening*, 2015. Collage on paper. Photo courtesy of De Buck Gallery.



Figure 2: Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit (for David)*, 1992-1997. (details) Orange, banana, grapefruit, lemon, and avocado peels with thread, zippers, buttons, sinew, needles, plastic, wire, stickers, fabric, and trim wax. Dimensions vary with installation. Collection of Philadelphia

Museum of Art. Purchased with funds contributed by the Dietrich Foundation and with the partial gift of the artist and the Paula Cooper Gallery, 1998. 1998.2.1.



Figure 3: Benvenuto Chavajay, *4'33'' Versión 2 (John Cage)*, 2015. Microphone stands, clay microphones. Multimedia Installation. Photo courtesy of artist.



Figure 4: Installation view, Jennie C. Jones, *Compilation* at The Contemporary Art Museum Houston TX. December 11 - March 27 2016.



Figure 5: Christine Sun Kim's *All. Day.* 2012 from series *Scores and Scripts*. Score, ink, pastel, and charcoal on paper. 38.5x50".

*Erratum Musical*

*Yonne*

Faire une em-prein te mar-quer des traits

u-ne fi-gure sur une sur-face im-pri-mée

un scap sur ci... re.

*Magdeleine*

Faire une em-prein te mar-quer des traits

Figure 6: Marcel Duchamp, *Erratum Musical* (for three voices), 1913. Score.



Figure 7: Marcel Duchamp, *With Hidden Noise*, 1916. Ball of twine between two brass plates, joined by four long screws, containing unknown object added by Walter Arensberg. 5 x 5 x 5 1/8". Collection of Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950. 1950.134.71.

# 4'33"

for any instrument or combination of instruments

John Cage

**I**

60 ♩ =  $\longleftrightarrow$   
4/4

3

.16

5

7

.32

9

33"

**II**

60 ♩ =  $\longleftrightarrow$   
4/4

3

.16

Detailed description: The image shows the musical score for the first section of John Cage's 4'33". It consists of five staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'I' and has a tempo marking '60 ♩ =  $\longleftrightarrow$ ' and a time signature '4/4'. The second staff is labeled '3' and has a measure rest of '.16'. The third staff is labeled '5' and has a measure rest of '.32'. The fourth staff is labeled '7' and has a measure rest of '.32'. The fifth staff is labeled '9' and has a measure rest of '33"'. The second section, labeled 'II', starts with the same tempo and time signature. The first staff of section II has a measure rest of '.16'.

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Figure 8: John Cage, *4'33"* (*In Proportional Notation*), 1952/53. Ink on paper. Each page 11 x 8 1/2". Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the generosity of Henry Kravis in honor of Marie-Josée Kravis. 1636.2012.



Figure 9: Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961. Wood, internal speaker. 46 x 9 3/4 x 9 3/4 in. (116.8 x 24.8 x 24.8 cm); 3.5 hours. Collection of the Seattle Art Museum. Gift of the Virginia and Bagley Wright Collection, 82.190.



Figure 10: Janet Cardiff, *Forty Part Motet*, 2001. Forty-track sound recording, forty speakers. 14 Minutes. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder in memory of Rolf Hoffmann. 424.2002.a-k.

## Chapter One

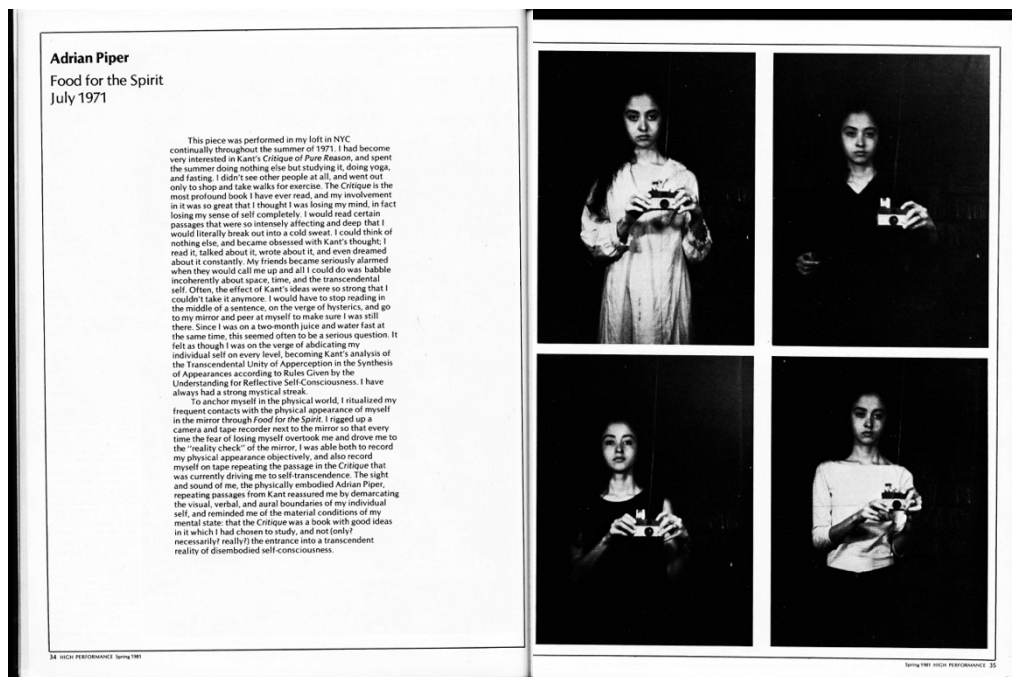


Figure 11: Adrian Piper, "Food for the Spirit" spread in *High Performance*, 4, No. 1 (Spring 1981), 34-35.

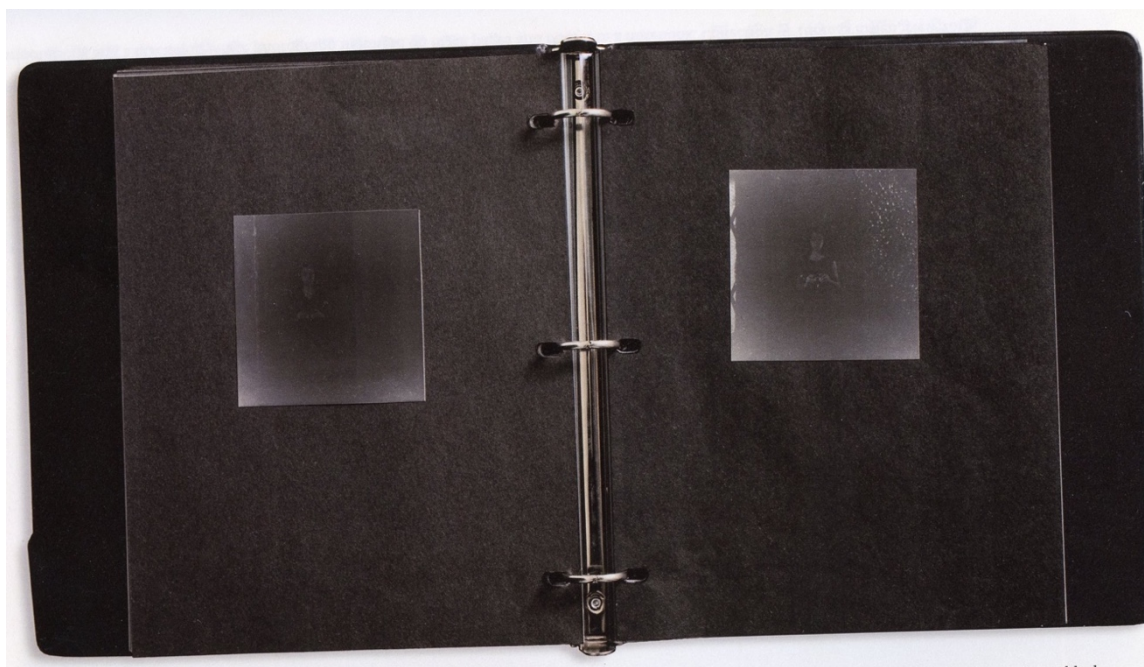


Figure 12: Adrian Piper, *Food for the Spirit* (detail), 1971. Two facing pages from the notebook; page torn from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with handwritten annotations and a black-and-white photograph mounted on black pages and bound in a notebook. Collection of Thomas Erben, New York. Plate 15 printed in John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.



Figure 13: “Adrienne Edwards in front of *Food for the Spirit*” 99 Objects: Adrienne Edwards on Food for the Spirit by Adrian Piper” Friday, May 29, 2015.



Figure 14: Adrian Piper, *Food for the Spirit* #1, 1971, printed 1997. Fourteen gelatin silver prints. Dimensions variable, Edition 3/3. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase with funds from the Photography Committee 98.28.3a-n.

## Chapter Two



Figure 15: Ana Mendieta, *Grass Breathing*, c. 1974. Iowa. Super 8 film, color. 1 reel, Super 8 to 3/4 -in. U-Matic videotape (1987.48), Super 8 to digital uncompressed QuickTime file (2010), Super 8 to 2K/HD DPX/ProRes file (2014).



Figure 16: Ana Mendieta, *Burial Pyramid*, 1974. Super 8 film, color, Super 8 to 3/4 -in. U-Matic videotape (1987.8), Super 8 to Digital Betacam (2003), Super 8 to 2K/HD DPX/ProRes file

(2014); in the collections of Daros Latin-America, Zürich; Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Castello di Rivoli, Turin.



Figure 17: Ana Mendieta, *Burial Pyramid*, 1974. Super 8 film, color, Super 8 to 3/4 -in. U-Matic videotape (1987.8), Super 8 to Digital Betacam (2003), Super 8 to 2K/HD DPX/ProRes file (2014); in the collections of Daros Latin-America, Zürich; Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Castello di Rivoli, Turin.

### Chapter Three

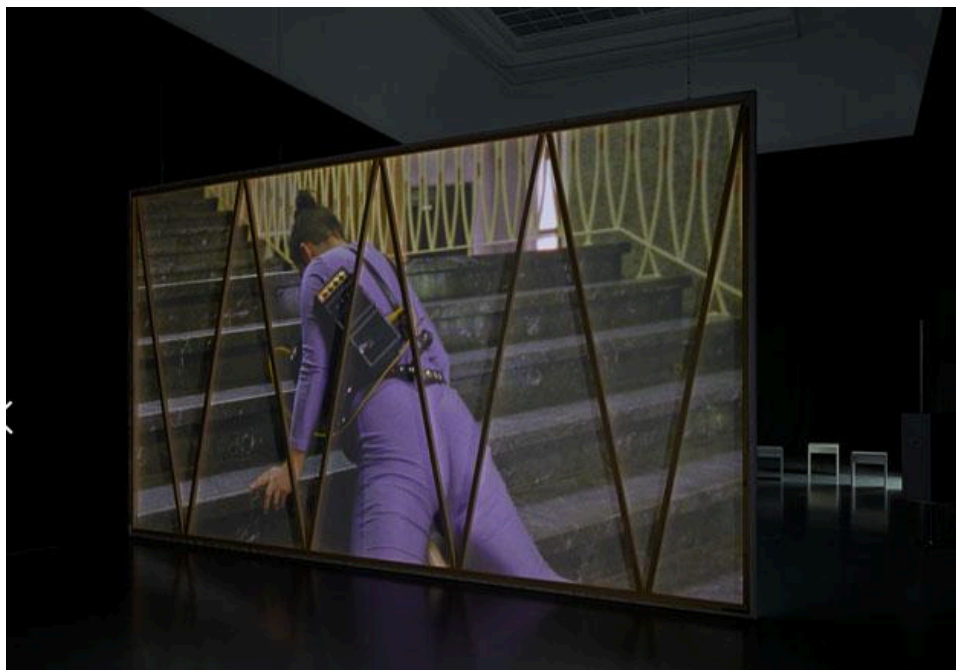


Figure 18: Installation view in Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe 2013, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation*, 2013, 16 mm film, HD video, 18 minutes.



Figure 19: Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation*, 2013, 16 mm film, HD video, 18 minutes. Screenshot.



Figure 20: Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation*, 2013, 16 mm film, HD video, 18 minutes. Screengrab.

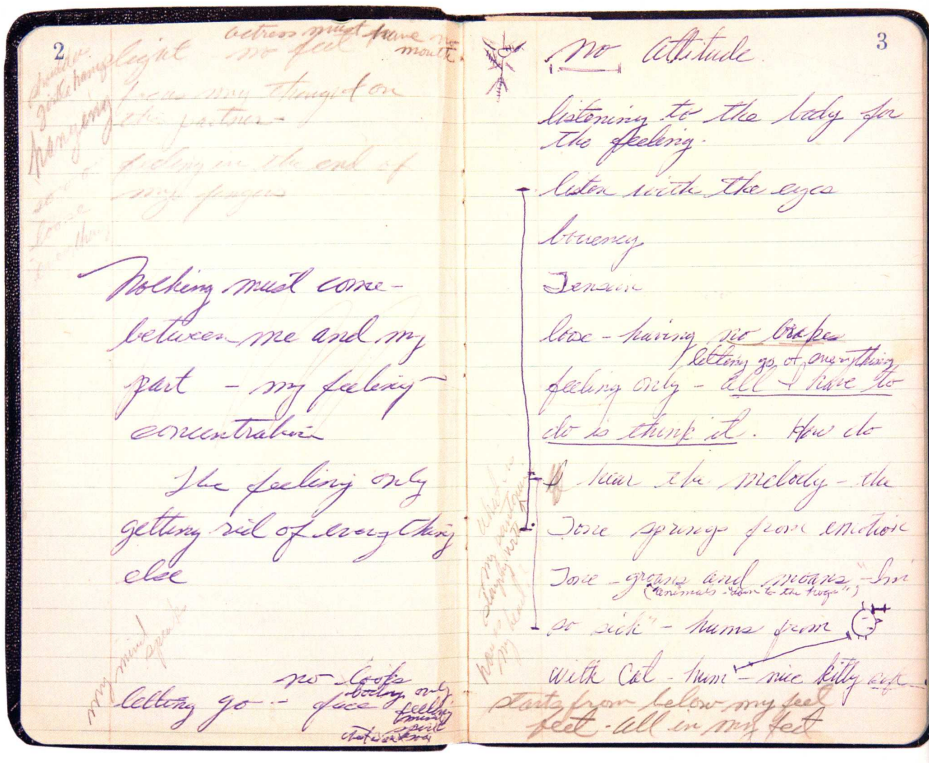


Figure 21: Marilyn Monroe, *Fragments: poems, intimate notes, letters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) 36-37.

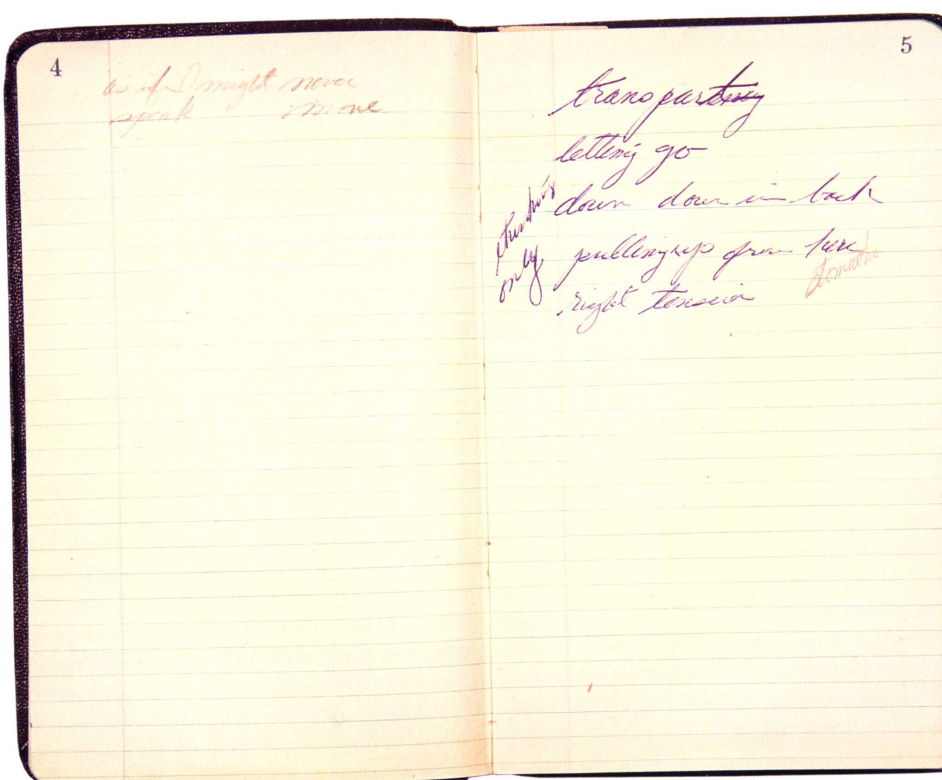


Figure 22: Marilyn Monroe, *Fragments: poems, intimate notes, letters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) 38-39.

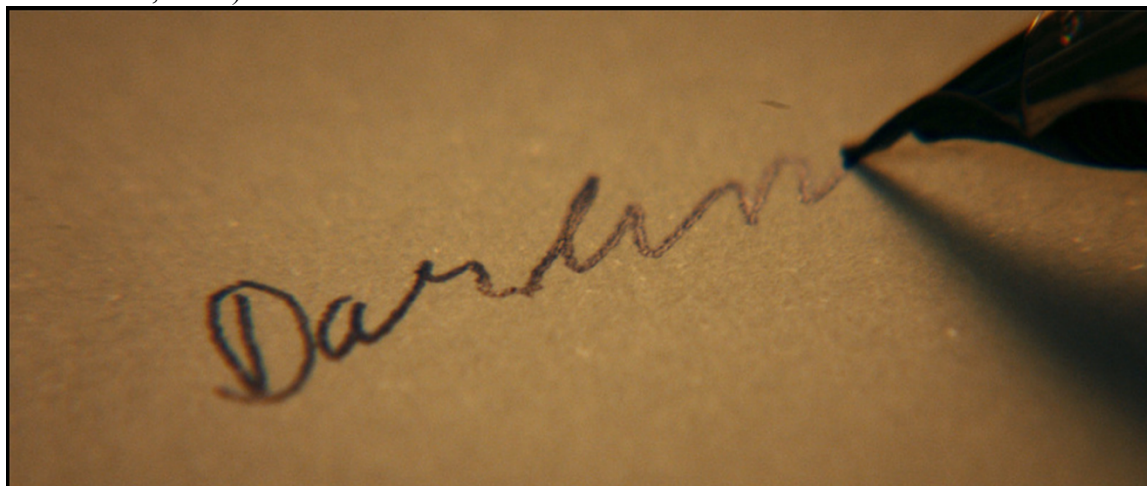


Figure 23: Phillippe Parreno, *Marilyn*, 2012. Screengrab.



Figure 24: Phillippe Parreno, *Marilyn*, 2012. Screenshot.

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