The Top Ten Sounding Out! Posts of 2017!

Sounding Out! Authors

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Abstract

For your January reading pleasure, here are the Top Ten Posts of 2017 (according to views as of 12/28/17). Visit this brilliance today–and often!–and know more fire is coming in 2018!

Keywords

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10). Unlearning Black Sound in Black Artistry: Examining the Quiet in Solange's A Seat At the Table

Kimberly Williams

On May 18th, 2017, Solange Knowles took viewers on an expedition as she glided, danced and "agonized" in a "joyful praise break" on the floor of New York City's Guggenheim museum. Drawing from the museum's narrative of introspection and multi-sensory connection, Solange's performance of "An Ode To. . ." prompted viewers to relearn and reorient the melodies of *A Seat at the Table* (2016). Solange's performance in this setting hearkened listeners to new concepts and emotions in the record they didn't catch before as they consumed it. This begs the question– what other sonic elements have we neglected to identify in *A Seat at the Table*? And why?

A Seat at the Table integrates topics like race, depression, and empowerment. Although the younger sister of powerhouse Beyoncé Knowles, Solange has managed to carve out her own legion of dedicated listeners from her infusion of Minnie Ripperton-esque vocals, hip-hop production and Gil Scott-Heron storytelling. Thematically, the album incorporates issues of Black Lives Matter and cultural self-preservation. However, Solange weaves personal elements such as vulnerability, futurism and paternity throughout the record as well, which buoy the album to praise but are hardly discussed in the album's many reviews. Instead, writers and listeners have largely focused on resistance, anger and reactionary concepts. **[. . .Click here to read more!]**



9) The Listening Body in Death

Denise Gill

My voice melds with the sound of the water pouring from the hose, as I gently massage the waste, blood, and tears from the body of the deceased. In the act of washing the dead, water is simultaneously sound, spirit, and sensory experience for the deceased and for the washer herself.

Washing the deceased in groups of three, our individual solo voices punctuate space at our own paces and intensities. Our sound soothes and cleanses the deceased as much as our washing. The melodic recitations we provide when gently holding the deceased are the most important components of ritual cleansing before one is buried. We repeatedly sound "Forgiveness, o Teacher [e.g., God]" while exhaling and inhaling. Often we recite the *Tekbir*—which articulates God's greatness—adding a melodic architecture to our textured calls for forgiveness. **[. . .Click here to read more!]**

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8). Unapologetic Paisa Chingona-ness: Listening to Fans' Sonic Identities

Yessica Garcia Hernandez

I am a self-identified Paisa, a Paisa Girl from Playa Larga – my home – in the Eastside of Long Beach, California. The term paisa/s is slang for paisanos (homies) and it references someone who takes pride in listening, dancing, and attending nightclubs where Banda music, corridos, and norteños are performed. I am part of a generation that has been referenced as the Chalinillos; youth with an urban gangsta aesthetic that was influenced by Chalino Sanchez, The Riveras, Saul Viera, Adan Sanchez, Los Dos Grandes, Tigrillo Palma, Los Amos; later came the Alterado, Progressivo (DEL) and now people like El Fantasma, Lenin Ramirez, Alta Consigna, Grupo Codiciado, Jesus Mendoza, and Los Perdidos de Sinaloa.

As they say, "*Fierro Parriente!*" "Andamos al Millon," "Pa que vayan y digan" and "Puro Pa Delante!"

In the mid 2000s, besides partying hard in the paisa nightclub music scene, I also partied with several paisa party crews in Long Beach. The songs, "Las Malandrinas," "Parrandera," "Rebelde, y Atrevida," and "Mi Vida Loca" by Jenni Rivera were my anthems. These songs described the music scene we were a part of, and how we situated ourselves within a male-dominated subculture. "La Malandrinas" for instance says that we make a lot of noise, we drink, ask for corridos at clubs (a masculine tradition) and do not care about what people say about us. **[. . .Click here for more!]**



7). If La Llorona Was a Punk Rocker: Detonguing The Off-Key Caos and Screams of Alice Bag

Marlen Rios-Hernandez

Mexican cultural theorist Carlos Monsiváis looked at various aspects of Mexican youth subcultures in the early 80s and revealed how youth relied on "caos" or chaos as a way to attain pleasure within disruption, spontaneity, and noise (68-79). How does the scream emerge through caos as a instrument of resistance? Alongside scholars like Fred Moten, I argue that the scream ruptures caos and allows us to glimpse the pleasure of resistance. In Alice Bag's scream we find this medley of pleasure, interruption, and spontaneity. Bag explains, "once the Bags hit the stage and the music started, ego checked out and id took over, channeling my libido, my inner rage, whatever... I was free to be myself with no holds barred. It was the ultimate freedom" (221). These elements epitomize what I consider a queer Chicana feminist exorcism of tonality.

As explained in Bag's memoir, particular to punk, there is a general reliance on informal/community-based ear training where musicians teach each other (183). European traditions of musical analysis both negate the horizontal learning central to punk while also normalizing the historical colonial presence within the Borderlands. In order to reveal how Bag's scream exorcises these Eurocentric traditions, I consider her performance of "Violence Girl" at the Whiskey (1978), footage of "Gluttony" from *The Decline of Western Civilization Part 1* (1981), and a brief clip of The Bags' "Survive" in *What We Do is Secret* (2007). Because of how the scream disrupts formal analysis, there is an urgency to understand how it works against the grain. **[. . .Click here for more!]**

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6.) Sounding Out! Podcast #63: The Sonic Landscapes of Unwelcome: Women of Color, Sonic Harassment, and Public Space

Mala Muñoz and Diosa Femme aka Locatora Radio

This podcast focuses on the sonic landscapes of unwelcome which women and femmes of color step into when we walk down the street, take the bus, and navigate public and professional spaces. Women of color must navigate harassment, violent, and sexually abusive language and noise in public space. While walking to the market or bus, a man or many might yell at us, blow us an unwanted kiss, comment on our bodies, describe explicit sexual acts, or call us "bitch." The way that women and femmes do or do not respond to such unwelcome language can result in retaliation and escalated violence. A type of harm reduction, women often wear headphones and listen to music while in public for the specific purpose of cancelling out the hostile sonic landscape into which we are walking. The way that women and femmes make use of technology and music as a tool of survival in hostile sonic landscapes is a form of femme tech as well as femme defense. What sort of psychological and emotional effect does constant and repeated exposure to abusive noise have on the minds and bodies of women of color? **[. . .Click here to listen to the podcast!]**

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5) "Don't Be Self-Conchas": Listening to Mexican Styled Phonetics in Popular Culture*

Sara Hinojos and Inés Casillas

The Cinco de Mayo season showcases troubling instances of Spanish being mocked. Corporate 'merica profits from Drinko de Mayo when menus advertise "el happy hour"; words like "fiesta" and "amigo" are overused; and Spanish hyperanglicized for laughs (one of the worst: "COM-PREN-DAY"). These acts of linguistic privilege, according to Jane Hill, elevate whiteness in public spaces. What is heard as playful for the dominant ear is simply an acoustic representation of the racist appropriation of mustaches, sombreros, and sarapes.

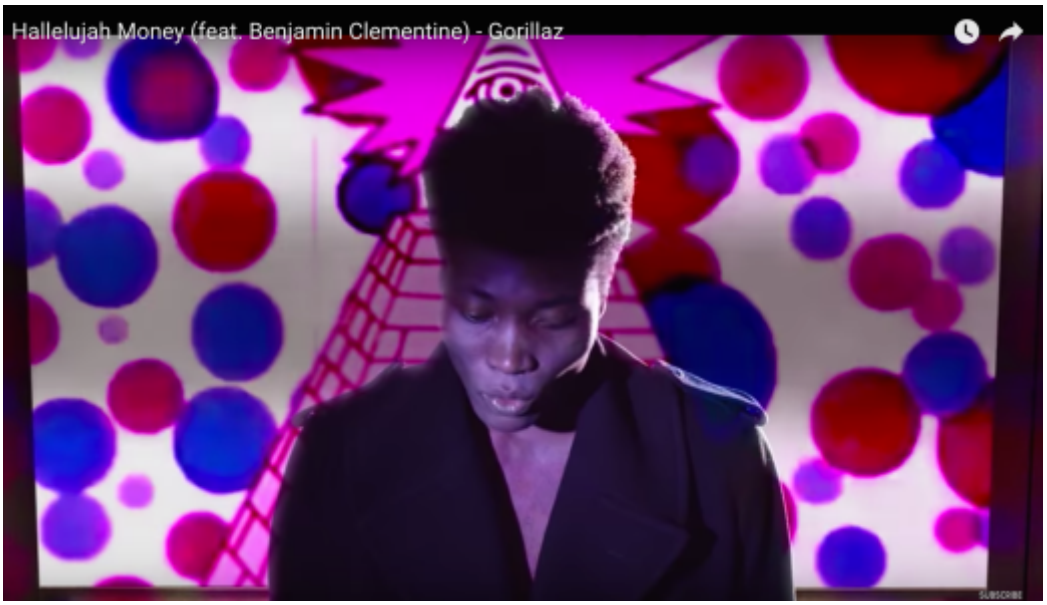
> ***CinKO de Mayo(naise)***
>
> ***Fiesta like there's no mañana***
>
> ***Said no Juan ever***

That said, bilennials have struck back.

Last year, the Latino digital platform, *we are mitú*, published a list that resonated with its young, bicultural readers, those long accustomed to hearing Spanish Accented English (SAE) as part of their everyday speech: 17 Popular Brand Logos If They Looked The Way Your Parents Pronounce

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Them. This humorous phonetic play in the face of complaints about foreign accents being unintelligible or moral indignation over immigrants who do not learn Englishwith native-like proficiency re-directs our attention to digital, engaged Spanish-English bilingual communities. Like Chicana/o listening practices, these digital memes, gifs, and lists embrace how these accents invoke sounds of survival, solidarity and place making. **[. . .Click here for more!]**



4) Singing The Resistance: January 2017's Anti-Trump Music Videos

Holger Schulze

The US presidential campaigns in 2016 were escorted by a number of songs regarding the person who was recently inaugurated as president. These songs served mostly as a kind of dystopic, fear-indulging, angsty "comedy music"—to reference Frank Zappa's 1971 "Dental Hygiene Dilemma"—with a perverted thrill, or functioned in the retro manner of balladesque storytelling in songform. Performance art band Pussy Riot's rather blunt "Make America Great Again" falls in the former category, while many examples from the brave and radiating 30 Days, 30 Songs project fall in the latter, summoning indie-rock icons as Death Cab For Cutie, R.E.M., Bob Mould, EL VY, Jimmy Eat World and Franz Ferdinand.

Lesser known tracks like "Trump," produced by German DJ and producer WestBam, used a collage with sampled footage organized on a 4/4-beat to uncover Trump's lies and remodel them into articulations of the vocal intentions of this subject: "We need drugs. We need crime." However, as horrific and uncanny as this video seems, this subject as head of government then figured only in an unthinkable, impossible world. **[. . .Click here for more!]**

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3) Beyond the Grandiose and the Seductive: Marie Thompson on Noise

David Menestres and Marie Thompson

Dr. Marie Thompson is currently a Lecturer at the Lincoln School of Film and Media, University of Lincoln. Her new book *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* has just been published by Bloomsbury. We've been following each other on Twitter for a while(@DrMarieThompsonand @**AbstractTruth**) and I have become very interested in her ideas on noise. I'm David Menestres, double bassist, writer, radio host, and leader of the Polyorchard ensemble ("a vital and wonderfully vexing force of the area's sonic fringes") currently living in the Piedmont region of North Carolina.

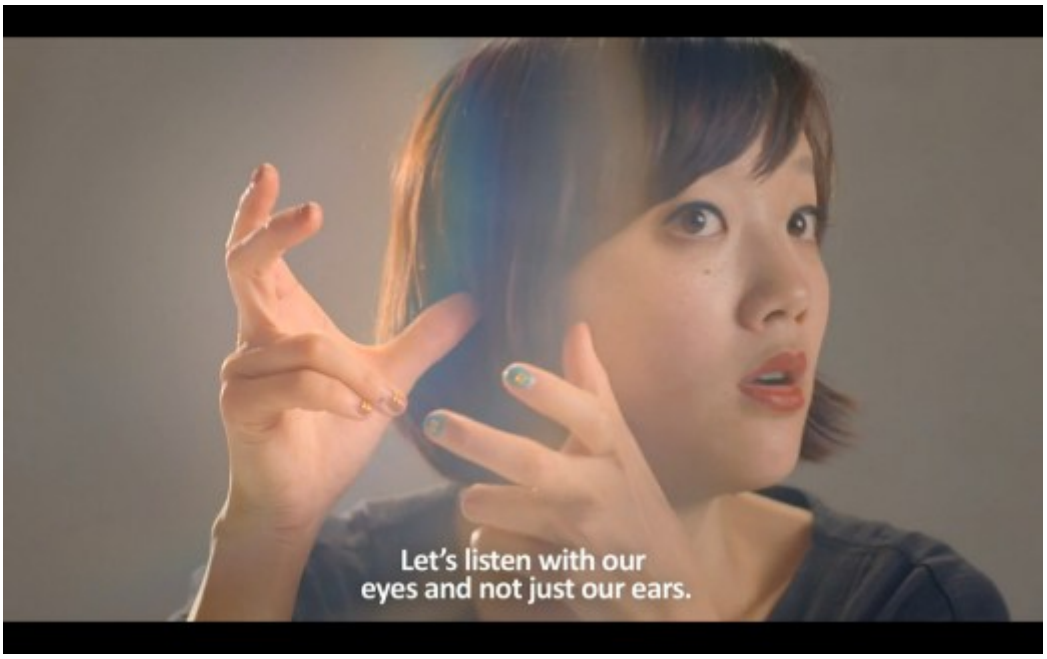
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In her new book, Dr. Thompson covers a wide variety of ideas from Spinoza to Michel Serres's cybernetic theory, acoustic ecology and the politics of silence to the transgressiveness of noise music, and many other concepts to show how we are affected by noise. Thompson is also the co-editor of *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*(Bloomsbury, 2013). Here is a conversation we had over email in February 2017 about *Beyond Unwanted Sound*.

David Menestres (DM): Why now? Why did you feel compelled to write this book? What do you hope this book will accomplish?

Marie Thompson (MT): I think my 'academic' interest in noise began as an undergraduate music student – I was interested in thinking 'beyond' distinctions of avant-gardism and popular culture and noise, as something that traverses such separations became an evermore appealing concept. So I've been circling some of these ideas for quite a while.

I felt compelled to write the book partly due to what I perceived as a gap between some of my 'everyday' experiences of noise and how noise was represented in discourse – particularly noise's representation as an essentially negative phenomenon; or as a shocking, sublime, radical, overwhelming, transgressive force. **[. . .Click here for more!]**



2)Re-orienting Sound Studies' Aural Fixation: Christine Sun Kim's "Subjective Loudness"

Sarah Mayberry Scott

A stage full of opera performers stands, silent, looking eager and exhilarated, matching their expressions to the word that appears on the iPad in front of them. As the word "excited" dissolves from the iPad screen, the next emotion, "sad" appears and the performers' expressions shift from enthusiastic to solemn and downcast to visually represent the word on the screen. The "singers" are performing in Christine Sun Kim's conceptual sound artistic performance entitled, *Face Opera*.

The singers do not use audible voices for their dramatic interpretation, as they would in a conventional opera, but rather use their faces to convey meaning and emotion keyed to the text that appears on the iPad in front of them. Challenging the traditional notions of dramatic interpretation, as well as the concepts of who is considered a singer and what it means to sing, this art performance is just one way Kim calls into question the nature of sound and our relationship to it.

Audible sound is, of course, essential to sound studies though sound itself is not audist, as it can be experienced in a multitude of ways. The contemporary multi-modal turn in sound studies enables ways to theorize how more bodies can experience sound, including audible sound, motion, vibration, and visuals. **[. . .Click here for more!]**



1) G.L.O.S.S., Hardcore, and the Righteous White Voice

Chris Chien

In a 2015 interview with Terry Gross on NPR, Toni Morrison recounts the time her father threw a drunken white man down the stairs because he thought the man was coming for his daughters. She concluded that it made her feel protected. Gross circuitously questions this rationale, implying that her father's act, his *black* violence, must have been terrifying for Morrison and her sister to see. Morrison responds, "Well, if it was you and a black man was coming up the stairs after a little white girl and the white father threw the black man down, that wouldn't disturb you." Chastised, Gross adds, "I think it's a product of being in this, like, not-very-violent, working-class, middle-class family where I didn't see a lot of violence when I was growing up, so any violent act would probably have been very unnerving to me." Gross' response to Morrison's childhood memory of black fatherly love and protection, coded to elevate her white, middle-class upbringing, left me wondering: whose violence is acceptable, and whose is not?

This question remains pressing in today's climate. In the past year, state-sanctioned violence against indigenous, black, brown, queer and trans people, which has run like rich, nourishing marrow through the backbone of this country, is once again being openly and actively fomented throughout the public sphere by the figures at the apex of state power. In reaction, antifa anarchist groups, responsible for the much-publicized #PunchANazi meme have revived the use of black bloc tactics; along with the rise of "left-leaning" gun clubs, these responses have given renewed currency to the notion of arming up to fight back out of fear, disgust, and rage.

Olympia queer and trans hardcore band G.L.O.S.S. embodies many of these impulses, especially in their most recent (and now final) EP, *Trans Day of Revenge*. Through calls to direct action and explicit violence, the band rages against every oppressor that has ever crossed its path. On the whole, popular and critical reception to the EP has been positive, even celebratory, due in part to the preceding lineage of music criticism in which the violence of hardcore music is neutralized or

intellectualized because of the implicit whiteness of the genre. And, in mirroring both critical and popular reactions to the work of Black Lives Matter and other black social movements, the calls to direct action in rap and hip hop are either discredited or disavowed. In other words, certain white genres of music, and the violence therein, appear to require intellectual analysis or even possess an inherent rationalization. **[. . .Click here for more!]**

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Featured Image: "Mic: Sounding Out! Por Vida" by Shizu Saldamando, courtesy of Jennifer Stoever

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Blog-o-versary Podcast EPISODE 62: ¡¡¡¡RESIST!!!!

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