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Special Issue: Essays on (De-)Composing the Nation

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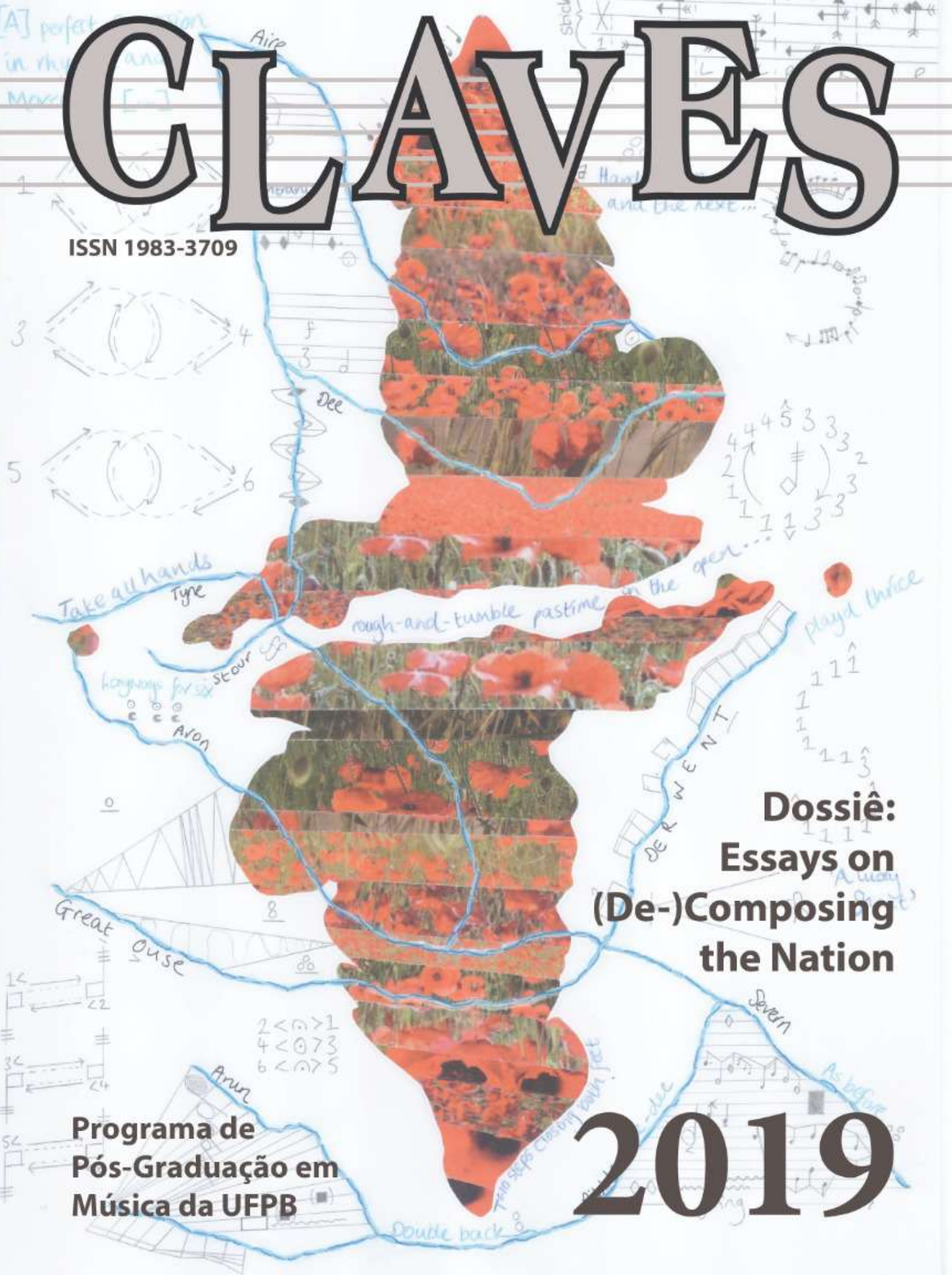
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EDITORIAL

Essays on (De-)Composing the Nation

The idea of this special issue came to us roughly half a decade ago. At that time, we had just completed our respective doctoral studies in composition, both concerned, in different ways, with the rediscovery of local identities, the critical renegotiation of national histories, and the (re)emergence of independence movements. In this context, we were (and are) attracted and repulsed by the discursive pressure of the “nation”, understood, from time to time, as an oppressive colonial institution, as an “imagined community” in Benedict Anderson’s terms (2006), or even as an ideal, independent geopolitical space to be rescued from the sovereignty of other national bodies. As a matter of fact, people in Scotland had just voted in the Independence Referendum when we were starting thinking about potential contributors for this collection.

Now, one problem that we have identified during the many years that have passed from those early days to the present publication is that, while musicians from popular and folk backgrounds have abundantly addressed these issues in their work, the involvement of contemporary composers appears remote. The notion of “contemporary composer” is obviously an extremely problematic one (mind, as much as the notions of “popular” and “folk” musicians), yet we found it extremely useful when putting this special issue together.

By “composer”, we automatically picture a typically (dead) white man (LUCAS, 2012; LUCAS *apud* MESSINA, 2015) in the act of scribbling notes on paper after epiphanic moments of “inspiration” – to this mere act of writing we normally confer the legitimacy of pure “truth”, a truth that is allegedly transmitted to performers (and, in turn, to audiences) via a “musical score”. In the context of the social ritual that surrounds this musical genre – time by time described as “classical”, “erudite”, surely “Western”, etc. – the authored score embodies precisely incontestable truth (cf. COOK, 2009).

After all, the qualifier “contemporary” put before “composer” hardly alleviates the normativity of this whole set of “social paraphernalia” (KELLER et al, 2010). On the contrary, the “contemporary” or “experimental music” rubrics often seem to perpetuate the very same racio-gendered, bourgeois, elitist premises on which the whole narrative of a “classical”/“erudite”/“Western” music sustains itself.

In this context, the inherent, deep-rooted, sentimentally charged belonging of a particular author to the national community that best describes their citizen status is imagined as a natural part of their “contemporary composer” essence. We are always already describable as an “Italian” and a “British” composer, in advance of any verification as to whether these labels mean anything for us and our work. We take this opportunity to recognise the inherent danger that the workings of cultural power become universalised from a Euro- or Western-centric perspective, and we emphasise the ambivalent and fluid nature of identification in order to disrupt discussions that generalise or fix.

With all this in mind, for this special issue we looked at inviting contributors that emerged as exceptions to these naturalised assumptions, combining the need to overcome received narratives on the “contemporary/experimental composer”, with a critical relationship towards the concept of “nation”. In (de)composing the nation from different perspectives, the five authors that contributed to this special issue identify to some degree as “contemporary/experimental composers”, while critically challenging the assumptions that revolve around these nomenclatures.

The artistic sonic practices discussed in this collection constitute critical re-framings, which enable an examination of the organising social practice of identification found within discourses of nation. The special issue explores symbolic struggles for ownership, the power to negotiate and narrate the meaning(s) and boundaries of belonging.

Marcello Messina
Caroline Lucas

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**[UNNAMED MAPS SERIES]: (RE)PRODUCING THE NATION. FOR ANYONE/ANYTHING TO
PERFORM**

Caroline Lucas*

Abstract: [*Unnamed Maps Series*] is a collection of creative *expressions* intended as a source of provocation for further artistic output. The series contains performance suggestions; six maps (A3 size); two fixed media parts (audio provided on CD); digital image files of the maps (on CD); and blank graph paper (A4 size) all wrapped up in brown paper and tied together with string. The series was created as part of my doctoral study at the University of Leeds, which was a practice-led research project exploring music's role in the formation of nation and identity. The following discussion is taken from the exegesis that accompanied my practice (LUCAS, 2012) and outlines some of my creative methods found in this series and the critical framework that shaped it.

Keywords: nation; identity; maps; practice-led research.

[*Unnamed Maps Series*]: (Re)produzindo a nação. Para qualquer pessoa ou qualquer coisa executar

Resumo: [*Unnamed Maps Series*] é uma coleção de *expressões* criativas entendidas como provocadoras de produção artística ulterior. A coleção contém sugestões para a performance: seis mapas (tamanho A3); duas partes gravadas em suporte fixo (áudio em CD); imagens digitais dos mapas (em CD); e papel milimetrado (tamanho A4), tudo empacotado em papel marrom e amarrado com um barbante. A série foi criada como parte dos meus estudos doutorais na Universidade de Leeds, a dizer, um projeto de pesquisa guiada pela prática que explorou o papel da música na formação de nação e identidade. A seguinte discussão é parte da exegese que acompanhou minha prática (LUCAS, 2012), e ilustra alguns dos meus métodos criativos encontrados nessa série, além da reflexão crítica que a norteou.

Palavras-chave: nação; identidade; mapas; pesquisa guiada pela prática.

Caroline Lucas: Originally Worcester, then Leeds, now Manchester. Composer, fiddler, subversive embroiderer. Interests: Maps, morris dancing and composting. WLTm like minded individuals to share in long walks and cartography. Must have own wheelbarrow.

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The nation as a symbolic and bounded entity, is maintained and reproduced as an expression of power. Music, as a medium of cultural power, is productive of sociality; the organisation (or *disorganisation*) of the sonic capable of producing (or resisting) the intangible bonds of collectivity. My study explored the power of music to symbolise, perform and potently communicate the imagined communion attributed to the experience of nation-ness. It asked specific questions about the practice of composition and its role in the construction and negotiation of national identity, furthermore, examining music's potential as a means of resistance.

The nation, as a hegemonic construct, produces a system of organisation which reproduces the dominant frameworks of power and marks the symbolic boundaries of belonging. My study considered the ways in which the individual is produced in creative imaginings of community, exploring the symbolic struggle for ownership, the power to negotiate and narrate the meaning(s) and boundaries of belonging. My work examines how my artistic sonic practices can be utilised to negotiate the multidimensional hierarchies of gendered, racialised, geographical framings of collectivity.

[Unnamed] – Open Borders

The very concept of the 'nation' is permeated with various and dynamic imaginings of power. Nation as a politically organised space evokes governmental power and sovereignty (or resistance to such power); the nation as a naturalised structure of normality controls and hierarchises forms of behaviour; as a bounded territory the nation regulates access to resources, defining who is included and excluded and, finally, the militarised institution of nation maintains a violent potential for the transgression of borders, as a threatening force of domination within the global space. Music's performative role in the symbolic communication of nation makes it an apparatus of control, reproducing the structures of power.

Attali's (2011) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* recognises music (sound organised) as a form of power and knowledge, and maps changing approaches to music as a method for theorising the means of production and organisation in society. This recognises the cultural, social and economic specificity of musical production, and predicts a new mode of musical production which rewrites the nature and relations of creative labour. Communication becomes imagined no



longer as a space of exchange, but as a collective endeavour. My study examined the capacity for music to resist the power of the nation, reimagining it as a democratised space for meaning-making, and reframing the relationship between the individual and the collective. The concept of hegemony is explored in my study to examine the ways in which power is constituted and negotiated within culture and the systems of cultural production.

Antonio Gramsci's theorisation of hegemony and resistance had revolutionary intent at its core. Barbero (1993) suggests that Gramsci's most significant contribution was his recognition of the potential for cultural action within an individual subject, moving beyond the idea of social domination as something that is simply imposed from outside, an idea akin to Foucault's (2002) depiction of power as a productive network rather than negative force. This not only draws attention to the way in which hegemony is continually negotiated (reproduced and resisted) as a "lived process", but that this process is limited as it relies not on force, but "on shared meaning and the appropriation of the meaning of life through power, seduction and complicity" (BARBERO, 1993, p. 74). Acknowledging the agency of the individual, the concept of "counter-hegemony" refers to "a process that challenges the normative view that capitalism is the only viable politico-economic arrangement available to humanity" (REED, 2012: 3). This goes further than simply resisting the hegemony of the ruling class, but suggests the potential for marginalised groups to more radically transform the intellectual, moral, political and economic spheres for the cause of human liberation.

Throughout my study, framings of anonymity were explored as a way of attempting to resist the hegemonic authorial control of the composer, democratising by drawing attention to the processes of meaning-making. Modes of anonymity were not intended to suggest that there is no person behind a work, but the act of obscuring, through the masking of the composer, consciously becomes part of the construction of the work. Positioning the composer as one of the material forces in the facilitation of a piece is not intended to negate the initial creative intentions of the composer, but instead recognises their limitations in shaping the individual's experience of a piece. The composer as "facilitator" becomes someone that contributes towards the creation of the conditions for a particular experience, without having the power to define what that experience actually is. The aim of this is to recognise the intrinsic loss of control (and to some degree ownership) involved in the process of transferring ideas from the private realm of the creative mind to

the multiple public sites of creative expression (sketches, scores, performances, etc.). Eco (2008) recognises that the *possibilities* of an open work operate within a *field of relations*, governed by an “organising rule”. He uses this to suggest that whilst a performer is invited to personally intervene, this is not an indiscriminate invitation; as such, he claims the creation “always remains the world intended by the author”, and hence “the work... will still be his own” (2008, p. 172). The position of the “author” is retained through a conception of creative process that is based on the view of the open work as “unfinished”, given to the performer for “completion”. However, I imagine this process as being more “open-ended” and fluid; my creative practice is intended to form continuous movement and transformation, with completeness reliant on the quality of openness and ownership available to whoever participates in engaging with the work.

The [*Unnamed Maps Series*] is an example of this “open” practice within my work. The maps utilise cartographic imagery, text and graphic scoring, and are accompanied by sample-based fixed media parts to serve as part of an improvisatory performance. The piece is designed to privilege the interpretive autonomy of the performer, with the composer taking a radically “hands-off” role beyond the basic presentation of materials. The notes that accompany the maps are characterised as “performance suggestions” rather than directions to encourage inventive engagement with the materials and emphasise the non-directive, open-ended freedom offered to the performer. This has been described by Lauren Redhead, who has performed pieces based on the series a number of times, as a “focussed indeterminacy”, recognising the “extreme freedom” and “extreme complexity” present in the work due the multiplicity of potential outcomes (2012a). Attempting to limit the composer’s influence (and hence control) to the symbolic material and creative context constructed within the maps, suggestions and fixed media part, is further emphasised by the adoption of a pseudonym “The Cartographer”. Not only does this avoid the self-identification of the composer, but it denies the act of composing acknowledging the constructive role the performer plays in interpreting and shaping the piece. Furthermore, the performer is invited to create a title for the piece, which presents authorial control to the performer in the task of naming.

The constructed ambiguity of “The Cartographer” is part of a wider strategy to democratise meaning-making within my creative work. The negotiation of the role of author facilitates an avoidance of the historically engendered gendering of the author/composer as masculine.



However, my use of anonymity is not about wishing to negate my gender identity, rather it is about not wanting this aspect of my personhood, or the expectation of implicit femininity, to become imposed on an experience of the work. It is worth noting, however, that this is countered by moments where my gender is used as an explicit political statement within the music, moments where my radical specificity is called upon to frame and illustrate a particular lived experience.

The graphic scoring and open nature of *[Unnamed Maps Series]* offers a great degree of freedom for the performer, and the work is constructed to create a context of controlled ambiguity, in which invention and imaginative interactions can occur. As the performance suggestions for *[Unnamed Maps Series]* suggests, performers are invited to “interpret, present and perform the maps and [fixed media] parts enclosed as [they] see fit.” The pictorial scores – and the absence of direction – transgress the standardised interpretive boundaries of traditional staff-based Western notation, inviting large amounts of freedom in the production of improvised responses. Many discussions surrounding *openness* overstate the polarity of the “closed” nature of traditional notation and the “open” or “unfinished” nature of graphic scoring, which appears to slightly conceal the fundamental interpretive process required by all forms of notation. Yet, it is the recognition of the potential of this intrinsic quality which has shaped the radical nature of graphic scoring and indeterminacy. All of these approaches in some way push the boundaries of control and freedom, pointing towards the infinitesimal potential of an open-ended creative processes, the outcome of which is music defined (yet liberated) by notions of chance, spontaneity, movement and mobility.

The visual design of the maps is intended to liberate the performer, audience and composer from notions of “correctness” in interpretation; there are, in fact, no “right” or “wrong” ways of perceiving these works. Redhead draws on Bruce Andrews’ concept of “nonreferential organisation” in her analysis of the sonic art produced by myself and other artists, suggesting that “in its creation and in the perceptual experience of it ‘[m]eaning is not produced *by* the sign, but by the contexts we bring to [it]’” (REDHEAD, 2012a). The inventive quality of these scores gets reflected back as a necessary condition in their subsequent interpretation. They are designed to invite experimentation and consequently capture the process of invention, the momentary experience of newness.

Redhead has performed *[Unnamed Maps Series]* for organ and fixed media numerous

times and discusses how, in preparing the piece for performance, she would find “different paths” through the score, describing movement through the piece as a “journey”. The inclusion of the fixed media part is described by her as adding complexity to the piece, Redhead states that “although it’s extremely free, it’s all bounded in a way that a performer might not expect from the notational style because of the [fixed media]” (REDHEAD, 2012b).

Redhead describes multiple layers of interaction, suggesting that “the notation doesn’t just interact with the performer in order to be performed, but it also interacts with its wider social context on its own before anyone has engaged with it” (REDHEAD, 2012b). The stylised visual design of the score means that the audience are invited to participate in this communicative process, with the potential for the score to be used within the design of the performance space. The intention is to draw on the significant role that visual content plays in the multi-sensory and physical experience of a performance event; an idea that popular music has recognised and profited from for some time.

The role of the score is reimagined within this series; it is no longer positioned as an instructive document for the realisation of a premeditated outcome, but instead presents a field of *potential* works, as well as being a *complete* work in its own right. *[Unnamed Maps Series]* reconceives the function of the score as an art object – fixed and concrete – and as a stimulus in an ongoing open-ended process of interpretation and meaning-making. As Eco suggests, this “sets in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and [her] audience, a new mechanics of aesthetic perception, a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society... In short, it installs a new relationship between the *contemplation* and the *utilization* of a work of art.” (2008, p. 174) Transformation is possible even within a single interpretation of the score. Redhead first performed *[Unnamed Maps Series]* at Holy Trinity Church, Hull; the piece was subsequently performed during Leeds’ Light Night festival at Holy Trinity Church, Leeds. Following the live performance in Leeds the church remained open for the rest of the evening, and the recording of the premiere from Hull was played a number of times.

Repetition does not present straightforward reproduction and continuity, but rather develops Eco’s suggestion that “the poetics of the open work... posits the work of art stripped of necessary and foreseeable conclusions, works in which the performer’s freedom functions as part



of... *discontinuity*” (2008, p. 171). Despite Eco’s concern here being with the freedom of performers, the transformative power of different spaces and translation across different forms of media highlights the mobility of perception. Redhead’s repetition and reimagining of this work in various settings draws attention to the productive “discontinuity” of open-endedness and its ability to create a space for multiplicitous forms of *newness*.

Ambiguity is a key quality in the creation of graphic scores and “open” works, and plays a significant part in understanding how this approach enables the production of music which resists the hegemonic power of the nation as produced through music. The ambiguous nature of *openness* in these works is not about a lack of definition or precision (which may be implied by the term “indeterminacy”), rather it is about the establishment of a situation in which a range of outcomes are made possible. It establishes a context in which new relations, processes, sounds and meaning can be envisaged. The role of the composer becomes one that involves the creation of a context in which invention, indeterminacy and active engagement are encouraged. This practice reshapes the frameworks by which one can understand artistic production, resisting the standardised conventions of Western notation and the associated hierarchical systems of organisation. Meaning and participation is democratised, making artistic production and reception a collaborative process. It also rejects the inherited and naturalised system of the semiotics of music, and shifts *meaning* from being a totalising discourse to one of plurality. As Eco notes, the open work “refuses to be hemmed in by any normative conception of the world. It shares in a general urge toward discovery and constantly renewed contact with reality” (2008, p. 170), meaning is created in experiencing the “*now* of it!” (BROWN, 2008, p. 194). Ambiguity and the ‘open’ work attempt to democratise the dialogue between ‘the realities lived, and the systematizing structures that [are brought] to bear on these realities’ (CREHAN, 2009, p. 42), making space for a diversity of world views.

Maps – Imagined Cartography

The nation exists as both the material “reality” of a territorially located place and the bounded limits of symbolic space. Foucault’s theorisation of the technologies of power recognises that space is fundamental to community and the exercise of power (2002, p. 361) and, further, that the experience of space is governed by the construction of opposing spaces, such as the separa-

tion of private and public space, leisure and work space (2000, p. 177). Cohen (1995) and Stokes (1997) identify the relationship between music and place as a fluid social practice, which makes meaning(s) through the production of boundaries capable of transforming space. The symbolic boundaries of the nation construct a narrative of exclusion, defining who has access to resources of belonging and identity, often asserted with reference to what is considered other to or outside of the boundaries. This process of differentiation is encoded in cultural practices which maintain and reproduce (or resist) the dominant narratives of nation, enacting the hegemonic moral code which produces the national collective as gendered and racialised subjects.

Said's (2003) concept of "imaginative geography" suggests the ways in which discourses produce knowledge of place and shape geographical perceptions.¹ The idea is Foucauldian in its assertion of knowledge as power; that is to say, the controlling power that processes of classification and ordering have in constructing perceptions of the world. Whilst the focus of Said's study is the ideological construction of the "oriental" East by Western authors, the text more generally offers a critical examination of the ways in which geographic imaginings produce spaces positioned as both outside (or Other) and inside, a process which is crucially rooted in the maintenance of the power to (re)produce.

The idea of "imaginative geography" suggests that the discourses of scholarship, literature and other forms of cultural production shape geographical perception, through the application of the "disciplinary order" (which is shaped by the norms) of the author (2003, pp. 66-68). These modes of classification are described as containing a "measure of the purely arbitrary", as well as values which "probably show the same measure of arbitrariness", yet are productive of meaning and objectively validate the perceptions (2003, p. 54). Furthermore, Said applies the notion of arbitrariness to describe the practice of boundary maintenance and differentiation, in which the delineation of the familiar (as "ours") and the unfamiliar (as "beyond" and "theirs") does not require the acknowledgement from those positioned as "outside", instead existing for the benefit of those positioned as "inside" (2003, p. 54).

Said's separation of the "objective" and "poetic" qualities of space draws attention to the

1. "Geography" here is to be taken in its widest sense to mean, not only the environmental territory of a bounded space, but also the inhabitants, societal structures and cultural forms of place.



power of the “imaginative”, not as a negation of reality, but the constitution of different forms of reality. Furthermore, the “imagined geography” of Orientalism is labelled by Said as a form of “radical realism”, highlighting the production of a knowledge which fixes and makes concrete the “dramatic boundaries” of place (2003, pp. 72-73). The concept of “imagined geography” draws attention to the power of discourses of “place” to legitimate and sustain power structures, based on notions of knowledge made *factual* through repeated narrativisation. These inventive processes construct and mediate *space*, as well as enabling an embodiment of *place* (cf. CERTEAU, 1984).

Cartography is a significant practice contributing towards the construction of the *imagined geography* of place. Mapping’s traditional position as a technical and scientific discipline, permeates forms of spatio-environmental knowledge with the power of claims to “truth”. The practice of recording the spatial qualities of place through the visual depiction of concrete reality is complicit in the (re)production of power structures, raising issues of surveillance and representation. Whilst mapping can be located as an apparatus of control for the state, Crampton and Krygier (2006) identify mapping historically as a site of contestation and, hence, recognise its potential for resistance to dominant forms of knowledge, the bounded *disciplining* of academia and the restriction of cartography as the practice of experts. The field of critical cartography, as “imaginative mapping practice” combined with theoretical critique, positions itself as “political” through its linking of geographic knowledge and relations of power (CRAMPTON; KRYGIER, 2006). The rise of critical cartography has challenged the relationship between maps and reality by suggesting that “maps *make* reality as much as they represent it”; as such maps are productive, actively constructing knowledge and exercising of power (CRAMPTON; KRYGIER, 2006, p. 15).

The potential for maps to resist power structures has led to the appropriation of mapping for subversive artistic activity. Mapping, as a pictorial exploration of the spatial qualities of place, functions in a similar way to musical notation, in that its application involves the perception, translation and interpretation of graphic images. Furthermore, a democratisation of cartographic practices and the active capacity for maps to *reimagine* has influenced the construction of a number of the works in this study which draw on critical cartographic practices to explore the relationship between music and nation. The appropriation of the graphics of mapping not only reconsiders the visual construction of the boundaries of place, but examines the way in which experiences of space

and the construction of place become encoded in sound.

The appropriation of mapping as a form of graphic notation has been influenced by “psycho geography”, most famously linked with the Situationist critique of consumer capitalism as explored in Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, but more generally applied to a broad range of radical practices which seek to explore the affective experience of place. In contesting received depictions of place, psycho geography negates mapping as “accurate” representation, instead fragmenting existing maps to construct the *potential* for new experiences of place, rather than delineating the boundaries of that experience. The inherent ambiguity of these representations disrupts the authorised “reality” of dominant images of place and, once appropriated, presents the possibility for uncovering the new and the unseen. Not only does this draw attention to the extent to which one’s comprehension of place is mediated by the hegemonic narratives but, additionally, psycho geography attempts to highlight the creative potential of geographical spaces, overcoming “the process of ‘banalisation’ by which the everyday experience of our surroundings becomes one of drab monotony” (COVERLEY, 2006, p. 13).

The [*Unnamed Maps Series*] utilises cartographic practices to construct musical maps which avoid linear structuring and temporal frameworks, combining the active nature of maps and graphic notation to resist and contest dominant power structures and reimagine place. This relies to an extent on the recognition of familiarity, which is created through the appropriation of iconic shapes and images, such as the environmental and political boundaries depicted by the outline of the land mass of Great Britain and the framework of coastal stations used in the shipping forecast, as well as the territory of England. The inclusion of three maps within the series explores the hierarchy of place-based identifications, mapping the symbolic boundaries of the transnational, the national and the local. Map 3’s transparency and the openness of the work as a whole is intended to examine the contradictory, intertextual and contingent nature of identity, as well as the fluidity with which individuals negotiate multiple aspects of identity. The suggestion in the performance notes that performers may wish to make their own map encourages the individualised experience of place, continuing to democratise cartography and adding further variables to the complexity of identification and symbolic boundary maintenance as explored within this work.

The use of visual quotation and sonic sampling brings a new dynamic into debates concer-



ning the nature of musical “objects” (sonic, material, conceptual) as “open” or “closed”. It draws attention to the fallacy of the recording as a “finished” product, placing all musical materials into a continuous state of flux - from initial conception; to written notation; recorded interpretation; re-mixed samples, to the act of perception. A sample ruptures the sonic from its source enacting discontinuity, however, traces of the original remain within this, yet its new context transforms it into something “other”. Sampling can then be imagined as a counter-hegemonic practice due to its capacity to appropriate. Gramsci uses the concept of “appropriation” to suggest the way in which hegemony can be resisted by adopting and reimagining the dominant culture, whereas Bourdieu’s use suggests the necessary possession of forms of capital in order to materially or perceptually access (and ultimately possess) the codes of a cultural work.

The ability to resist the hegemonic in this way then relies on a certain level of cultural capital (separate from “institutionalized” knowledge forms) and as such, subversive cultural practices are partly an expression of cultural power, reproducing the status of the creative agent. The conversion of pre-existing sounds *re-articulated* within a new context makes sampling and quotation, more generally, a key method for sonic subversion. Subversive cultural methods such as détournement, culture jamming and bricolage, all construct critique by reclaiming existing practices, through which it reveals the original in a new light, disrupting the mainstream.

Throughout the music in my study the potential for familiarity and the application of quotation is intended to play a role in creating moments of recognition and expectation in the performers and the audience. Redhead describes the visual quotation of the *[Unnamed Maps Series]* scores as “so striking the piece is very memorable just for the score itself”, similarly the use of a sample of BBC Radio 4’s iconic *Shipping Forecast* in [fixed media] Part 1 is described by Redhead as contributing to making the piece “immediately memorable” (2012b). In recognising the familiar the observer is drawn into the work, yet upon further inspection something unfamiliar is revealed. Familiar elements are made unfamiliar, yet traces of the experience of recognition remain. In the most general sense, the openness of graphic scoring leaves space for the idiosyncrasies of the instruments, described by Attali as the “sound field” and “field of knowledge” implied by an instrument (2011: 133), and the tradition or “existential credentials” (Eco, 2008: 169) of the performer, providing quotations from the instrument and performer’s personal history.

Series – (Re)producing the Nation

Place-based identifications, such as the politico-territorial identity of nation, contribute to a complex web of collective identifications such as class, race, sexuality and gender. The symbiotic relationships between these constructions exist within a framework of power, constructing discourses which serve to privilege and maintain the status quo of dominance, excluding those who do not fit within its boundaries. Moreover, Lucas (2013) suggests that “[r]ather than acting as an ongoing attempt at unity, the discourses of the nation could be more potently viewed as a set of exclusionary practices reliant on differentiation against an evolving benchmark of alterity.” These exclusionary practices appear, on the surface, to be most harmful at the extreme ends of the political spectrum, however, the explicit nature of these constructions makes them more visible for critique. A more pervasive danger can be uncovered in the subtle power of the implicit assumptions found within the discourses of nation, unmarked these are made invisible through claims of naturality.

The gendering of the nation is masked by connotations of the naturality (and antiquity) of the dominant world view and moral values, as enacted through the mythic rituals of ceremony and national *tradition*. It is through these *grand* narratives that the nation produces and appears to fix the differentiated boundaries of gender normativity, defining gender roles and maintaining the nation as a patriarchal dominion. However, the fluid nature of identification means that the boundaries undergo a constant process of negotiation and (re)formation.

Yuval-Davis suggests that gender and nation need to be understood in terms of relation rather than difference, she counters the hegemonic theories of nationalism, which privilege the role of “bureaucracy and the intelligentsia”, by drawing attention to women’s role in reproducing nations, “biologically, culturally and symbolically” (1997, p. 2). Mayer states that the relationship between nation, gender and sexuality is concerned with the codification of morality, which enables men a position of superiority over women and “Others”, mobilising “men (and sometimes women) to become its sole protectors and women its biological and symbolic reproducers” (2000, p. 6). As such, she suggests that “the nation’s great narratives and its sense of self are ‘intimately connected to patriarchal hierarchies and norms’” (2000, p. 6).

The positioning of women as reproducers of the nation relates to both biological and sym-



bolic concerns. Yuval-Davis suggests that the assertion of *woman-as-mother* burdens women with the role of symbolically representing the collective's identity and "honour", whilst they often face exclusion from the collective body politic and are positioned as object rather than subject (1997, pp. 45, 47). Despite the nation being constructed as a male project, women often have agency in constructing and maintaining (as well as resisting) the boundaries of "acceptable" femininity, which symbolically and culturally reproduces (and negotiates) the nation and national cultural traditions through notions of sexual morality, appropriate behaviour and normative constructions of familial arrangements. Mayer recognises that, despite the prescribed identities of the gendered nation (women as reproducers, men as defenders) being challenged and contested, rarely does the ambivalence of identity make its way into the rhetoric of nations (2000, p. 10). A recognition of women's agency, however, acknowledges the fluidity of gender relations and the possibility for resistance to the hierarchies of power encoded within the nation, which presents the potential for reimagining the position of women as constructors, rather than reproducers, of nation.

The process of reproduction is essential to an understanding of sound technologies and their creative use in electronic musics and, as Roger's (2010) suggests, the privileging of music as a domain of masculinity. Her account of *Pink Noises* attempts to uncover the multiplicitous nature of reproductive sounds, challenging the "patrilineal lines of descent" and the totalising male claims to creation which characterise dominant discourses of electronic music and music-making more generally (2010, p. 15). The basis for this reimagining of narratives of electronic music practices is founded on the recognition that "reproductive sounds are variously *produced...*; *reproduced* in multiple reflections...; *reproducible* within spaces of memory... and *productive*, by generating multiple meanings in various contexts" (ROGERS, 2010, p. 15). The process of reproduction has been a critical consideration in the exploration of sound practices in this study, informing both the use of technologies, and more generally relational interactions between performers, the sonic, the visual, the composer and the audience. Key to the development of this practice has been the concept of "do-it-yourself", which has been a significant strategy employed within music and art cultures attempting to resist and counter the hegemonic power structures of the "mainstream" and capitalism, gaining independence from the mass mediation of cultural production. This rejection of the authorised institution's control of creative goods and labour appropriates the power to create

and disseminate for the *everyday* individual rather than the “expert” or “elite”, which democratises the opportunity for creation and reimagines the aesthetic of the artistic object.

Every-day practices are used by de Certeau to conceive of new ways for researching the creative workings of culture, suggesting that:

if everyday practices, “ways of operating”..., no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity, and if a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives, by penetrating this obscurity, make it possible to articulate them. (1984, p. xi)

These ideas resonate with the Gramscian concept of resisting hegemony through a critical engagement (i.e. appropriation and reimagining) with existing practices. Reimagining creativity within everyday practices democratises invention and, to an extent, liberates it from the standardisation of institutional control.

The subversive practice of radical embroidery (along with other crafts such as knitting and crochet) has, since the suffragettes and later feminist art movements, appropriated and reimagined craft practices which have been historically marked as “feminine”. This gendered activity has been associated with both the division of labour and the restrictive control of feminine leisure pursuits. Needlework as “appropriate” leisure activity has been historically constructed as feminine (and hence marginal) through its limited location in the private sphere of the home, it connotes a silenced, still space of restricted physicality and the pursuit of innocuous *beauty* delineated as “craft” rather than artistic production. The use of embroidery within the scores draws on this subversive appropriation of *feminine* practices to critique the gendered control of modes of cultural production, as well as a reimagining of the media through which musical scores can be constructed.² The process of sewing through paper and card, as opposed to the malleability of woven textile, effects a physical experience of the material reality of the action in its enactment of resistance.

The “handmade” process involved in *do-it-yourself* practices has particular implications for concepts of reproduction and repetition. The concept of reproduction is key to a discussion of graphic scoring versus ideas about the interpretation of conventional Western notation. Whilst the

2. The use of embroidery in my practice also ties in to the notion that the gendered culture of the nation is reproduced within the familial setting, as my sewing technique was a skill passed on matrilineally from my maternal grandmother and mother, whilst at the same time my brothers learnt military model making from our paternal grandfather and father. This idea sits with Bourdieu’s depiction of cultural capital as being, in part, acquired within the familial setting. Further, its acquisition as gendered knowledge suggests the way in which cultural capital organises the social in hierarchical gender relations, legitimising inequality.



aim of traditional notation may be the accurate replication of similar sounds and effects, repetition of the sonic is rejected by the indeterminacy of graphic scores. This resistance is embodied in the specific mode of production employed in creating the maps for the *[Unnamed Maps Series]*, where the accuracy of reproduction is negotiated in the handmade quality of the scores, as much as in the realisation and performance of that work. All copies of the maps are handcrafted, rather than being digitally copied, recognising that “accurate” mechanical reproductions of the scores would, in fact, transform the material qualities of the works reducing it to the condition of ink and paper. The handmade production also, therefore, involves the notion of difference as a central quality in the work creating the context for variance, which challenges the authority of the notion of the singular “original” work, acknowledging that each copy possesses the quality of originality.

Conclusion

The nation, as a symbolic and bounded entity, maintains and reproduces dominant forms of knowledge through expressions of cultural power such as music. The nation as a hegemonic construct produces a system of organisation which maintains the position of the elite, defining the symbolic boundaries of belonging and exclusion through discourse and practice.

A recognition of meaning-making as a fundamentally individualised process acknowledges the potential for a space of production that can resist and reimagine the authorised narratives of nation, privileging the individual within the collective. Furthermore, this suggests that individual processes of meaning-making are a necessary condition for the experience of collectivity.

The graphic scoring presented in *[Unnamed Maps Series]* explores the potential for communication to become a collective enterprise, appropriating existing modes of working and critically reimagining the relationships between participants and materials. Additionally, the concept of the *open* work transgresses the limit of the work imagined as a fixed object, it becomes instead a means of invention. Invention is positioned in my work as the essential process involved in production, reception, interpretation and reproduction, creating the potential for multiplicitous forms of newness. Ambiguity and the assertion of interpretive ambivalence creates an open space in which meaning becomes democratised and the very process of individualised meaning-making is privileged.

As such, the [*Unnamed Maps Series*], as a social practice, presents a process of resisting the hegemonic organisation of location and identification within the multidimensional space of nation, utilising the indeterminate *glitch* of individuality to disrupt the unity of the authorised “we”.

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“Quando scrivo devo essere sincero con me stesso”: Intervista con Carmine Maresca

Marcello MESSINA*
Carmine MARESCA**

“When I write I need to be true to myself”: An interview with Carmine Maresca

Abstract: This article consists of an interview with Neapolitan composer Carmine Maresca. Taking the 2015 prize-winner piece *Fenestrelle* as a starting point, we survey Maresca’s production, touching upon some of the controversial bits of the historiography on the Italian Unification, discussing Southern Italian identity politics, and exchanging views on compositional aesthetics.

Keywords: Carmine Maresca; *Fenestrelle*; Italian Unification; Southern Italy; Compositional Aesthetics.

“Quando componho preciso ser sincero comigo mesmo”: Entrevista com Carmine Maresca

Resumo: Este artigo é baseado em uma entrevista com o compositor napoletano Carmine Maresca. A partir da peça de 2015, *Fenestrelle*, premiada em um prestigioso concurso nacional, analisamos a produção de Maresca, mencionando a disputa sobre a história da Unificação italiana, discutindo sobre a política de identidade do Sul da Itália, e trocando opiniões sobre a estética composicional.

Palavras-chave: Carmine Maresca; *Fenestrelle*; Unificação italiana; Sul da Itália; estética composicional.

Marcello Messina Siciliano, residente a João Pessoa, Marcello Messina è professore visitante di musicologia e etnomusicologia all’Universidade Federal da Paraíba, in Brasile. Ha completato un dottorato in composizione musicale alla University of Leeds (UK), ed è stato vincitore di una Endeavour Research Fellowship alla Macquarie University (Australia) e di una borsa PNP/DC/PPS per un post-doc all’Universidade Federal do Acre (Brasile).

Carmine Maresca nasce a Napoli, sin da giovanissimo si appassiona alla musica studiando pianoforte, successivamente passa alla chitarra classica. Si diploma presso il conservatorio “D. Cimarosa” di Avellino. In qualità di compositore ha pubblicato, per la casa editrice Esarmonia Echi Partenopei, tre brani dalle sonorità che riportano alla Napoli antica; Three soul images, composizione originale per violino e pianoforte; Tre liriche napoletane per pianoforte e voce e I poeti lavorano di notte per chitarra sola. Per la stessa casa editrice ha scritto Approccio e comprensione della partitura, un compendio sulla interpretazione musicale. Con la casa editrice Mulph Edizioni Musicali ha pubblicato la rielaborazione per orchestra d’archi di due sonate di D. Scarlatti e il brano originale Fenestrelle, sempre per orchestra d’archi, vincitore del II Concorso internazionale di Composizione “Città di Nepi”.

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Tra la fine del 2015 e l’inizio del 2016, dai profili social, blog e riviste online di molti attivisti napoletani e meridionali (VETRANO, 2015; ESPOSITO, 2016), venni a sapere che Carmine Maresca, un giovane compositore partenopeo, aveva scritto una composizione per orchestra d’archi, dal titolo eloquente di *Fenestrelle*. C’è di più, perché il brano in questione, sempre secondo le suddette fonti online, aveva vinto il prestigioso concorso di composizione “Città di Nepi”. Ora, chi ha dimestichezza con l’eterno dibattito sul Risorgimento, recentemente riaccessosi in occasione del centocinquantesimo dell’Unità d’Italia (MONSAGRATI, 2014), sa bene che il nome “Fenestrelle” è diventato un pomo della discordia tra chi parla con disprezzo di “storie inventate” (MONTALDO, 2012, p. 144) e chi cerca di dissotterrare, o per lo meno considerare con un minimo di serietà, le sinistre narrazioni sui campi di tortura e sterminio per gli ex-soldati del Regno delle Due Sicilie nel periodo successivo all’unificazione (PUGLIESE, 2008). Situato dentro i confini della Città Metropolitana di Torino, il forte di Fenestrelle viene oggi celebrato come “Grande Muraglia Piemontese” (CARLESI, 2017), nel contesto di un’obliterazione sistematica e “istoricida” (PUGLIESE, 2007) del retaggio di violenze razzializzate che segna inevitabilmente il processo di unificazione del nostro paese. Contattai Carmine quasi immediatamente, a metà del 2016, proponendogli un’intervista che, tra impegni e contrattempi vari, si sarebbe materializzata solo tre anni dopo, nel presente testo.

Marcello Messina: Caro Carmine, desidero cominciare questa nostra conversazione chiedendoti il perché di questo tuo pezzo, *Fenestrelle*. Come mai hai scelto di scrivere una composizione basata su questo luogo e su quello che rappresenta?

Carmine Maresca: Per raccontare qualcosa ho bisogno di immagini nitide; la musica che viene fuori è sempre frutto di uno stimolo emotivo che può scaturire da un verso, da un dipinto o da un episodio di vita reale, quindi anche storico. Senza voler entrare nel merito di un argomento che è assai spinoso e che non mette d’accordo tutti gli storici, Fenestrelle è un capitolo di una questione più ampia che tocca vari aspetti del Risorgimento italiano: una questione che a mio parere andrebbe riscoperta non tanto in chiave antiunitaria, come in tanti fanno finta di pensare, quanto per un più sano e sentito senso di appartenenza.



MM: Ma perché Fenestrelle e non un altro episodio? Pontelandolfo per esempio, o l'assedio di Gaeta? Hai avuto un momento di ispirazione personale? Cosa ti ha fatto pensare di scrivere una musica su questo episodio?

CM: Ci sono evidentemente per ognuno di noi episodi che colpiscono la nostra emotività in maniera particolare. Fenestrelle è stato uno di questi. Quelli che ti muovono e che ti spingono a non cedere alla pigrizia. Uno dei miei migliori (bada bene dico migliori) difetti...

MM: Se posso chiedertelo, come l'hai saputo?

CM: Ho letto tanto a riguardo: a partire dalle posizioni critiche come quelle di Salvemini (1963), Nitti (1900) e Gramsci (1966) per arrivare ai libri dei vari Zitara (1971), Del Boca (1998), Alianello (1972), Giordano Bruno Guerri (2010) e tanti altri...

MM: Come ti sei trovato a lavorare su questi argomenti con i musicisti che hanno suonato il tuo pezzo? Si trattava dell'Orchestra San Giovanni, composta quasi totalmente da musicisti italiani, e mi chiedevo se avessi trovato resistenza da parte loro nell'accogliere certe narrazioni. Poi vorrei anche capire la posizione del Concorso – stiamo parlando della seconda edizione del Concorso di Composizione "Città di Nepi", che ti ha visto vincitore nella Categoria A (partitura per piccola orchestra d'archi). Il Concorso è pur sempre un *locus* di riproduzione di certe narrazioni ufficiali, e mi sembra che la tua vittoria possa rappresentare una sorta di legittimazione di questa tua scelta. Hai avuto modo di dialogare con gli organizzatori dopo la tua vittoria?

CM: Per quanto riguarda l'orchestra, tutto il processo è stato molto interessante. Essenzialmente, prima della registrazione ho discusso della questione con il direttore d'orchestra, Gianluigi Zampieri. Durante le prove, proprio per entrare nel *mood* giusto, il direttore ha spiegato per bene quale doveva essere la direzione emotiva. Ora, per la verità, quasi nessuno di loro era a conoscenza di quello che è successo, o che per lo meno noi crediamo sia successo, giacché questa è una questione talmente tanto dibattuta che si fa fatica, a volte, a dare per certe determinate cose.

MM: Forse la “Storia” possiamo sempre semplicemente scriverla a partire da diverse “Verità”, e chi decide quali “Verità” entrano nella “Storia” e quali non entrano? C'è sempre una questione di potere che ha a che vedere con la manutenzione, in questo caso, di certi discorsi nazionali...

CM: Sono perfettamente d'accordo con te. Comunque, alla fine i ragazzi dell'Orchestra San Giovanni, quando è stato loro spiegato tutto quanto, li ho visti assolutamente interessati alla questione. Alcuni sono andati anche a cercare più informazioni sull'argomento, poi hanno chiesto, ci siamo risentiti... insomma, diciamo che qualcosa s'è smosso. Di sicuro c'è stata un'accettazione alla fine, quanto meno per indagare e approfondire ciò di cui si stava parlando. Per quanto riguarda il Concorso, non ti so dire sinceramente se loro hanno tenuto conto della questione storico-politica: io credo che, siccome la commissione era composta esclusivamente da musicisti, sia stato valutato solamente il merito musicale, estetico e formale. Non so davvero fino a che punto il Concorso abbia potuto tener conto della questione politica...

MM: La tua musica è, per tua stessa ammissione, anti-avanguardista, e arrivi a dichiararlo in un testo su Boulez in cui mi sono imbattuto recentemente (MARESCA, 2016). Com'è che questa tua scelta estetica, che io considero anche molto ben riuscita nel contesto del tuo linguaggio, ti aiuta a lanciare determinati messaggi storico-politici?

CM: Marcello, sono sincero in questo: non credo a questo tipo di etichette. Parlare di avanguardia oggi è anacronistico e pretestuoso. Quando scrivo devo essere sincero con me stesso e la componente più importante è che le immagini che vengono fuori dalla mia musica siano autentiche. Si può scrivere buona musica e cattiva: in ogni caso racconti te stesso e questo viene percepito da chi ascolta...

MM: Certo, siamo d'accordissimo, ma io mi riferisco al tuo prendere posizione a rispetto di un preciso dibattito e al dire che c'è bisogno di una certa trasparenza. Penso che questa sia una presa di posizione politica, non solo estetica. E penso che abbia a che vedere con quello che cerchi di dire. Per esempio, te la metto così: pensi che la tua *Fenestrelle* (sempre per parlare dello stesso pezzo) avrebbe potuto essere composta, non so, anche con procedimenti seriali, o con una scrittura puntillistica? Sarebbe stata la stessa cosa?

CM: No, chiaramente no. Se sento questo tipo di scrittura più vicina al mio sentire, o come dicevo prima, più autentica, questo è chiaramente il mio punto di vista, che è, tra virgolette, "di parte", nel senso che io ritengo che certi tipi di moti d'animo si possano raccontare, o descrivere, soltanto in questa maniera, con un certo tipo di scrittura. Io parlo sempre di immagini perché la musica ha una via d'accesso preferenziale con l'altra faccia della luna, avrebbero detto i Pink



Floyd,¹ mi riferisco all'inconscio, insomma, e l'inconscio parla per immagini.[†]

MM: Fantastico, e dunque c'è una certa corrispondenza tra queste immagini che tu crei e una sorta di "trasparenza" nel linguaggio? C'è una ricerca di chiarezza nella tua musica?

CM: Dunque, la cosa è un po' complicata. Nel mio percorso musicale e di vita (possono essere slegate le due componenti?) la chiarezza risulta essere la conseguenza naturale di una ricerca reale. Adesso, questo processo, potrebbe non essere limpido e chiaro come lo è per me. Tu devi sapere che io sono un grande appassionato di psicologia, Jungiano incallito [ride]: ebbene, Jung diceva che non si può spiegare la psiche con la psiche. Questo per dire che il campo inconscio, quello emozionale, quello a cui la musica parla, credo che sia estremamente differente, quanto a sensibilità, da persona a persona. Poi è chiaro che abbiamo tutti una sorta di inconscio collettivo, che è quella eredità archetipica che è in qualche modo iscritta in noi, in tutti gli uomini, dalla nascita. Insomma, ricapitolando: c'è sicuramente, nel mio percorso un tentativo di fare chiarezza, ma questa chiarezza potrebbe risultare "non chiara" (perdona il gioco di parole) per altre persone.²

MM: Ma se questa chiarezza comunicativa, come dici, non è uguale per tutti, allora deve avere a che vedere concettualmente con una serie di lacune, omissioni e silenziamenti che a loro volta riguardano la storia e la politica? Insomma, la chiarezza musicale ci aiuta a fare chiarezza nella storia?

CM: Io credo che noi essere umani siamo fatti in larga parte di materiale inconscio, per cui la musica, soprattutto quella strumentale, discute direttamente con ciò che non è nel campo della coscienza, che è probabilmente quello più importante, e quello sul quale poche persone indagano profondamente, anche perché richiede un certo lavoro, un certo sforzo, una certa sofferenza che non tutti sono disposti a sopportare. Quindi, se parlare di un argomento utilizzando un linguaggio riconoscibile e comprensibile può creare barriere, resistenze, sicuramente andare a parlare a quella parte che esula dalla componente cosciente può essere un modo per cogliere più il segno, evitando resistenze cognitive. Quindi sicuramente la musica può arrivare direttamente a quella parte che è spesso senza difese. Ma d'altra parte la teoria degli affetti è precedente, quindi di questo

1. Riferimento all'album *The Dark Side of the Moon* (PINK FLOYD, 1973).

2. Si vedano per esempio *Tipi psicologici* (JUNG, 1973) e *Gli archetipi dell'inconscio collettivo* (JUNG, 1977).

si è discusso largamente. Io ci tengo a precisare che non ho utilizzato queste strategie per parlare di Fenestrelle. Magari può essere una conseguenza del fatto che io ho sentito così reale, così forte quel tipo di sensazione, che poi si è tradotta in qualcosa che rendesse dal punto di vista musicale.

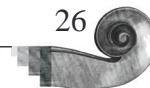
MM: Mi sembra che qui stiamo viaggiando "in direzione ostinata e contraria"³ rispetto a due narrazioni forti: una è quella della versione ufficiale (portata all'estremo del paradosso) della nostra storia, e l'altra è quella dell'avanguardia a tutti i costi, anche correndo il rischio di risultare manieristi e anacronistici, come dici bene tu. Percepisci questo doppio lavoro, per lo meno in *Fenestrelle*? Era tua intenzione lavorare attorno a questo tipo di disobbedienze?

CM: Guarda, magari qualche anno fa avevo questa intenzione di utilizzare un linguaggio che mi liberasse da certi tipi di discorsi e di orientamenti, che poi, ripeto, si parla di avanguardia ma non c'è nulla di avanguardia, c'è una frammentazione incredibile in cui ognuno scrive come gli pare, quindi faccio fatica anche a capire cosa si possa adesso intendere per avanguardia. L'ho ribadito più volte, credo fortemente nell'autenticità di quello che si sente e si scrive. Forse questo può essere un modo per viaggiare, come dici tu, "in direzione ostinata e contraria", ovvero, essere onesti con se stessi. Continuo a credere che l'unico modo per fare arrivare un messaggio vero a chi ascolta sia precisamente essere onesti con se stessi. E guarda un po', credo che la gente percepisca, quando stai facendo un lavoro di maniera e quando, al di là della qualità di ciò che produci, sei comunque onesto.

MM: Tornando a *Fenestrelle*, ti sei mai sentito preoccupato di poter essere individuato come impostore, tanto per questioni politiche, quanto per questioni estetiche?

CM: Ritengo ci sia una coscienza che unisce tutti inconsciamente, e credo che, come detto in precedenza, con il linguaggio musicale ci si rivolga a quella parte, che può essere senz'altro collettiva. Poi, chiaramente, ognuno ha un modo di sentire differente, però, ecco, anche sollevare un problema politico ma farlo cercando di andare direttamente alla pancia delle persone, credo che abbia una potenza superiore rispetto, per esempio, ad una conferenza in cui si parla di un evento. Per quanto riguarda le critiche, quelle alla fine sono arrivate, c'è chi mi chiama neoromantico,

3. Celebre espressione di Fabrizio De André, contenuta nella canzone *Smisurata preghiera* (DE ANDRÉ, 1996), e che diede il nome a una raccolta postuma di canzoni del cantautore (DE ANDRÉ, 2005).



quando sinceramente nella mia musica di romantico in senso estetico ci sta ben poco, di chi dice che magari la modernità sta andando da altre parti... Poi sinceramente non ci ho più fatto granché caso, perché, ripeto, io vado sempre incontro a quella famosa autenticità. Se io sento di scrivere quel tipo di musica, che appartiene al mio sentire, al mio essere, io scrivo quella musica... altrimenti sarei finto, e quando sei finto la gente se ne accorge... Per me ogni compositore può scrivere quello che gli pare, a patto che sia quello che realmente sente. Io in giro invece sento tanta finzione, tanto scrivere in quel modo perché devi scrivere in quel modo, perché altrimenti la tua musica non viene eseguita, perché altrimenti la tua musica non funziona, non è moderna, ma noi sappiamo che l'arte è sempre contemporanea: Bach è contemporaneo, Beethoven è contemporaneo, Mendelsson è sempre contemporaneo, perché la loro arte sicuramente non si esaurisce là, rimanda ad altro che non può essere esaurito né razionalmente né emozionalmente. Poi per quanto riguarda *Fenestrelle*, anche in quel caso le critiche sono arrivate, ci mancherebbe altro: che è tutta una montatura, che sono falsità, che ho preso un granchio, etc. Insomma, le critiche sono arrivate ma io so quello che ho letto, so quello che ho visto, e magari, ecco possiamo ragionare sulle proporzioni dell'evento, ma senza mai dimenticarci che *Fenestrelle*, e più in generale il Risorgimento italiano, sono qualcosa da riscoprire per bene, anche per dare più forza ad una unità che adesso fatico a vedere, perché ci sono sempre due o più paesi messi assieme. Invece riconoscere che l'Italia andava fatta, ma andava fatta probabilmente in una maniera differente, questo credo che sia un segno di maturità di un paese che vuole andare avanti, credo che sia l'unico modo per mettere pace e per veramente unificare.

MM: Tu adesso parlavi delle critiche di chi "dice che magari la modernità sta andando da altre parti", e io per un momento non sapevo se stavi parlando di critiche rivolte alle tue scelte estetiche o a quelle storico-politiche! Mi sembrava di sentire la canzone di Eugenio Bennato (non so se la conosci), che diceva che "Ninco Nanco deve morire perché la storia così deve andare", etc.⁴ Quindi, come vedi, per me le due cose non possono che essere connesse. Non trovi? Poi mi viene da chiederti, sempre ascoltando questa tua frase, in che misura questa modernità è, in se stessa, uno strumento di potere e di controllo, tra le altre cose, sulla nostra attività di compositori, intellettuali, etc. E in che misura invece possiamo

4. Estratto dalla canzone *Ninco Nanco* di Eugenio Bennato (2011).

riscriverla noi questa modernità, appropriarcene, farla procedere per la nostra strada?

CM: Sì, diciamo che le idee politiche sono venute solo nell’occasione di *Fenestrelle*. Ma sono arrivate critiche, proprio quando ho vinto il Concorso, di persone che avevano perso scrivendo in un altro modo, e che mi imputavano di avere una scrittura “datata”. Poi io non credo che la modernità sia uno strumento di controllo, nel senso che non ha proprio senso, dal mio punto di vista, parlare di “modernità”. Quali sono i parametri oggettivi che possono stabilire cosa sia e cosa non sia la modernità? Stiamo parlando di concetti stabiliti da persone che in un dato periodo storico decidono: “OK, questa per noi è la modernità”. Quindi non credo sia la modernità il problema. Certamente c’è però una sostanziosa parte di compositori, organizzatori e curatori di festival, oltre a coloro che insegnano nei conservatori, che stabilisce quale debba essere la linea comune, e quindi chi è meritevole e chi deve stare fuori. È un discorso che potrebbe anche suonare anacronistico, ma che purtroppo è ancora molto presente.

MM: Concordo pienamente. Vorrei chiederti qualche commento sul lavoro con la London Symphony Orchestra per *Poiesis Concerto*, in particolare se e come sia stato diverso dal lavoro con l’Orchestra San Giovanni per *Fenestrelle*.

CM: La differenza principale l’ho percepita essenzialmente sull’approccio alla musica. In Italia ho notato un contatto più serio, che non vuol dire più professionale. I musicisti della LSO si prendevano in larga parte meno sul serio. L’impressione, condivisa col Solista Nicola Montella e il direttore Gian Luigi Zampieri, è che davvero giocassero con la musica. Il che non è sinonimo di scarsa professionalità. L’esatto opposto.

MM: *Poiesis* è un concerto per chitarra. La chitarra, oltre ad essere il tuo strumento, mi pare un laboratorio compositivo che esplori in maniera minuziosa e esaustiva (penso alla suite *Echi Partenopei*, ma anche a *I Poeti Lavorano di Notte*), è una precisa scelta estetica o è il frutto di una maggiore prossimità in termini pratici? Componi spesso alla chitarra, o magari al piano? O ti capita più spesso di scrivere direttamente sulla partitura?

CM: Ci sono in cantiere altre registrazioni per chitarra come le “5 miniature” dedicate sempre a Nicola Montella. È lo strumento che suono e che cerco di valorizzare in tutti i suoi aspetti. Se scrivo per chitarra, compongo alla chitarra. L’idea nasce già come qualcosa di compiuto, pochissime battute, che hanno in sé i prodromi di quello che sarà l’opera finita, che può ovviamen-



te poi prendere direzioni impensate. Ho appena terminato “La nuit d’une ame”, un notturno per pianoforte dedicato a Massimiliano Damerini che ho scritto in larga parte direttamente in partitura e successivamente chiaramente provato allo strumento. I brani orchestrali di solito vanno direttamente in partitura o al pianoforte.

MM: Rimaniamo ai tuoi pezzi per chitarra, e in particolare parliamo della tua suite *Echi partenopei*. Qual è, in questo pezzo, il legame tra musica, storia e identità? Come interagiscono questi tre elementi? E qual è il peso della tua identità nella tua musica?

CM: Diciamo che io ho un legame molto forte con Napoli e con la sua cultura, che spazia dalla cosiddetta Scuola Napoletana del ‘600-‘700, fino ad arrivare anche alle villanelle, alle canzoni classiche napoletane, insomma, è una cosa che fa parte di me, perché comunque ci sono cresciuto e sono ascolti che ho fatto fin da quand’ero piccolo, e quindi inevitabilmente da questo vissuto viene poi fuori in quello che scrivo. Ho ribadito più volte che quest’autenticità che cerco nelle cose che scrivo inevitabilmente viene fuori perché fa parte del mio vissuto, ma non solo in *Echi partenopei*, io penso che sia proprio una cifra stilistica.

MM: Ti faccio questa domanda parlando del mio esempio personale: io preferisco sempre presentarmi, se ne ho la possibilità, come compositore siciliano. Tu come la vedi? Senti che esiste una tensione, per te, tra l’essere un compositore napoletano e l’essere un compositore italiano? Come preferisci essere presentato?

CM: Non c’ho mai pensato onestamente. Ma diciamo che se dicono che sono un compositore italiano non me la prendo. Se dicono che sono un compositore napoletano, va benissimo uguale. Diciamo che la cosa è abbastanza indifferente. In fin dei conti, non può essere, dal mio punto di vista, conflittuale il rapporto con la nazione italiana. Poi, che storicamente venga raccontata una cosa per un’altra, su quello siamo d’accordo.

MM: Com’è che si fa ad essere autentici senza rischiare di usare strumenti e materiali che evocano, e nel momento in cui evocano si propongono di rappresentare una determinata identità culturale? Melodie, intervalli che evocano la napoletanità, per esempio. Come si fa ad evitare che tutto questo diventi stereotipo? Qual è il confine tra l’autenticità e l’imitazione? Come articolare il nostro lavoro per rimanere autentici senza cadere nello stereotipo?

CM: Io resto sempre di quell’idea. Certamente posso imitare, e quindi rendere senz’altro

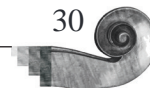
stereotipo, un'atmosfera o un gesto napoletano. Posso, allo stesso tempo, ricreare musica seriale, posso anche ricreare qualsiasi tipo di musica analizzandola in maniera dettagliata. Il problema sta sempre là, nel sentire autenticamente. Io, per esempio, stimo molto Donatoni, che ha scritto musica che ho apprezzato, che al mio sentire risulta vera, e che quindi ha senso di esistere anche se in tutta onestà non è un tipo di ascolto che faccio con piacere. Quindi, anche nel mio caso, certi suoni non sono tanto frutto di indagine razionale, ma è una cosa che è cresciuta dentro di me e che sento autenticamente mia. Il resto è una conseguenza.

MM: Veniamo alla parte storica evocata già dai titoli. I sanfedisti, il Grand Tour, la corte (immagino borbonica). C'è un chiaro intento di rivisitazione anche qui come in Fenestrelle? E c'è un contrasto tra questi vari "affreschi sonori" (se mi permetti il termine)? Il sanfedismo è una forza di insurrezione popolare molte volte ingiustamente ridotta a semplice espressione di lealismo, mentre il Grand Tour lo vedo (dal punto di vista della storia culturale) come produttore di rappresentazioni e stereotipi, sui napoletani e in generale sui meridionali, a partire da una visione generalmente nordeuropea, "gringa" (per usare un termine brasiliano). E come si articola questo contrasto con l'ultimo movimento? Chi è che viene invitato a corte?

CM: Innanzitutto, questi sono pezzi brevi che ho scritto per i ragazzi dei licei musicali. Per la verità, è stato un viaggio in cui ho voluto fotografare un periodo in cui Napoli splendeva sia dal punto di vista culturale che musicale, e anche i moti insurrezionali sono comunque sintomo di vita, di movimento, di persone che vanno in una certa direzione. Quindi ho cercato in sostanza di fotografare un periodo. Non c'è un vero contrasto tra queste sequenze, è più la fotografia di un periodo di splendore culturale.

MM: Ti sembra che Napoli abbia perso un po' di questo splendore o che l'abbia piuttosto mantenuto/riconfigurato?

CM: No, chiaramente non possiamo parlare della stessa città. L'immagine che mi viene in mente è quella di un nobile decaduto: prendi un caffè al bar con lui, puoi intuirne la storia, i pregi, i valori, tutti quanti i vecchi splendori, ma inevitabilmente non puoi evitare di notare i vestiti rattoppati, le scarpe un po' consumate, etc. Napoli resta una città viva, certamente. Ormai però, ahimè, da tempo non più riferimento culturale e musicale europeo.



MM: C'è uno slancio verso il futuro, una dimensione utopica nella tua musica, che magari fa da contraltare a questa attenzione per la memoria? O è lo sforzo di ricostruzione che è in sé uno slancio verso un futuro possibile/auspicabile?

CM: L'autenticità di cui più volte ti ho parlato è sinonimo di verità. Forse l'auspicio è che ci sia un sentire generale sempre meno artefatto, sempre meno costruito a tavolino. A quel punto la musica tornerebbe ad essere soltanto quello che è, e a rappresentare solo se stessa.

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Breve ensaio sobre o caso colonial da música sem nação

João José Veras de Souza*

Resumo: O presente ensaio busca refletir – tendo como lócus territorial e epistêmico a esfera geocultural do Acre – como certas manifestações sensoriais criativas sonoras são tratadas pelo mercado, pelo estado e pela academia no contexto de um Estado-Nação colonizado. A pretensão é demonstrar a ocorrência de práticas colonizadoras em face da produção sensorial criativa local, especialmente a musical, oferecendo como fato-modelo a ausência de preocupação historiográfica, mormente pelas políticas públicas, em relação a dita produção, fato este que se revela como uma das expressões concretas e simbólicas do fenômeno da colonialidade cultural. Ausência esta fortalecida, senão também determinada, pelas ações da indústria cultural e da academia com seus estatutos de estética norte-eurocêntricos (no plano global), e brasilcêntricos (no plano nacional), o que faz com que a música acreana se ponha como uma expressão cultural negada pelo Estado-Nação brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: Acre; Brasil; indústria cultural; políticas públicas; colonialidade.

A brief essay on the colonial case of nationless music

Abstract: Holding the geocultural sphere of the State of Acre as its territorial and epistemological locus, this essay seeks to reflect on how specific sensorial, sonic and creative manifestations are treated by the market, by the state and by academia, in the context of a colonised nation-state. My aim is to show the occurrence of colonising practices in the face of the local sensorial and creative – especially musical – production, identifying as key problem the absence of historiographical preoccupation related to this production, affecting mainly public policy-making. This fact emerges as a concrete and symbolic expression of cultural coloniality. This absence is strengthened, if not even caused, by the action of cultural industry and academia, with their North-Eurocentric (on a global scale) and Brazil-centric (on a national scale) statutes of aesthetics. This makes Acrean music a cultural expression that is denied by the Brazilian nation-state.

Keywords: Acre; Brazil; cultural industry; public policy-making; coloniality.

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Há alguns anos (exatamente no dia 23 de abril de 2013), publiquei, na minha página do facebook, um pequeno texto-manifesto – *Memória e esquecimento da cultura artística acreana* (SOUZA, 2013) – em que apontava e lamentava a completa ausência dos poderes públicos locais quanto ao registro, conservação/guarda e difusão da memória da música acreana e de seus criadores. Falava dos compositores urbanos de Rio Branco. Este escrito foi motivado pelo fato de que muitos estarem morrendo, alguns ainda muito jovens, e que suas obras e suas histórias estarem sendo enterradas junto com os seus corpos. Constatação de tão literal que me fez ali apelar para a listagem do nome de uma série deles. Ao final, propus, sabendo das normas e instituições criadas especialmente para a memória cultural local (conselhos de patrimônios histórico cultural, fundações culturais...), que se criasse um meio institucional para suprir tal ausência. O que me ocorreu na época foi propor a criação de museu da imagem e do som.

Desde a sua primeira publicação, que se deu em 2013, venho renovando, a cada ano, a sua visualização na minha página. Todavia, na mesma medida, ele (não falo exatamente deste singelo artigo, mas do fato em si) vem sendo ignorado por quem poderia fazer alguma coisa nesse sentido, o Estado. É por este escrito – em sua homenagem – que eu escrevo o presente ensaio para, partindo dele, procurar problematizar e entender o que tem levado a esta forma estatal interna de menosprezo cultural e, com isso, refletir sobre as suas causas e consequências para o plano historiográfico, mormente da música acreana e seus criadores, enquanto patrimônio histórico e artístico cultural. Vou na sequência desenvolver ainda que brevemente algumas notas sobre um caso em que a música é negada pelo Estado-Nação.

Parto de alguns pressupostos históricos desenvolvidos no bojo da teoria crítica social denominada decolonial. Por estes, a América Latina, desde 1492, quando invadida pelos europeus, vem sendo colonizada política, econômica e culturalmente. Esta condição colonial, de que têm sido vítimas suas regiões e seus povos, o estágio histórico do *colonialismo*, regime jurídico-formal de subalternização das colônias frente às nações colonizadoras, se transmudou, com o fim formal das colônias, para o da *colonialidade*, isto é para um padrão de poder global pelo qual perdura aquela condição colonial – desta feita muito mais no plano mental – que, sob o manto da ideia de modernidade, insiste em manter as nações periféricas, seus povos, suas culturas e seus bens materiais, sob o domínio, exploração e racialização das nações centrais, tudo na conformidade da



geopolítica imposta pelo *sistema mundo moderno colonial* (cf. MIGNOLO, 2001; 2003; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; QUIJANO, 1992; 2000; 2006; 2010).

Tal regime é reproduzido intra-nações de modo a manter e reforçar, com vistas à sua naturalização, as relações heterárquicas internamente. O que ocorre no plano global se repete no local pelos quais – no regime moderno colonial – as relações sociais, econômica e culturais passam a ser referenciadas por uma central de produção e difusão de modelos de poder, de saber e de ser fora dos quais nada existe ou se existe é condenado ao jugo da hierarquia do padrão estabelecido.

A questão central que busco problematizar nesta fala é de caráter local em sua relação com o global na medida em que diz respeito ao papel da instituição Estado-Nação na definição e manutenção da histórica condição colonial traduzida pela relação hierárquica (mercantil e acadêmica) no campo da cultura pelos considerados centros – locais e globais – para com as suas consideradas periferias – locais e globais. Quando se avista políticas públicas que também não se interessam pelo registro, conservação/guarda e difusão patrimonial das histórias e artefatos artísticos dos produtores locais – do passado e do presente – é possível ver aí uma medida historicamente consciente – pois sistemática e estrutural – das administrações em manter tais expressões no cercado do não-ser, no caso, da não-arte. É quando a instituição estado não passa de reprodutor da cultura da lógica colonial – seja ela advinda do eurocentrismo ou do brasilcentrismo.

O que aqui pretendo desenvolver parte do fato de que a colonialidade também busca estabelecer uma matriz nos campos da cultura e da arte da qual todos devem se espelhar/seguir sob pena de não ser cultura, de não ser arte. Sob pena de não-ser.

Também demonstrar que o Estado-Nação, mormente o colonizado, como um conjunto de unidades territorial, linguística, cultural e política, tem se firmado como uma totalidade social que busca homogeneizar sua expressão cultural de modo a neutralizar e, até, extirpar qualquer diferença que possa colocar em risco a unidade também cultural por ele albergado para o que se presta no contexto de seu histórico e estrutural status moderno-colonial.

É possível pensar a cultura-artística local, de um lado, como manifestação de saberes e processos sensoriais criativos filiados à tradição ocidental e, de outro, fora desta tradição em outros lugares tão culturalmente legítimos quanto. Cada possibilidade é passível de sofrer efeitos distintos com os seus produtos, processos e agentes. Efeitos estes determinados pelos modos como

o estado, o mercado e a academia os tratarão dentro de um contexto histórico-cultural dado, o que aqui, usando os pressupostos da teoria decolonial, vou denominar de moderno-colonial.

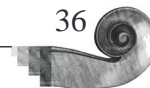
Na primeira, estão as ideias e práticas tipificadas sob as linguagens artísticas como as que consumimos dentro da centralidade da indústria cultural, das reproduções estatais, com suas políticas educacionais e culturais, e também das estruturas acadêmicas produtoras/difusoras/reprodutoras/legitimadoras formais de conhecimentos, em regra, constantes do estatuto da estética ocidentalocêntrica. Uma das suas características é a possibilidade da diversidade e questionamento de suas premissas e usos, especialmente as massificantes e mercantis, apesar desta possibilidade não colocar em risco a marcha da colonização de saberes e práticas artísticas fundadas no cânone da arte ocidental (com a sua concepção de belo, certo tipo dele, universal e superior, como se impõe) que tem dominado na relação colonizadora dos países ditos centrais – mormente os de língua inglesa – em relação ao resto – colonização esta que se reproduz em todo lugar na forma de colonialismos internos.

Fora desta filiação estão as manifestações diversas das ocidentais, caso daquelas próprias das sociedades indígenas, cujos paradigmas partem de outras e diferentes formas de lidar – outras cosmologias sensoriais – distintas, portando fora dos padrões, do chamado senso estético ocidental.

Nos processos sensoriais criativos locais que são filiados à matriz ocidental, vemos matizes com as quais o eurocentrismo estético universalista vai conviver, ora incorporando, ora subjugando, ora eliminando, o que se reproduz internamente, no espaço geocultural do Brasil, especialmente pela via do mercado cultural, como manifesto de brasilcentrismo estético universalista – cuja sede difusora central se encontra nas regiões sul/sudeste do país.

Já quanto aqueles processos diversos à matriz estética ocidental dominante, esta prefere ou ignorar, como possibilidade de padrão próprio, ou cercar-lhe de controle discursivo como algo a ela – como expressão de padrão pretensamente universalista – externo e inferior dando-lhe a pecha – do que seria o seu contrário e inferior – de primitivo, pré-civilizacional, não estético.

É justamente no espectro do padrão moderno colonial da cultura que – pelo menos no sentido formal como se tem comumente concebido a existência do produto artístico e de seus criadores – a música acreana não tem o seu livro de história, tal como um conjunto de registros historiográficos, narrativas sistemáticas que busquem dar conta dos seus processos, suas obras e



seus agentes políticos-estéticos-musicais circunscritos ao espaço geográfico e sonoro acreano. O direito a ter história aqui diz respeito a um direito que toda coletividade social pode ter/expressar de identidades próprias que lhe diferencie e lhe ateste seja até mesmo no plano da indústria do fazer e do consumo cultural como um produto, ou como processos sem centralidades mercantis, no aspecto cultural, estes como expressão dos modos de vida em determinado território e a partir de concepções próprias de viver e lidar com processos sensoriais criativos.

As expressões musicais acreanas – enquanto também dignas de história – o que quer dizer também dignas de existência social no tempo, têm sido institucionalmente camufladas por esta lógica normativa da indiferença que avança para o simbólico, no plano do que se entende por patrimônio histórico-cultural. No Acre não existem os chamados espaços públicos de memória os quais possibilitam o acesso livre a qualquer pessoa – a exemplo de um museu da imagem e do som – aos quais se possa recorrer para conhecer o que se chama de “passado cultural” e também manifestações do presente nos planos das imagens e dos sons capturados e arquivados como documentos. Mas a falta não diz respeito somente ao passado. Também são raros, no presente, os canais públicos e privados de difusão cultural pelos quais se possa acessar a música e seu produtor que insistem. Como exemplo que melhor pode patentear esta falta institucional, o Estado do Acre tem uma rede de rádio e de televisão – que chama de pública – cujas difusões de imagens e sons – que alcança todo o seu território – tem se limitado a retransmitir programações televisuais e musicais do sudeste (sede da indústria cultural, do brasilcentrismo), desconhecendo – o que significa não reconhecendo – e, assim, fazendo desconhecer a todos, posto que não difundindo, as manifestações artísticas do passado e do presente locais.

Este mesmo estado, que também domina toda a rede de comunicação privada – mediante a chamada verba de mídia – nada faz para que os canais privados de difusão de cultura a quem sustentam com verba pública (especialmente rádios, TVs e jornais escritos) cumpram sua função cultural – ainda por serem, no caso dos rádios e TVs, concessões públicas – ignorando, como de fato ignora, as expressões artísticas ditas locais – como expressões indignas – desse que é um verdadeiro desprezo estrutural no plano da cultura artística.

Por esta condição/tratamento, e pressupondo a música acreana como uma realidade histórica pulsante – a impressão que se tem é que ela está reservada às zonas do invisível/inaudível, nas

quais segue no tempo como uma espécie de manifestação de um passado e um presente que não ficou (não vai ficando) como memória (coletiva e institucional) e que, assim, vai se esvaecendo, se dissipando até o completo esquecimento social – partindo da suposição de um presente social. No máximo, se teve alguma função no seu momento de restrita publicização lá atrás (em seu nome eram realizados festivais), como aqui agora no exato de quem faz, hoje tende a sumir, sumir na poeira do tempo em seu túnel da memória sonora, de tão escuro, que nada revela, torna audível, guarda, lembra e deixa.

Não estou tratando aqui somente da produção musical que simplesmente reproduz os produtos da indústria mas também e especialmente daquela que, de algum modo, parte da realidade local e com isso, dialogando ou não com o entorno, manifesta/registra uma expressão sensorial e criativa com elementos culturais e artísticos próprios. Mas se estivesse disposto a tratar somente desta expressão musical que tem se limitado à reprodução, ela também não passará – como de fato não passa – disso, e sem a visibilidade, inclusive histórica, tão desejada.

Este fato só nos sugere – e nos faz inquirir atônitos – estar se tratando de algo, como expressão cultural, que não é digno de presente tampouco de passado. No sentido formal (ainda normativo), a conclusão suposta é inegavelmente afirmativa. Uma das explicações que se possa considerar factível se encontra na forma como se tem tratado a manifestação artística que esteja fora do considerado eixo central, no caso nacional (fiquemos neste plano geográfico), de produção e difusão da indústria cultural e também de manufaturamento teórico com vistas à transmissão/inculcação conceitual da arte que tem se prestado às academias. Isto é, a mesma medida exógena que ignora a cultura local é uma só na forma de duas: a do consumo mercadológico e a da difusão acadêmica, ambas com seus estatutos/normas fundados na estética eurocêntrica que alimenta e é alimentada pelo mercado cultural seja do *mainstream*, seja do *underground*, para usar epistemes da cena moderno-colonial do campo da cultura.

Estou a tratar, inevitavelmente, de uma realidade que é a do colonialidade cultural interna (reprodutora da global), com o que quero afirmar estarmos diante de uma explicação histórica pela qual isto se deve à imposição, de longa data colonizadora, da visão de arte instrumental em que reduz qualquer processo sensorial criativo, **primeiro**, como um produto de mercado, por isto de caráter massivo; **segundo**, como algo gestado concebido e modelado a partir do território exter-



no a ser reproduzido pelo de dentro; **terceiro**, de caráter normativo e universal o que o faz regra geral a ser seguido por todos dentro do estatuto do padrão de arte ocidental; **quarto**, produzido e difundido a partir de um Centro territorial e epistêmico (de naturezas local ou global); **quinto**, cuja finalidade é ser difundido (o que significa vendido) para suas Periferias, estes lugares condenados ao consumo e reprodução; e **sexto**, onde (das Periferias), por esse entendimento, é improvável uma produção (senão reprodução) de arte digna à altura de valor e circulação mercadológicas e acadêmicas, portanto impossibilitado como parte da gênese do padrão colonial universal que se impõe.

Com tal visão, o que tem sido merecedor de um espaços de memória – portanto de história enquanto instituição formal – é o conjunto daquela produção artística de status industrial, para consumo das massas e das academias, qualidade esta – seguindo esta concepção – não encontrada comumente naquelas criações locais, mormente as que não aceitam a condição reduzida de cópias. E haja enciclopédia, compêndio, dicionário, seleção, livro didático, bibliotecas, programações televisivas e radiofônicas, currículos escolares e acadêmicos – sob o selo de arte brasileira – em que as manifestações locais não se encontram consideradas, catalogadas.

De fato, passa desapercibido – posto que de tão naturalizado pela insistente, intencional e estrutural fábrica de ignorância cultural – que no verbete da cultura dita central brasileira (em que estão os considerados nomes de valor da literatura, da música, do teatro, da fotografia, do cinema, das artes plásticas, da dança...) o resto não seja considerado, não exista. Na verdade, este resto, como tal, ou é tido como não-arte (alternativa A) ou a quem a que está reservado o lugar subalterno, menor, inferior, fora do padrão de matriz da cultura nacional brasilcêntrica (alternativa B).

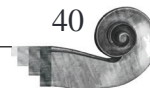
Fácil, assim, aceitarmos, quando muito, a ideia de cultura local – mas não merecedora do status de brasileira, de nacional (na verdade, um selo que a diferencia desta no sentido menor, nos carimbos da hierarquia colonial), o que atesta a força da hierarquização interna dos cânones ocidentais (vale dizer, especialmente, norte-eurocêntricos) da arte. Acreana está de bom tamanho, isto é na proporção de seu valor e existência (se é que tem algum valor e existe!). A brasileira é aquela nomeada pelo centro cultural – é exógena – que chega e se apresenta pelos produtos “importados”: pelos livros, pelos produtos audiovisuais, pelos rádios e TVs... A local é aquela que não sai por isso nunca chega. É a que se “auto gueta”, se coloca, se reduz, no seu lugar – no latifúndio da colonialidade cultural interna e também global – de “arte da terra”, de “arte local”, de “arte

regional”. É aquela que não consegue alcançar a qualidade do cânone, do *mainstream*, e, quando tenta (audaciosamente), produz sempre algo de “mau gosto” ou de cópia mal feita, fora inclusive do status de *underground*, quando se presta à comparação.

Pela alternativa A, tem-se a negação, inclusive de sua historicidade em si, e por si próprio para o consumo interno no seu lócus original de criação e difusão. Pela alternativa B, tem-se a subordinação, outra modalidade de negação. Sua folclorização, isto é, sua redução ao nicho – que também acaba afinal de alguma forma – mas sempre na condição inferior – servindo como um produto de mercado (como lenda, mito...) – das manifestações tradicionais, por isto dignas de comiseração e “tutela” do estado em razão de sua classificação como cultura menor, subdesenvolvida posto que aquém ou fora do padrão de qualidade da matéria nacional, subalterna em relação não só àquela considerada de massa (posto que não vende) como também a acadêmica (posto que fora da tradição da estética européia e sua vanguarda) e, com esta e por esta qualidade, credora de apoio cultural estatal, seu socorro indispensável, socorro este que também, de fato, quase sempre não chega.

Noutro sentido, mesmo dentro da esfera da imposição colonial – com a sua indiferença e subalternização – e em razão dela, se poderia considerar, frente às aludidas alternativas, alguma coisa de positivo, sob o ponto de vista cultural, na medida em que é justamente pela diferença que a expressão local se afirma como algo diverso, portanto próprio. Caráter positivo este que, segundo entendo, vai depender, fundamentalmente, de uma consciência cultural profundamente esclarecida e liberta – ou que, de alguma forma, que a problematize – frente à condição colonial imposta historicamente.

Não se pode perder de vista o fato de que é precisamente na relação entre a expressão local e o que se apresenta a ela externo que se produz – ante tamanha força da imposição do martelar canto da sereia – uma auto aceitação de inferior e não diferente – diante do padrão imposto. É quando o que seria diversidade e diálogo perde força para a colonialidade cultural interna, cuja função é hierarquizar as diferenças e, nessa medida, excluí-la (pela alternativa A) ou subalternizá-la (pela alternativa B). É assim que, com o tempo, dita expressão da colonialidade passa a germinar/desenvolver “na mentalidade dos locais” a pedagogia da auto exclusão e da auto baixa estima cultural. O que os faz aceitar como um dado natural – e cultural inevitável – as condições



impostas historicamente de reprodutor e consumidor, tipo inatos ou resultante do destino traçado pelos deuses (colonizadores/do mercado).

É quando a máquina colonial passa a produzir seus efeitos e se reproduzir nas/pelas mentes dos próprios colonizados. É quando tudo isso se oferece como pressuposto da relação (se é que se pode assim denominar), naturalizando o que é historicamente construído para nos impor à condição de meros reprodutores e consumidores, jamais criadores. É quando o produtor local cai no canto da sedução e passa a sonhar em ser o postigo do modelo que se lhe apresenta como o ideal, posto que melhor, superior, desenvolvido.

Em um lugar mais abaixo dessa hierarquização de sentidos (se é que se pode descer ainda mais) vamos encontrar as concepções e manifestações sonoras dos indígenas, cuja dimensão de invisibilidade/inadivisibilidade – pelos canais de difusão da indústria cultural – é infinitamente maior (definitivamente não faz parte de qualquer programação radiofônica ou televisiva, mesmo estatal de um Estado, como o Acre, que se diz seu protetor-mor), quando não postos – reduzidos – a uma classificação de caráter exótico encontrado nas prateleiras dos mercados globais (não locais!) com apelo comercial de selo supostamente étnico, neste caso, o que o torna invisível como cultura e visível como produto exótico para o consumo, isto é, incompreendido e por isto também não considerado – como expressão (e toda significação que lhe é inerente) de uma cultura própria e, com isso, reduzida a mais um subproduto de mercado de discos (para consumo dos entendidos) e também da museologia, como algo sempre do passado da modernidade, algo de primitivo, selvagem, exótico e assim longe da qualidade técnica – seja do *mainstream*, seja do *underground*, clássicos/eruditos e populares – que o padrão eurocêntrico atesta e impõe.

Não se trata simplesmente de ter orgulho cultural de ser como é – o que significa não ser como o outro busca impor – mas de se manter consciente da tensão permanente do contato seja com o que for, não exatamente que o diferencie, mas com o que o inferiorize, buscando daí – como esfera dialógica – extrair tudo menos deixar-se eliminar como potência e ação culturais, como, definitivamente, outros tipos de saberes e de processos sensoriais criativos dignos. Falo de um projeto estético decolonial aí incluído.

Tenho este caso como a expressão de um fato moderno-colonial que não está solitário na esfera do território nacional (SOUZA, 2017). É um fenômeno que se repete em cada locus geocul-

tural que não seja o do centro e que mesmo no centro se espraia hierarquizando tudo que nele se produz e que não se encaixa na estética colonizadora. É o manifesto expresso de um Estado-Nação fazendo mover a máquina do colonialismo cultural interno que – negando as diferenças – impõe o seu (que é do *sistema-mundo moderno-colonial*) estatuto da totalidade, da centralidade, da verticalidade e da universalidade culturais a transformar diferença em hierarquias coloniais.

Não perder de vista esta forma de colonialidade cultural – como fato histórico que se mantém e se atualiza nos processos de modelamento dos criadores culturais locais – é determinante para que possamos tomar atitudes decoloniais.

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“Experimental” Music Practice and/or Self-Determination Politics: A Sicilian Diasporic Perspective

Marcello Messina*

Abstract: How can an intellectual project, centred on the revindication of one’s peripheral identity, be based on a privileged, ethnocentric corpus of (extra)musical practices and rituals — described as “experimental”, “new” or “contemporary” — that is inevitably imbricated with impalpable and yet perniciously operative notions such as “erudite”, “classical”, “Western”, “European”, etc.? On the one hand, self-determination activism and avant-garde music may both be seen as forms of symbolic production characterised by situations of substantial political isolation. On the other hand, claims for territorial and ethnic liberation may clash with the not-so-implicitly Eurocentric, white, aristocratic premises upon which the whole “erudite music” rubric is predicated. In addition, as someone born and grown up in the Southern fringes of Europe, who has lived and worked both in Northern Europe and South America, I also need to acknowledge the slippery nature of my supposed peripherality, always suspended between the racialised stereotypes traditionally assigned to Sicilians and the privileged condition of a white EU passport holder.

Keywords: peripherality; privilege; self-determination; avant-garde; Eurocentrism

Prática musical "experimental" e/ou autodeterminação política: uma perspectiva diaspórica siciliana

Resumo: Como pode um projeto intelectual, centrado na reivindicação da própria identidade periférica, ser baseado em um corpus privilegiado e etnocêntrico de práticas e rituais (extra)musicais – definidos como “experimentais”, “novos”, e “contemporâneos” – que è inevitavelmente imbricado com as noções, impalpáveis e mesmo assim operativas, de “erudito”, “clássico”, “ocidental”, “europeu”, etc.? Por um lado, o ativismo pela autodeterminação e a música de vanguarda podem ambas ser vistas como formas de produção simbólica, caracterizadas por situações de substancial isolamento político. Por outro lado, reivindicações de independência territorial e étnica podem chocar com as premissas eurocêtricas, brancas e aristocráticas nas quais todo o conceito de “música erudita” se sustenta. Outrossim, como sujeito nascido e criado no extremo sul da Europa, que têm morado e trabalhado tanto no Norte da Europa, quanto na América do Sul, eu devo também reconhecer a natureza ambígua da minha suposta perifericidade, que está sempre suspensa entre os estereótipos racializados dos sicilianos e a condição privilegiada de um branco europeu.

Palavras-chave: perifericidade; privilégio; autodeterminação; vanguarda; eurocentrismo.

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INTRODUCTION

I commonly situate the start of my “serious” compositional production between the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2009. These were the first months of what would turn out to be a 7-year long stay in the North of England, studying and working at the University of Leeds. This was also the period when I started realising that I could use Sicilian to name my pieces: part of that was due to the fact that everyone uses Italian for music, and as a speaker of Italian I find that often inappropriate and ultimately unexciting, whereas nobody has got a clue about Sicilian and then they find it interesting or at least obscure. Most of why I started naming pieces in Sicilian, though, has to do with the fact that in those years I was becoming more and more reflective about my own Sicilianness, and got to meet several movements and associations which were concerned with this same issue, from a range of different standpoints: some were more like culture revival associations, others were interested in politics and in campaigning for forms of territorial self-determination – basically, autonomy or independence.

So, looking back at this period I am often struck by the naivety of my own confidence with the political significance of my work, and also with the fact that composing and disseminating “contemporary” or “experimental” music could effectively contribute to the cause. In my 2013 PhD thesis, I got as far as claiming that

my examination of these issues [on Sicily] is tightly intertwined with my activity as contemporary experimental composer, in that both involve an effort in challenging assumptions and coming to terms with situations of substantial political isolation (MESSINA, 2013a, p. 5).

Here the very idea of complaining about political isolation is symptomatic of the perception that this isolation is somewhat anomalous or undeserved. Moreover, in the above passage I actively connect contemporary experimental composition with intellectual activism. But how can an intellectual project, centred on the revindication of one’s peripheral identity, be based on such a privileged, ethnocentric corpus of (extra)musical practices and rituals — described as “experimental”, “new” or “contemporary” — that is inevitably imbricated with impalpable and yet perniciously operative notions such as “erudite”, “classical”, “Western”, “European”, etc.?

On the one hand, surely decolonial self-determination activism and avant-garde music may both be seen as forms of symbolic production characterised by political isolation. On the other



hand, however, claims for territorial and ethnic liberation may clash with the not-so-implicitly Eurocentric, white, aristocratic premises upon which the whole “erudite music” rubric is predicated. Of course, one should be aware that independence politics may well be, and often is, reducible to Eurocentrism and whiteness, especially in Europe. This may be the case even in Sicily, and at times it is the case, despite the violent racialisation to which our bodies, cultures and territories, are subjected when they are set against the whiteness of Northern Italians and Northern/Western Europeans; however, my interest in Sicilian self-determination is precisely the opposite — I look precisely at my racialised identity in order to imagine a space that is freed from the normativity of European and Italian whiteness. Again, how can this imaginary space exist in the context of elitist, abstract, white music?

Early responses to this question are to be found in my production from the early 2010s. For example, in the orchestral piece *U mpastu*,¹ I use variation in the density of isolated and repeated fragments in order to reproduce the imperialistic regime of unequal exchange that regulates the economic relations between the North and the South of Italy (cf. ZITARA, 1973). In *A banner*,² I call for two unsynchronised ensembles with two different conductors as an allegory of the ambiguous geopolitical relations between Italy and Sicily. *Antudo*³ is a lyrical piece based on the eponymous motto from the Sicilian Vespers, used again by the Separatists in the 1940s and by contemporary independence movements. Several other pieces of mine focus on Sicilian self-determination, but in general, in these pieces, my use of material in the context of evocative allegorical coding fails to address the elitist and exclusive nature of this very material.

There is more, as I also need to acknowledge the slippery nature of my supposed peripherality, always suspended between the racialised stereotypes traditionally assigned to Sicilians and the privileged condition of a white EU passport holder. I divided this paper in two different parts, both concerned with my trajectory as a diasporic subject: in the first one, I look at my own production in terms of self-discovery as Other; in the second one, I provide an example of how

1. Premiered in Leeds on 12 June 2010 by the LUUMS Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adam Fergler. Published by MAP Editions in 2013 (MESSINA, 2013b). Recording available at <<https://bit.ly/2EErri>>.

2. Premiered in Leeds on 18 March 2011 by the LSTwo Ensemble conducted by Mic Spencer and Jessica Ward. Published by MAP Editions in 2013 (MESSINA, 2013c). Recording available at <<https://bit.ly/36WdML5>>.

3. A first version for violin, violoncello and harmonium was premiered in Edinburgh on 12 December 2011 by the Red Note Ensemble conducted by John Harris. Recording available at <<https://bit.ly/2ECrKFK>>. Later versions for solo cello were performed by Seth Woods and Leticia Porto.

my positionality as a peripheral, racialised Other, upon another dislocation to South America and Amazonia, may quickly turn into the privileged and arrogant *locus* of enunciation of the coloniser.

PART 1: “I’M A FILTHY WOG, AND PROUD!”

My trajectory is marked by a manifold and complex Otherness, that is partly describable with the help of Frantz Fanon’s work, and in particular the book *Black Skin, White Masks*. A renowned passage from this book explains how the young Antilleans self-represent themselves. They identify “with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages—an all-white truth” (FANON, 2008, p. 114). This confidence in their own whiteness lasts up to the point when they go to Europe, and understand they are seen as the savages in movies and comics. They then immediately feel that “in the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality” (FANON, 2008, p. 149). They therefore start feeling immoral and ashamed.

Now, I want to dislocate the discussion for one minute from aural to visual culture, and show how my experience of Sicilian, for example, can be compared with Fanon’s description, even with the fundamental disclaimer that I am totally aware of my privileged status as a white European subject, who does not want to appropriate black histories of global sufferings and oppression.

The movie scene I refer to articulates at least my own Fanonian discovery of Otherness. In the film *Volcano* by William Dieterle (1950), upon landing in the Aeolian island of Vulcano, the Italian actress Anna Magnani meets the racialised stares of the Sicilian women (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: stills from the landing scene in William Dieterle’s *Volcano*.



Source: <<https://youtu.be/4XqP6IvEb4s>>.

This kind of scene reappears cyclically in films about Sicily, the clichéd landing in front of the angry, racialised islanders: most notably, it appears in the film *Stromboli* by Roberto Rossellini (1950), with Ingrid Bergman playing the Nordic character disgusted by the local women. As in



Fanon, here the Otherness of these women is my own Otherness as a Sicilian: although the images encourage me to identify with the white Italian or Nordic protagonist, I am secretly conscious that the representation of these Sicilian women is actually the representation of me, too.

A Cronulla si junceru

Between the end of November 2015 and the end of May 2016, I resided in Sydney as a visiting researcher based at Macquarie University. I made it to Australia in time to be there for the 10th anniversary of the Cronulla riots – or pogroms, as described by Suvendrini Perera (2009). On 11 December 2005, a multitude of over 5000 angry Anglo-Celtic yobs gathered at Cronulla beach in order to exert punitive violence against Arab and Muslim communities (Fig. 2), in what was nicknamed as the “National Leb and Wog bashing day” (AL-NATOUR, 2017).

Figure 2: A mob of angry white rioters brutally attacking victim Safi Mehri in Cronulla. Photo credit: Andrew Meares.



Source: <<https://bit.ly/2PI9pgD>>.

Soon it was clear to me that the “anti-wog” feeling that triggered the riots was about me, too. After all, Australia has a whole history of racialised violence against Southern Italians, ranging from the whiteness screenings of prospective immigrants made by Australian immigration officials (PUGLIESE, 2002), to any sort of violent bullying suffered by Southern Italian kids at school (BOCCABELLA, 2011), etc.

A few years later, in 2018, I wrote a text-based piece titled *A Cronulla si junceru* (“They gathered up in Cronulla”),⁴ in which I use Sicilian recitation alongside free improvisation in order to re-narrate the events – essentially, Anglo-white violence against the so-called *Lebs*, which stands for Lebanese, a general slur against people “of Middle Eastern appearance” (quoting the local press, but also cf. PUGLIESE, 2003; AL-NATOUR, 2017).

A Cronulla si junceru, na ddhu jornu, cchiossai di cincumila chistiani. All’ottu e menza già ndrummavunu e cunsavanu i cuffulari. S’accupava rô cauru, e cchissi ccà nzuppilu nzuppilu accumulincianu a scattari. A manziornu, mbriachi comu tanti signi, arrustevanu canni ri poccu e caddhozzi ri sasizza, ppì llassaricilli curriri ncoddu ê libbanisi.

[They gathered up in Cronulla, on that day: more than five thousand people. At 8.30am they were already drinking and starting the barbecues. It was boiling hot, and these people, little by little, were starting to go bonkers. By midday, all drunk as skunks, they were roasting pork meat and sausages, in order to throw them at the Lebs].

I re-narrate the events from the point of view of an imaginary Sicilian person who witnessed the violence and attempts to describe it, lingering on the most brutal details in order to avoid establishing any sympathy for the fierce perpetrators of the violence – contrary to what has been extensively done by Australian media (cf. WISE, 2017).

Appoi accumulinciaru a scassaricci i machini a cchiddi ca pareunu nnicchiddhu cchiù libbanisi ri l’autri. Scassunu ssi machini, e appoi ncagghiunu a dduj carusi mediurientali e ccuminciunu a ssuntumarili rê coppa. E mentri chissi ccà a munseddhu vastunaunu a ssi dduj carusi, na fuddha ri ggenti mbriachi taliava e arrireva. Ccu ll’occhi russi, assappanati ri sangu, si ciccaunu a malajucata, tiniunu u schifu, ppì ffozza ddhu jornu cci’ava a nesciri u mottu.

[Later they started smashing the cars of those who looked a bit more Lebs than the others. They smash the cars, and then they bump into two Middle Eastern guys and start beating them up. And while the mob bashes these two guys, a crowd of drunk people stares at them laughing. With red eyes, soaked in blood, these mobsters were looking for trouble; they were making a mess, as if they wanted someone to end up dead on that day].

This imaginary narrator gets to the point of wondering what could have happened if s/he was “mistaken” for a “Leb” and lynched in the middle of the crowd.

Ju pensu ca su ppì ddiri cc’jera ju ddhu jornu, sti scattati m’avissunu scassatu a lignati macari a mmia, a mmia ccu tutti i me cumpagni catanisi, palemmitani, sciacchitani. Ddhu jornu n-cafolu ri ggenti comu a nuatri, emigranti siciliani, napulitani, greci, marrucchini, palestinesi, si stesino ê casi rô scantu, nzemmula

4. Recordings and script available at <<https://mega.nz/#F!2pBhTIDT!TvPg9iDzWF6lcbKjqMLAuw>>. Recorded in August, 2018 by myself with the Grupo de Improvisação Livre – G.I.L. and presented in Sciacca, Sicily, as part of the Ritrovarsi festival. Also performed in Rio Branco with G.I.L. on 22 August 2018, and in João Pessoa with Artesanato Furioso on 23 October 2018.



cchê só figghi e niputi, nanzamai cci puteva capitari quacchiccosa. Sydney addi-vintau ncampu ri battagghia, ccù scerri a tutti i banni.

[I bet if I was there on that day, these idiots would have beaten me up, too, they would have beaten me with all my mates from Catania, Palermo, or Sciacca. On that day, a lot of people like us, immigrants from Sicily, Neapolitans, Greeks, Moroccans, Palestinians, they all stayed home in fear, together with their children and grandchildren, afraid that something could happen to them. Sydney became a battlefield, with fights everywhere].

Indeed, during my stay in Sydney, I heard many stories from people of Southern European, North African and Middle Eastern backgrounds who locked themselves at home in order to avoid the mess that was going on in the streets.

I saw them colours of your flag

Further into my stay in Sydney, I then witnessed Australia Day (better known as Invasion Day or Survival Day, celebrated on 26 January), and the shameless parade of whiteness it involves, in the face of the dispossessed, Indigenous owners of the land. This episode inspired a solo-speech piece that I completed a few weeks later, titled *I saw them colours of your flag*, which was recorded by Lauren Redhead as part of her independent album *solo speaking* (REDHEAD, 2016). On Invasion Day, I did not want to participate to the celebration of the persisting invasion of the land where I was temporarily residing, and hence decided to participate to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders counter-event in downtown Sydney, called Yabun Festival.

The impressions of the whole day at Yabun Festival, with the contextual stop at Redfern Station; the walk to Victoria Park where the Festival was taking place (because even that park needed to have a settler colonial name, surely?); and the white people trying to disrupt the event, provided the content material for the piece (MESSINA, 2017).

You know they celebrate that crap at the end of January, when they got here in 1788 and started plundering your land and killing your people? Well I went to Victoria Park on that day, because how the hell do you want to name a bloody park round here??! No, seriously, what the fuck, but then there was also your own counter-festival down there, and guess what? Those clowns with their blue flags were trying to hijack your event, breaking in your shows, interrupting your speeches, as if the whole country hailing the fucking invasion wasn't enough for them!

In the piece, I get to the point of offering to wrap myself in the Aboriginal flag, but I first situate myself: “I’m a filthy wog, and proud!”. This wog declaration serves to avoid appro-

priating Aboriginal histories of suffering and oppression while standing in solidarity against a white Anglo-Celtic, Aussie-dominated country: “I’ll wrap myself in your proud banner: / I love it, as – unlike this country – / There’s no fucking white in it”. While directly referring to the white Commonwealth stars on the Australian flag, as opposed to the black, red and yellow Aboriginal flag, my comment here is an obvious disavowal of whiteness in the face of the persistent settler-colonial mentality that characterises Anglo-Celtic Australia.

PART 2: “I WANT TO OCCUPY YOUR SKIN”

The disavowal of whiteness declared and performed in *I saw them colours of your flag* somewhat clashes with my parallel trajectory in Brazilian Amazonia, that started before my stay in Australia and continued after my return. As a European – and, in particular, Italian – subject I (more or less consciously) embody the role and the aspirations of the coloniser.

In his famous reading of Jan Van der Straet’s painting *America* (Fig. 3), Michel de Certeau illustrates the shortcomings of the racio-gendered colonial mentality that characterises Eurocentric images of South America:

Figure 3: Jan Van der Straet’s painting *America*, as it appears on Michel de Certeau’s *The Writing of History* (1988).





Amerigo Vespucci the voyager arrives from the sea. A crusader standing erect, his body in armor, he bears the European weapons of meaning [a cruciform staff with a banner bearing the Southern Cross, a navigational astrolabe, and a sword—each of these referring to discourses of mastery—religious truth, scientific truth, and military power]. Behind him are the vessels that will bring back to the European West the spoils of a paradise. Before him is the Indian “America,” a nude woman reclining in her hammock, an unnamed presence of difference, a body which awakens within a space of exotic fauna and flora. An inaugural scene: after a moment of stupor, on this threshold dotted with colonnades of trees, the conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his own history. From her he will make a historied body—a blazon—of his labors and phantasms. She will be “Latin” America (DE CERTEAU, 1988, pp. xxv-xxvi).

How can I possibly avoid reproducing this mentality when creating, pronouncing or commenting something about Amazonia? Even with the best intentions, is it really possible, as a white European subject, to eliminate one’s violent arrogation of the “European weapons of meaning”? Is it really possible to come to terms innocently with the temptation to write one’s “own history” on the bodies and territories of the local population? In a nutshell, can my presence in Amazonia, or elsewhere in South America, ever be innocent?

A Language I Never Heard

For example, in 2017 I participated to Ursprung Collective’s work *A Language I Never Heard*,⁵ a lo-fi music video on an eponymous track by Israfel Sivad, who wrote and declaimed the lyrics, and Reify, who wrote and produced the music. I filmed and edited the images, as I stated, in a very lo-fi fashion, using my phone during various trips to the border between Amazonian Bolivia and Brazil, in the cities of Cobija, Epitaciolândia and Brasília.

Everybody else has gone to sleep / except for me and the bats, and / we can’t get close enough to you. // I want to occupy your skin; / my soul commingled with yours – / one body, one breath, one vein, // one love. // I can’t say too much as / the moon turns to blood, / earthquakes rock my continent. // The apocalypse devours my mind / as your arm brushes mine. I / speak a language I never heard // before. // But it seems maybe you / understand, maybe you heard it, / too. Constellations return. // They light our silhouette in / a primordial bath. You’ve given birth / to me in a land where I never knew // I died.

A Language I Never Heard uses the violent language of the coloniser. The poem deploys an imagery that inscribes colonial occupation and exploitation, while it describes a relationship of love and desire. The poet’s male voice explicitly says “I want to occupy your skin”, and uses signifiers such as “continent”, “language”, or better, “language I never heard”, “primordial”,

5. Completed in 2017 and available at <<https://youtu.be/zk7tG-2gQb0>>.

“land”, that are all intrinsically connected to the rhetoric of the *terra nullius*, of the demographic void to be domesticated, populated and civilised. Importantly, the use of these signifiers connotes the ownership of the female body, in line with the well-known correspondence between colonial occupation and patriarchal domination (WILLIAMSON, 1986; MOANE, 2011).

Here, again, De Certeau’s critique of Van der Straet’s *America* may turn out handy:

This erotic and warlike scene has an almost mythic value. It represents the beginning of a new function of writing in the West. Jan Van der Straet’s staging of the disembarkment surely depicts Vespucci’s surprise as he faces this world, the first to grasp clearly that she is a *nouva terra* not yet existing on maps—an unknown body destined to bear the name, Amerigo, of its inventor. But what is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is *writing that conquers*. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, “savage” page on which Western desire will be written. It will transform the space of the other into a field of expansion for a system of production. For the moment of a rupture between a subject and an object of the operation, between a *will to write* and a *written body* (or a body to be written), this writing fabricates Western history (DE CERTEAU, 1988, p. xxvi).

Taking as a starting point whiteness, defined by Sara Ahmed as “zero-point of orientation” (AHMED, 2007), the other is fundamentally deprived of their space, and then imagined as exotic and primordial. Literally, a violent act of writing superimposes a layer of history over what is already there. As much as Israfel Sivad’s poem utilizes a lexicon of colonial exploitation, Reify’s music provides sonic elements that reinforce this lexicon, and my own images domesticate Cobija’s urban space, submitting it to my own zero-point of whiteness, violently resignifying the

Figure 4: A still from the video *A language I Never Heard*.



Source: <<https://youtu.be/zk7tG-2gQb0>>.



place from my own Eurocentric and Brazil-centric coordinates (Fig. 4). In other words, even with a self-critical glance, I internalise my own Europeanness, as well as the point of view of a Brazilian resident, in order to racialise Amazonian Bolivia with my own observation.

FINAL REMARKS

The status of my participation in this last collective work is even more problematic in light of the violent coup d'état that has recently overthrown President Evo Morales in Bolivia. On 10 November 2019, Morales was forced to resign by the head of the army (BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT..., 2019). On 12 November, he flew to Mexico in exile (DRAKE, 2019).

Not only was Bolivia's Plurinational Utopia destroyed by religious bigotry and white supremacism, but also by the hypocritical intellectual relativism of many fellow academics whose activities have actively undermined Morales. In August 2016, I participated to the prestigious academic conference 12th Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana (JALLA), that was celebrated in La Paz. To the shock and disappointment of me and many of my Brazilian colleagues, former Bolivian President Carlos Mesa Gisbert, disguised as a common “historian”, was invited to pronounce the final keynote speech at the conference.⁶ As a runner-up to the October 2019 elections that had confirmed Morales's presidency for the fourth time, Mesa was then involved in the coup d'état that forced Morales to the resignation and exile (BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT..., 2019).

As an academic and firm supporter of JALLA's spirit and intents, I repudiate Mesa's 2016 speech as a “historian”⁷ as well as the organisers' decision to let him talk at the event. As noted in a personal conversation by my friend, colleague and collaborator Jairo de Araújo Souza, who was also attending JALLA in La Paz, “unfortunately, in 2016 we witnessed a live rehearsal of the coup d'état”.⁸

Needless to say, the Bolivian dream of a Plurinational Indigenous State kind of went through the same appropriation process I symbolically apply to Cobija and Bolivian Amazonia in

6. Teresa Di Somma and I published a critique of Mesa's speech at JALLA 2016 in the 2nd volume of the analytical dictionary *Uwa'kirü* (MESSINA; DI SOMMA, 2017).

7. It has to be said that Mesa is indeed one of Bolivia's most respected historians, alongside his mother Teresa Gisbert. However, his keynote at JALLA 2016 was the speech of a politician, who did not hesitate in claiming that Bolivia should be considered part of “the West” and in expressing his discontent with the 2009 Plurinational Constitution (cf. MESSINA; DI SOMMA, 2017).

8. “Lamentavelmente assistimos em 2016 ao ensaio do golpe ao vivo” Jairo de Araújo Souza, personal conversation with the author, 12 November 2019.

my video. Another despicable event connected to the Bolivian coup d'état also resonates with the racio-gendered desire of domination that characterises *A Language I Never Heard*: on 7 November, Patricia Arce, Mayor of the small town of Vinto affiliated to Morales's party MAS (Movement for Socialism), was beaten up by anti-Morales protesters “who dragged her through the streets bare-foot, covered her in red paint and forcibly cut her hair” (BOLIVIA MAYOR..., 2019) (Fig. 5).

Regardless of the ethnicity of the perpetrators of the violence, here it is evident that the rage against Evo Morales and his party is nothing short of a reactionary settler-colonial re-

Figure 5: Mayor Patricia Arce forced to parade disfigured by protesters.



Source: <<https://bbc.in/2ZeVDW0>>

taliation against any minimal attempt to advance the project of a country that acknowledges the non-negotiable right to Indigenous sovereignty. I say this with utter disappointment towards some colleagues whose work I absolutely respect, but who have shown indifference or even open hostility against Morales's project and even against the 2009 Plurinational Constitution: among them, JALLA's general coordinator Guillermo Mariaca Iturri.⁹

Talking about hypocritical intellectual relativism, once again I need to problematise the significance of my activity as an “experimental” composer, and reflect on the inevitable clash

9. A few days after the exile to which Morales was forced, Mariaca accused him of “cowardice” [*cobardía*], called him “a tyrant” [*un tirano*] and hailed the new birth of “street democracy and citizen politics” [*La democracia de la calle y la política ciudadana hemos terminado de nacer*] (MARIACA ITURRI, 2019).



between ambitious intellectual projects and personal/collective deception. Surely, I maintain that my artistic attempts to reclaim and therefore dignify my wog status are totally sincere, sound and legitimate. On the other hand, the most basic intellectual honesty urges me to admit my substantial belonging to the most violent and bloodthirsty ethnic group/geopolitical colossus of human history, that is once again evocable through signifiers like “European”, “white”, “the West”, even “Italy”, etc. I am not just talking of a historical legacy; I am talking about the immense privilege of being able, at any given time, to appropriate Otherness and force it violently into my own racialised categories. Having said that, I do not really disown *A Language I Never Heard*, I rather take full responsibility for it, as long as its problematic status is admitted.

The very texture of what we call “experimental” or “contemporary”, intended as generic concepts that claim universality while concealing their often exclusive “white-only” applicability, might definitely be part of the problem here. And while I reclaim my belonging to both “experimental music” and “academic studies”, I have no hesitation in recognising the non-innocent shortcomings of both these rubrics.

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One No Many Yeses

Amble Skuse*

Abstract: The piece *One No Many Yeses* was inspired by the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, and produced in collaboration with National Collective. In this contribution, the author discusses the working of the piece, situating herself as a pro-independence campaigner willing to mark this crucial moment in history, and as a disabled artist exploring the analogies between territorial and individual self-determination. The piece explores how a composer can give voice to non-composers and use real audio to create a representation of the conversations found online and in the real world.

Keywords: Scottish Independence, Soundscape, Activism, Disability, Composition.

One No Many Yeses

Resumo: A peça *One No Many Yeses* foi inspirada no Referendo sobre a independência da Escócia, celebrado em 2014, e produzida em colaboração com o National Collective. Neste artigo, a autora ilustra o processo de montagem da peça, situando-se como uma defensora da independência e querendo evidenciar este momento crucial da história escocesa. Ademais, enquanto artista com deficiência, ela pretendeu explorar as analogias entre autodeterminação territorial e individual. A peça explora as maneiras em que uma compositora pode dar voz aos não-compositores, usando o áudio real para criar uma representação das conversas encontradas online e no mundo real.

Palavras-chave: Independência da Escócia, Paisagem sonora, Ativismo, Deficiência, Composição.

Amble Skuse is a musician and artist, working with found sound, voices, electronic processing, and site specific locations. She works with oral history archives, interviews, community memories, radio interviews, found sounds and site specific compositions to explore myriad identities in myriad locations. She explores these ideas of identity and power through a lens of intersectional feminism. Her focus is on gender and disability, and she is currently studying for a PhD looking at ways in which a disabled composer / performer can utilise technology as a tool for composing, improvising and performing.

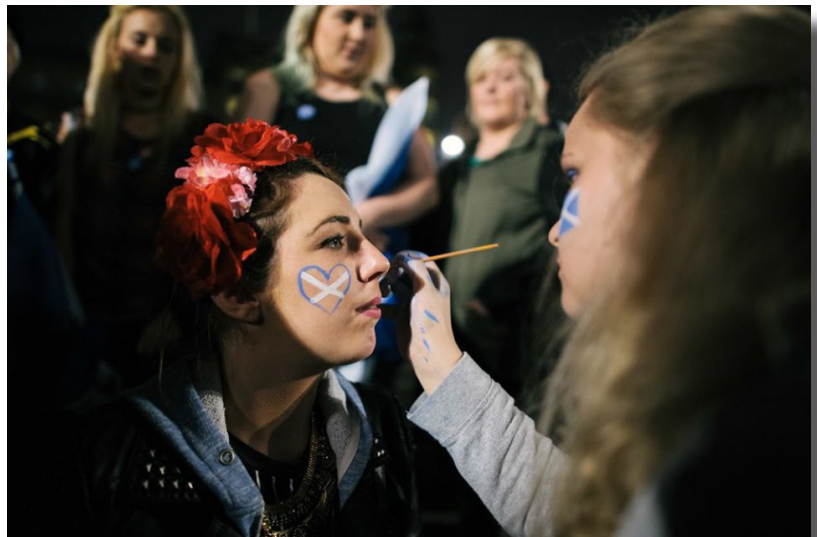
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The piece *One No Many Yeses* was created in response to the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014, in collaboration with National Collective. Its vision was to bring the ideas and passions of the Yes voters to an audience, in order to establish a connection between the grassroots movements (and the many conversations being had), and a general public who may not have a connection with those groups.

I have long been interested in the ways in which a sound artist can work with groups to express various voices. For example, in my piece *Linda's Soundscape* I took interviews of Chinese “left behind” children (children whose parents had migrated to Beijing in search of work, and had been left behind with extended family in the countryside) and merged them into a sound piece for the Chinese community theatre group Hua Dan. I had also worked with the Tinderbox Collective on a soundscape of Haikus written by migrant children who had moved to Edinburgh. The haikus expressed what home meant to them and were performed as a part of The Journey of A Thousand Wings project.

One No Many Yeses came about as a result of a social media conversation with Mairi McFadyen of National Collective. National Collective was a cultural movement for Scottish independence during Scotland's Referendum from December 2011 to September 2014, and as a part of their work they convened with grassroots groups, campaigners and individuals who were intending to vote Yes to the question “Should Scotland Be An Independent Country?” in the referendum of 2014 (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Yes Voters preparing for an Independence march 2014.



Source: Amble Skuse's personal archive.

In the summer of 2014, they organised a mammoth 30 day national grassroots pro-independence festival that took place across Scotland during July. The Yestival tour showcased the grassroots cultural movement for Scottish Independence and included communities in the Scottish



Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, central Scotland, Western Isles, the Highlands, Orkney, Shetland, the North East, Angus, Perthshire and Fife as well as all of the country's seven cities.

As a part of this travelling exhibition, they were looking for someone to make a soundscape of the Yes movement which included people explaining their reasons for voting for independence, mixed alongside sounds from the Yes movement, such as snippets of speeches, clapping/cheering, news reporters reading out headlines, politicians speaking etc. Throughout their campaigning and outreach they interviewed people to collect their thoughts and reasons around voting Yes in the Scottish Independence referendum.

The voices for the soundscape were gathered by members of National Collective. They went to events, groups, meetings, rallies and marches with sound recorders, gathering sound to feed into the soundscape. The voices included in the piece range from The Indy Knitters – a group of women who come together to knit and talk about Independence for Scotland –, to major politicians, from journalists to playwrights, from architects to fishmongers. We wanted to represent a broad range of reasons for voting Yes, something which would resonate with different people for different reasons, and to show the strength of feeling and commitment they witnessed in their research.

As a Yes voter myself I was interested in developing a piece of work to mark this crucial moment in history, and as a disabled artist going through a difficult period of health issues, I was limited as to what I could do in terms of community outreach. The collaboration with National Collective meant that I was able to contribute something using their found and recorded materials, reducing my need for active engagement, and increasing the levels of partnership decision making in the work.

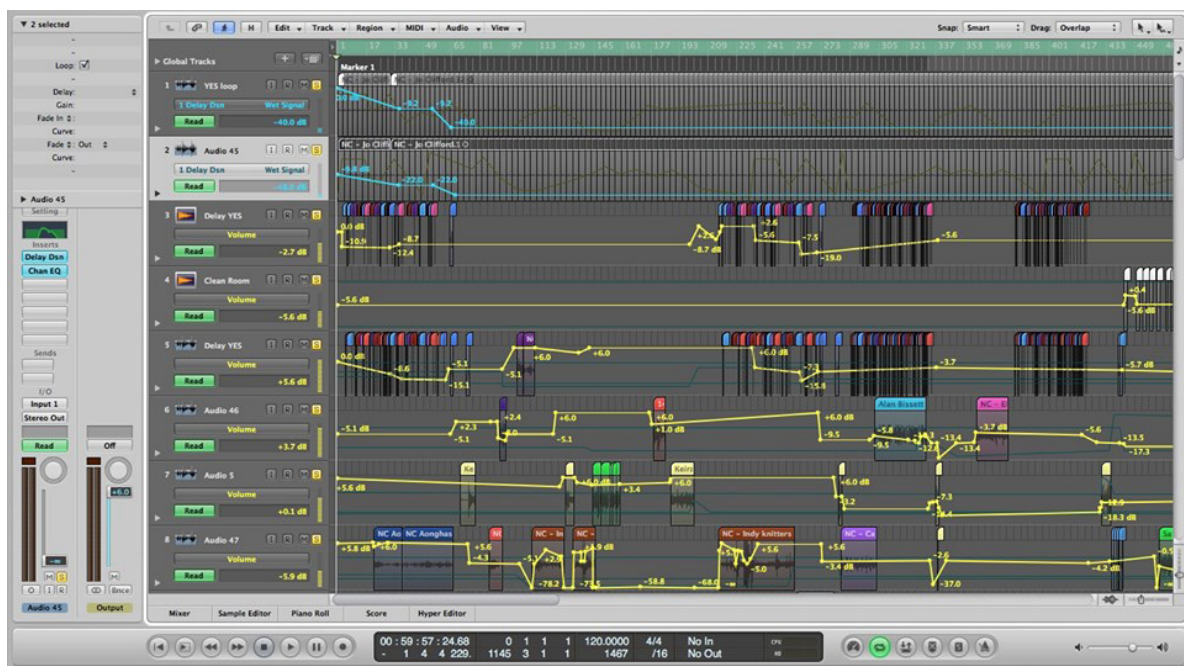
As a disabled person and composer I am interested in how power manifests itself, often through system design this relates both to the micro-systems of how we live our daily lives and the macro-systems of government. For me, creating systems which work for the people in them is more important than maintaining systems which support the most powerful. In this way we can think of disability justice in similar terms to self-determination. Because one is different it does not mean that one is wrong. And if one is different perhaps we need different ways of doing things. As Colin Barnes puts it, “this is about far more than simply ‘political correctness’. It’s about the

crucial issue of causality, the role of language, its normalising tendencies and the politicisation of the process of definition” (BARNES, 1999, 578).

Following on from the Social Model – which holds that disabled people are not *disabled* by their impairments, but by the way society is designed¹ –, I am interested in broadening design, relinquishing power and decision making and bring a group of voices together in the pieces I make.

This piece allowed me to take that role as a composer, putting together sounds which had been spoken by some people, recorded by others and then edited and selected for me by others (Fig. 2). In this way, the piece is a collection of decisions made by a group of people, some of whom knew each other and some of whom did not, but all of whom had a shared goal of independence. The power for decision-making in the piece is distributed amongst those involved. This takes my powerful role of composer, and distributes it amongst many voices, in a dismantling of hierarchy and centralised power.

Figure 2 : A snapshot of the editing process of the Yes soundscape.



Source: Amble Skuse personal archive.

1. On the social model, cf. the following quote by Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer: “The significance of disability theory and practice lies in its radical challenge to the medical or individual model of disability. The latter is based on the assumption that the individual is ‘disabled’ by their impairment, whereas the social model of disability reverses this causal chain to explore how socially constructed barriers (for example, in the design of buildings, modes of transport and communication, and discriminatory attitudes) have ‘disabled’ people with a perceived impairment” (BARNES; MERCER, 1997, p. 1).



I felt that this methodology reflected the sense of the independence movement in Scotland, which appeared to be a heterogeneous mass of grassroots movements, and political movements coming together with a shared intention. More recently this has been gathered semi-formally with the name All Under One Banner. This collection of different people, different visions, willing to work together with one project in mind is reflected in the title of my piece, *One No Many Yeses*. All those in the Yes campaign reject rule by Westminster in favour of independent Rule in Holyrood (Scotland's Parliament) but beyond that we have myriad visions of what the future may hold, how we would organise ourselves, what political direction we would take, which countries to align ourselves with, and how our votes would break down. We have one No and many Yeses. The title also reflects the many many people who told me Yes. Yes to a different future, Yes to a leap in the dark, Yes to working together, Yes to change, Yes to fairness, Yes to an independent country with control over its own laws and assets, Yes to Yes.

The piece explores how a composer can give voice to non-composers and use real audio to create a representation of the conversations found online and in the real world. *One No Many Yeses* weaves together ideas, passions, and encouragement from those people encountered in the Yes campaign; it is a demonstration of the grassroots energy of the Yes movement, and reflects a new way of doing business in Scotland's political world. A great shift has been made towards social media, speaking person to person rather than from the central campaign office downwards. I capture this in the piece by choosing to feature key politicians Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon² midway in the piece, once the sense of passion and hope has been expressed by other unnamed Yes voters.

The soundscape captures a moment in time, and voices which previously would have been lost to the wind are preserved, we hear the real voices of independence rather than those skewed by the national media, we share our thoughts, feelings and excitement for a better version of politics. The piece was made together, all contributing our own skills and visions, in the way that we would hope to build a new country, together.

2. It is important to note the way in which the independence movement has developed since this period in time. While Nicola Sturgeon has proven her credentials amongst the leaders of the world, Alex Salmond has been hit by many allegations of sexual harassment. How this will affect a second referendum is yet to be seen.

References

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