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Vacilar:  
The Entanglement of  
Self-expression and its Outside.

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October 2018

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation and the work presented in the accompanying portfolio have been carried out by myself except as otherwise specified.

Signed,

Gregorio Fontaine

# Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. John Levack Drever for his constant support and fruitful scrutiny that pushed the boundaries of what I understood as the limits of my research practice.

For bearing with me through these four monothematic years, I specially thank my wife Trinidad.

# Abstract

In current sound studies a fissure has grown regarding ontology. This fissure divides the field between sonic ontology on one side and auditory cultures (Kane, 2015) on the other. The sonic ontology side claims we would be capable of suspending cultural and subjective perspectives to access the sonic per se while, on the other hand, auditory cultures deny such access (Cox, 2018). For these auditory cultures, universal or natural notions are always mediated by cultural or subjective traits—therefore this research will identify them as para-ontological. The fissure is experienced across sound studies and touches, among others, artistic practices, philosophy, musicology and anthropology.

As its main contribution, this practice based research develops an arts practice that attempts to reconcile the ontological and the para-ontological as the entanglement between 'self-expression' (para-ontological methods) and 'its outside' (ontological methods). The research develops works to attempt this entanglement as an experience of disorientation, ambiguity and reversibility between sonic agencies of self-expression and those of its outside.

The concept of *vacilar* is proposed by this research as the leading concept to understand the pursued experience of entanglement. In South America *vacilar* is a word with multiple meanings. Each of these meanings is used to identify different aspects of the practice. The meanings of *vacilar* are trap, doubt, dance, and vibration. This dissertation is organised in four chapters according to them.

In the first chapter the element of 'trap' encapsulates the strategies and mechanisms of disorientation and ambiguity—developed throughout the research mainly as Max/MSP patches—to entangle self-expression and its outside. In chapter two 'doubt' is introduced as the property that opens up the possibility of sonic ontology as a listening that questions personal foundations. By situating the outside of self-expression, doubt absorbs ontological methods for the proposed art practice. In chapter three 'dance' conceptualises the reinforcement of the para-ontological from a non-essentialist stance—identified from my own cultural/subjective traits as the sonic *Criollo*. Dance therefore provides the frame from which to develop self-expression for the practice. Finally, in Chapter Four 'vibration' groups the other *vacilar* elements into one sonic experience. The

conclusive works of this research propose the experience of vacilar as a vibration between dance and doubt that is triggered by sonic traps.

The vacilar vibration produces the experience of reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological as the entanglement of self-expression and its outside. As is proposed in the works *Romper el Silencio* and the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk*, this reconciliation is not produced by the logical solution of the fissure but by the experience of sonic agencies as a vacilar of disorientation, ambiguity, and reversibility between self-expression and its outside.

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## Chart: Practice based research of Vacilar

This practice based research develops the vacilar sensitivity as a reconciliation of sonic ontology and para-ontology for the sonic arts. As such, it proposes an entanglement of self-expression and its outside that is developed by the four elements present in vacilar's polysemy: trap, doubt, dance and vibrate.

	Works	Main Method	Main discussion
<b>Chapter 1 'To Trap'</b>	<i>V Region Songscape</i>	Songscape traps as the realtime in situ dialogue of different sound perceptions.	Building Songscape sonic traps as a way to entangle self-expression and its outside.
	<i>Songscape improvisations</i>	Songscape trap as an event: the sonic entanglement of intentions both in the acoustic world and in internal ones.	
<b>Chapter 2 'To Doubt'</b>	<i>London Transport listening exercises</i>	Listening exercises that are not pursued from an interest in listening.	<i>Doubt</i> as listening to both listening to the contrary of Self-Expression (Cage, LaBelle, Voegelin, Cox etc.) and listening to its deconstructionist critique. (Kahn, Kim-Cohen, etc.)
<b>Chapter 3 'To Dance'</b>		Develop a speculative theory from my para-ontology to reconcile ontology and para-ontology.	Dancing 'I' as a para-ontology that, starting from a South American cultural frame opens up to the ontological realm.
<b>Chapter 4 'To Vibrate'</b>	<i>Romper el Silencio</i>	Create an environment to combine all the different elements of vacilar.	Vibration as the integral experience of Vacilar, bringing together all of its elements.
	<i>The Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk</i>	Create a vacilar experience that transcends the fragility of the environment, by allowing a more direct dancing 'I' engagement.	

# Introduction

In recent years, a strong division has been building up in the centre of sound studies. This fissure divides the field into irreconcilable positions between two groups that are identified by Brian Kane (2015) as 'sonic ontology' and 'auditory cultures'. The 'sonic ontology' side claims the ability of having a non-mediated access to the nature of sound in itself: to sound's objective materiality as an event (O'Callaghan, 2007) that is accessible independently of culture. On the other side, the 'auditory cultures' perspective claims that there is no access to the nature of sound in itself, as cultural subjective positions always mediate conceptions of what the natural is. In contrast to sonic ontology, auditory cultures could be labelled as para-ontological. As such, they claim that the ontological realm of sound is never accessible and therefore that ontology and epistemology are undifferentiated. A lively debate has grown over this fissure in the last years. In the special issue of *parallax*, 'Sounding/Thinking' (vol. 23, no. 3 [2017]) a critique of sonic ontology is presented by Marie Thompson and Annie Goh and in the next issue of *parallax* (Vol. 24, No. 2 [2018]), Christopher Cox replies to them in defence of sonic ontology.

In short, the critique of sonic ontology is based over the fact that ontology universalises subjective/cultural positions. For Thompson, ontology naturalises the position of white European man, even claiming that Cox's sonic ontology is 'uncritically naturalizing what is ultimately a specific onto-epistemology of sound that is entangled with, amongst other things, histories of whiteness and coloniality' (Thompson, 2017, p.270).

On the other side, Cox replies by asserting that the para-ontological statement that the universally valid is inaccessible is itself a universal claim (Cox, 2018, cf.236). If no universal axiom is accepted except this negative one, then there would be no form of transcending subjective positions and we would be bound to a 'creationism that replaces God with human beings' (Cox, 2018, p.236). Therefore, the merit of ontology rests in its quest for the universally valid. It is the promise of finding a common ground that would apply to all, accepting all diversity and difference in a neutral, inclusive frame. On the other side, the merit of the para-ontological is the reminder that the subjective is irreducible, that difference will always resist the efforts of a universal frame.

This division of sound studies between sonic ontology and para-ontologies is also enlivened in sonic art practices. It is an all-encompassing fissure that divides the sonic arts between practices that imply that ontological access is possible and those that imply the contrary. This practice based research then is concerned with how this fissure has developed in the sonic arts and proposes an artistic practice that navigates the fissure. As a practice based research the motivation is to engage in sonic experiences that could be understood as contradictory: both part of the sonic ontology quest and aware of irreducible para-ontological biases. Therefore these experiences should be able to reinforce subjectivity and simultaneously they should suspend it or set it aside in order to open up other possibilities. That is to say, my para-ontological stance, my irreducible cultural and subjective approach, should be active in sonic experience and simultaneously, an ontological awareness, a setting aside my subjectivity, should also be present in sonic experience. To try to unify this into one sonic art experience I encapsulate my cultural/subjective approach as my self-expression and ontological awareness as the outside of it. Therefore, what my research tries to accomplish is to entangle into one experience self-expression and its outside. Even though the contradictory nature of this experience is clear to me—that perhaps experiments that try to experience sound in such a way are destined to fail—at the same time I feel that this experience is somehow inescapable; that there is a certain inevitability to the experience of sound as both self-expression and its multiple outsides. In fact, that sonic experience inevitably entangles the para-ontological and the ontological.

As such, the engine for this research is an intuition that propels me to search for ways of exploring both self-expression and its outside as one experience. Intuition or interchangeably sensitivity—address the drive for this experience, as they seem to intertwine personal properties with an awareness of what surrounds oneself, implying voluntary and involuntary stimuli. They point towards the inseparability of a person's deliberate stance and, at the same time, of that person being unintentionally situated. Intuition and sensitivity do not arise voluntary yet they are either embraced or not by the will. One must decide whether to unfold them or repress them. They provide a starting point to understand who you are and how you relate to what you are not. As such, sensitivity or intuition are 'a contingency with no limit other than itself' (Meillassoux, 2008,

p.82). In this sense, intuition and sensitivity provide the frame, the underlying canvas that supports the different methods and paths followed throughout this research, and the final criteria to decide when to stop or how satisfied I am with it.

The methodology of this research practice is then based on the development of this intuition. Perhaps this sensitivity or intuition could be understood as a form of proto-entanglement between self-expression and its outside. What lies ahead would then be methods of exploring and unfolding it; of pulling it out from its nonverbal nature in order to understand it better, expand its reach, and communicate it properly.

As succinctly discussed above, this intuition arises as a contradictory experience as it simultaneously enacts my self-expression and its outside. Even though it is contradictory, it also arises as an inevitable experience. That this experience is both contradictory and inevitable are important aspects of it. They provide an important frame for the intuition, how the different aspects of my practice unfold, and the notions I develop through this text. Therefore an important aspect of this text will be devoted to explaining what contradiction and inevitability entail for this intuition and mean for my practice—this will be explored in detail in the fourth chapter. Importantly I will show in the third chapter, how this contradiction surpasses the limits of logical contradiction. That is to say contradiction is not between yes or no, or between being and not being, but between being and not being sure. Whereas logical contradiction works inside a system that demarcates clear boundaries, the contradiction that is explored here is ambiguous and a-systematic.

I believe this intuition to be rooted in my personal experience growing up in Chile: its cultural, historical and geographical conditions; being influenced by the work of other artists seldom known or misinterpreted; and how I believe this has influenced my outcome as a poet and musician and that of my peers<sup>1</sup>. Therefore it is a para-ontological intuition since I understand it arises from my South American background. On the other hand, by the strength of it appearing as inevitable, it

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of how I understand this intuition as arising from my personal experience in Chile and the influence of other South American artists see the appendix.

implies an ontological certainty. The main concept that allows me to unfold this intuition and frame my practice is that of *Vacilar*.<sup>2</sup>

In Latin American Spanish, *Vacilar* means 1) to dance, to have fun 2) to doubt, to hesitate, to falter 3) to trap, to trick and 4) to vibrate, to oscillate. As the main concept that frames this practice, *vacilar* makes sense of the sensitivity by combining this polysemy. The sensitivity in my practice therefore arises as the vibration triggered by a trap that produces ambiguity, the in-betweenness, of dancing and doubting. In other words, the trap integrates dancing and doubting in a vibration to reconcile the ontological and the para-ontological. A trap is a mechanism, a technology that disorients intentionalities (Hyde, 2010). Similarly, in this practice a sonic trap is created to disorient the boundaries between cultural/subjective expression and openness to the objective or universal realm of sound. This vibration of trap, dance and doubt is what I refer to as *vacilar*.

This text is organised then in four chapters following the polysemy of *vacilar*. The first chapter deals with the *songscape* as the creation of traps for the entanglement of self-expression and its outside. The second chapter explores the element of doubt as a quasi-ontological listening. The third chapter describes the element of dance as a performative reinforcement of a South American para-ontology that ambiguously opens up to the ontological. The fourth and last chapter describes the integration of the other three elements as vibration. This last chapter will show how the *vacilar* vibration unveils the inevitability and contradictory nature of the sensitivity that guides the research. How it therefore provides the basis for reconciliation between ontology and para-ontologies for sonic arts practice.

An outline of each chapter is given below:

## **Songscape Sonic Traps**

In the first chapter, I describe the methods of my practice based research as those of the *songscape*. The *songscape* is a trap, a mechanism to allow an entanglement of both self-expression and its outside. A trap, as Hyde (2010) explains, is a process through which we can exploit the material for our own benefit by way of disorientation. For example with bait the fisherman disorients a fish's eating habits. Even though the fish approaches a worm to feed itself,

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to advise the reader to consult the glossary of this dissertation to follow the terminology introduced.

as it has done multiple times before, it turns out that this worm is now the opposite of what the fish is accustomed to. As bait, the worm reverses the eater/eaten logic that the fish expected to encounter.

This mechanism of traps then is precisely the kind of production needed to experience an entanglement of self-expression and its outside. It is the functioning of the trap that sets the entanglement in action.

The first songscape method to explicitly develop a trap, that entangles self-expression and openness to its multiple outsides, was conceived as a project of in situ real-time musical interaction. I started developing this in a coastal region of Chile and labelled it as the *V Region songscape*. The idea was to create an interaction between “song”—or the sounds that I want and that I am intentionally putting out there—and the concurrent ‘soundscape’—loosely understood as the environment or situation in which the song is sounding. To create the trap between these opposing acoustic worlds I created a series of Max/MSP patches that worked autonomously, listening and processing audio signals both from the ‘song’ and the ‘soundscape’. As such, this trap is originally framed according to understandings of sound perception (Nudds and O’Callaghan, 2009) and different acoustic modes developed in the field of soundscape ecology (Truax, 2001).

In different locations such as in rocks close to the ocean, the beach or a hill, I placed microphones to capture some of the surrounding sounds, started running a songscape maxpatch in the computer and performed with a microphone and a midi keyboard. The idea was to experiment and create a songscape trap to entangle my performance and all the other sounds around. The limits between the sounds from the ‘soundscape’ and those of my performance—my song—would become diffuse through the sonic trap. The maxpatch was a fundamental method here as acoustically providing a disorientation between the sounds happening around and those that came from my personal intention. In fact, the maxpatch was the core of the trap.

In the initial stage of the songscape there was an emphasis on the realtime and in-situ conditions of the interaction. Later in London I developed songscape traps beyond these constraints that appeared arbitrarily fixed. Their fixedness did not allow for the complete

entanglement I was after. The first songscape was partly a trap, yet it had many elements that were immune to disorientation.

The second songscape trap I developed was for the *songscape improvisations*. These are a series of works that—building from the *V Region songscape*—took the material gathered into compositions and improvisations both in the studio and live performance. In these works, I try to erase any immunity to the trap. The theoretical frame was expanded to allow a more flexible description of the practice. Notions that question rigid dualities (Latour, 1993) and explore new fluid forms of materiality (Bennett, 2010) became relevant for the framing of the songscape as an entanglement of agencies (Barad, 2007). The traps in the *V Region Songscape* are built by working with acoustic categories. For the *songscape improvisations* I start to expand the acoustic to include all sonic stimuli. By the concept of the sonic, sound is understood as more than just acoustic presence. It provides access to a form of perceiving and understanding reality that could be labelled as sonic materialism (Cox, 2011). As such it is not constrained to acoustic sounds only but makes sense of other stimuli such as internal experience and also non-acoustic modes of perception.

A sonic trap is therefore not built between soundscape-sounds on one side and song-sounds on the other. It is an event built as a complex relationship between multiple sonic agencies. The relationship between the sounds I perform, the ones I encounter, and the ones the computer creates are not in different compartments but are part of a flux that takes into account emotions, memories, fantasy, and other elements as sonic agencies as well. Therefore, the trap of the *songscape improvisations* is an event that disorientates all elements present.

To finish this chapter, I give my conclusions on these methods and outline what I understand a songscape trap should entail. This will then be taken again in the fourth and final chapter in which trap vibrates with the other two elements—to doubt and to dance—of vacilar.

## **Doubting as listening**

In the second chapter I focus on the vacilar element of doubt as quasi-ontological listening. By doubting I loose my certainty, I falter and become unclear as to what my position is or should be. The element of doubt is what opens my self-expression to its outside. Doubt is what listens to

other possibilities and accepts what my self-expression would rather not listen to. It cracks my position and glances at other positions, perhaps opening the possibility of reaching a universal sonic ontology. However, as doubting is an action of the will, it also recognises that sonic ontology is never reached but always enacted para-ontologically. Therefore by the element of doubt I adopt some elements of artistic practices that relate to sonic ontology and adapt them to be in tune with the para-ontological critique.

Firstly, then, this chapter identifies art practices that are linked to sonic ontology as *poetics of silence*. The poetics of silence, just as sonic ontology, will search for ways of relating with a sonic realm of fluidity and openness that would be natural and/or universal. A realm that for them is prior to the categorisations of subjectivity and culture. Indeed, an outside that can claim an ontological precedence over self-expression.

This poetics of silence develops as part of a more general quest for disabling the culturally, historically and subjectively charged 'I' in order to provide experiences that would be universally accessible. Broadly, this quest is an artistic motive that spans for about a hundred years now: from the dehumanising of the arts in the avant-garde of the beginning of the twentieth century (Ortega y Gasset, 2005), to finding a common language in the structure of modern music rationality as a turn towards an aesthetics of objectivity (Bonds, 2014) or a search for a modernist artistic Esperanto in recent years (Bourriaud, 2009). Put simply, it is a quest that tries to relegate the 'I' in order to allow neutrality as the base from which to recognise a plurality of possibilities. Abandoning the 'I' is seen as crucial to overcome discrimination and supremacisms. Moreover, this discarding of the 'I' is not only present in the arts but it traverses a variety of disciplines and approaches. From a historicisation of the subject—from Marx to Foucault—or a dissolution of the 'I' as an effect of language—in Lacan or Derrida—to a fragmentation of identity in social critiques (Bordo and Moussa, 1993, cf.113-119).

The poetics of silence then encompasses all sonic art practices in which an abandoning of the 'I' is crucial. For these poetics it is without the 'I' that sonic experience accomplishes openness, receptiveness and inclusiveness. For the poetics of silence the suspension of the 'I' is fundamental. In fact, this relegation is the unifying link between multiple practices that span roughly



from the mid-twentieth century to our current days. Therefore it is the link that allows grouping them as poetics of silence.

The poetics of silence comprises from practices based on listening to *silence*, as the here and now of all present sounds in the experimental music of John Cage; to being incapable of marginalising the overheard as you are always submerged in the sounds of others as in the operas of Robert Ashley and the theories of Brandon LaBelle (2016); to experience our own body/mind constitution as Pauline Oliveros, Meredith Monk or La Monte Young; to practices of listening as fluid and the adjoining writings and philosophies of the sonic as flux such as described by Christopher Cox (2013) or Salomé Voegelin (2014).

Throughout the practices of the poetics of silence, by different methods the 'I' is seen with suspicion and is set aside. The 'I'—as cogito, as subject, as ego or any other identification—is understood as inextricably inclined to carry its own understanding, its own judgement and hierarchies instead of embracing the sonic experience itself. Perhaps rooted in the horrors of the twentieth century, a silencing of the 'I' is presented as liberation, as promise of universal understanding. In fact, this poetics identify that an inevitable outcome of the 'I' is that, in one way or another, it will universalise its subjectivity. Therefore access to sonic ontology would require removing the 'I'. Only once this removal is accomplished, an experience that provides sensitivity to otherness, to the outside of your own personal tastes and hierarchies would be possible.

The poetics of silence is a tradition that today is very much alive. To be outside the 'I' is the main requisite for most free improvisation, circuit bending, turntablism, deep listening, soundwalks and other practices that form different circles of the avant-garde, sound arts and adventurous, experimental or exploratory new music.

On one side I value these poetics positively and wish my practice to provide such a sonic opening, yet I believe the possibility of the eradication of the 'I' has not been considered properly in the poetics of silence, an eradication that the para-ontologies denounce as impossible.

In this second chapter, appropriating some elements of the poetics of silence, I focus on what the act of listening is for vacilar. With it I attempt to keep alive the promise of universality that the poetics of silence provide while recognising the impossibility of eradicating the 'I'. By way of

developing the *London Transport listening exercises*, I define what I understand by the act of listening in vacilar and contrast it with the listening method of the poetics of silence identified above.

For the tradition of the poetics of silence, the act of listening is the ultimate mechanism to eliminate the 'I'. Listening would thus allow for a consideration of the sonic without the encumbrance of biased subjective positions. In other words, listening would allow an access to sonic ontology. A phenomenological method for understanding the act of listening achieves this liberation. Listening then becomes the activity that optimistically opens up a realm of transcendence and of universal neutrality. This opening up, this promise of fluidity and elimination of fixed hierarchies is what I encapsulate as silencing of the 'I', of the subjective, of the culturally specific and biased.

However this silencing is enforced. Silence does not arrive silently but it is imposed over the 'I'. Perhaps paradoxically this imposition over the 'I' is also the action of the 'I'. It is the action by which the 'I' shushes the 'I'. In this condition of listening, we find the contradictory and the inevitable that will allow opening listening to doubting.

Describing experiences of everyday listening as part of the *London Transport listening exercises* I will explore how the shushed remains un-listened by the listening of the poetics of silence. In fact not listening to the shushed is what sustains the illusion of ontological access to sonic experience. Therefore I understand that listening, as access to sonic ontology, is a metaphoric experience embedded in an unlistenable experience of waiting for the 'I' to resume. On the contrary, doubting acknowledges the shushed 'I' and the concomitant waiting to stop listening, that listening implies.

This overturning of listening as doubting is achieved in connection with an understanding of the sound logos in Henriques (2011) and Kim-Cohen's critique of ambience (Kim-Cohen, 2016). I will show how listening is always mediated and inhibiting what it cannot listen to. With this in mind, I propose listening as doubting. Doubting adopts the shushing of the 'I' as integral to listening and therefore provides an experience of reconciliation between the phenomenological approach to

listening of the poetics of silence and the opposed deconstructionist approach of Kim-Cohen (2016) or Kahn (1997).

Doubt reconfigures listening, and the ontological quest of the poetics of silence, for the experience of vacilar. In the last chapter I will describe how doubting integrates the sonic ontology motive in my work. Doubt puts the emphasis in the inevitable conditions of listening: inevitable conditions that the listening of poetics of silence shushes. From listening as doubting I stop considering the songscape—the trap that entangles self-expression and its outside—as a fixed format but develop it as a strategy of songscaping.

## **Dancing from personal bias**

The second chapter explores how the element of doubt allows for the reconfiguration of the access to the ontological as embedded in a para-ontological experience. In this third chapter, through the element of dance, I take the opposite direction and arrive to the possibility of the ontological from within the para-ontological. Dance is proposed as the mechanism that allows the sonic experience of reinforcing a subjective and biased 'I' while simultaneously opening up to what that 'I' is not.

Through dancing I take action willingly: I join the rhythm, I accept organised sound and move in accordance. At the same time it is sounds themselves that impose dominance over me. Sounds create involuntary body reactions. Through sonic dominance, material vibrations reconfigure my body as a continuum with the frequencies of the sound system (Henriques, 2011). A sonic body that flows in synchronicity with the sounds it is experiencing. That is to say, through dancing the 'I' is not a fixed entity or position. It is not a noun but an action or a verb in the gerund form (Ingold, 2015).

Dancing makes the 'I' an action that is both voluntary and involuntary. Yet importantly for vacilar, the dance will inevitably stop. The sonic dominance over the body will cease or the body will face fatigue and become immune to it. To recognise the end of dancing as an integral part of it, is a key mechanism for the dancing 'I' to open para-ontology to the possibility of ontology. In fact it is the fundamental element that precludes any 'I' to impose its characteristics beyond the dance.

The dancing 'I' is therefore not self-expression and not the outside of it, but the action that entangles them.

This understanding connects the dance element of vacilar directly to the sensitivity that puts this practice based research in motion. Recapitulating, this is a sensitivity that affirms the possibility of an experience that entangles into one self-expression and its outside. It is an experience that contradicts itself and simultaneously appears inevitable. It is a sensitivity that I can position para-ontologically as South American yet that by recognising it as inevitable (the dance will stop, listening does not listen to the shushed) implies an ontological certainty.

This chapter therefore does not focus on any specific work. It concentrates in the general sensitivity that guides the research as a whole. I propose the notion of the *sonic Criollo* as the dancing 'I' that holds the vacilar sensitivity. As stated before, this sensitivity arises from my personal experience and I have preliminary identified it as South American. As a dancing 'I', it is an affirmation of a subjective, personal stance and yet as the dance will stop, it is unable to proclaim transcendence to its position. It can reinforce itself only as long as the dancing is on. Also as dancing is both an action of the will and a sonic dominance over the will, the dancing 'I' cannot be appropriated by any particular group. It has no essential ties to any particular gender, race, or ethnic group.

The fundamental property of the sonic Criollo is an action that occurs in-between different elements. It arises only as the dancing between them but is not bound to any of them in particular. Its enactment is akin to the experience of earthquakes. The earthquake as an experience is not the buildings and solid elements it shakes; yet we can only know of it through those elements. The earthquake in itself is unperceivable, even inexistent, yet it shapes the solid. In that sense, the present shape of the solid is only the way it is between the earthquake past and the earthquake to come. In fact, the solid is in the constant and inevitable menace of the earthquake.

I therefore group the traits of the sonic Criollo as *the menace of the earthquake*. I propose this menace as the inevitable threat of contradiction and that as such it should not be ignored. It is a menace that unravels an ambiguity through which solid, identifiable or determined elements are shaped, constructed and destroyed. The sonic Criollo—as an earthquake between the plates—is the

friction between self-expression and its outside, it moulds them and is essentially none. The sonic Criollo is only the in-between; it is the dance, the trembling that sets self-expression and its outside in place. It is inexistent in itself and is always menacing whatever formation self-expression and its outside might take.

In order to arrive to the sonic Criollo, an important step needs to be done. If the sonic ontology of the poetics of silence is embedded in a para-ontology—as will be exposed in the second chapter—then that hidden para-ontology needs to be unveiled. Likewise, so far I have not identified the common element of para-ontological sonic practices. What makes them irrevocably para-ontological needs to be clarified; what conditions or mechanisms to deny access to the ontological they have; why cultural or subjective frames are unbreakable.

Therefore this chapter deals with a common concept to clarify these three issues. 1) The unveiling of the para-ontology of the poetics of silence 2) Clarifying why the para-ontologies are unbreakable and the poetics they comprise and 3) To unfold the dancing 'I' of the sonic Criollo and its characteristics as the menace of the earthquake. It is by understanding the interconnectedness of these three issues that the dancing 'I' can be understood as the South American para-ontology that opens up to the ontological. It is this interconnectedness what 1) makes certain para-ontologies attempt to find a universal (ontological) realm, 2) makes others para-ontologies defy the possibility of access to that realm and 3) what sustains the vacilar sensitivity that propels this research project as the experience of reconciliation between the other two.

I identify this common issue as the *problem of America*. In this analysis the arrival of Columbus and crew to the American continent inaugurated a new world and its problems. America—conceptualised as the inauguration of the New World and not only as a continent—closes the world as one unified globe. It is with this inauguration that human led processes of exploitation, slavery, migration, extinction, colonisation, etc. take on a scale previously unimagined and is therefore the milestone that defines the direction of the world ever since. In the natural sciences, there is ample evidence to suggest that this inauguration of the New World can be taken as the unambiguous event that triggers the Anthropocene era (Leswin & Maslin, 2015). Importantly, it is not that America created these issues or that there are no other modes to approach them, yet

America can be conceptualised as the inauguration of these issues on a global scale. With the arrival of Europeans to the American continent, a new global and humanly controllable world was discovered. In fact, ever since then the relevance of the problem of America has been growing exponentially.

The problem of America is then the discovery of the urgent need of universal understanding and at the same time of learning to respect and accept incommensurable difference. Therefore the problem of America brings to earth precisely the issue between ontology and para-ontology. Both the para-ontology that sustains the (ontological) poetics of silence and the common element of para-ontological practices can be understood as artistic mechanisms to address the problem of America.

From this perspective, the para-ontology of the poetics of silence is identified as a way of confronting the problem of America from the hope of finding a solution to it via universal and neutral standards. I identify this mode as that of the Nameless America. This mode is the point of access to the New World for a Western mind and is the essence of the concept of America that the U.S.A has built. It is enrooted in Western ideals of individualism, freedom and an understanding of the New World as a terra nullius. That is to say a nameless, unbiased, non-specific canvas that any individual can explore and appropriate. This individual is not bound to any cultural or fixed essence and is free to explore and access all possibilities. As such, the poetics of silence is the ultimate mean of listening to all the possible new worlds from the optimism of the Nameless America.

In contrast to this Nameless America, I identify as American Diasporas all other para-ontologies that resist the possibility of universal understanding. For them, the ontological is inaccessible and we are always mediated by something else. I will describe these American Diasporas by analysing a few examples of art practices that stress unsurpassable mediation such as Mapuche rapper Chicha con Harina, performance artist Coco Fusco and Outkast's *Hey Ya!* video clip. These practices expose the impossibility of pure access, thus that every experience is mediated. As mediated there is latency between the experience and the experiencer. This mediation can be understood by a loose definition of diaspora. Just as in the case of diasporas, if

there is latency, if there is unsurpassable mediation then home, origin, or essence are never reachable. As diasporas, the poetics of mediation deny the ontological access and are the point of access to America for African, native Americans and other groups who access the New World unwillingly, from positions of violence, geographical and/or bodily estrangement.

Both the Nameless and the Diasporas are points of access to America. That is to say, they confront the problem of America from their pre-American condition. In fact, the Nameless America is evidently Western and the fact that the American Diasporas cannot liberate themselves of mediation can only be measured by contrast to a non-mediated time—regardless if this is or not historically accurate. Therefore both the Nameless and the Diasporas are dealing with the problem of America as something that can be concluded. For the Nameless this conclusion arises from the hope of the future, from the promise of universal understanding. For the Diasporas the conclusion arises from the memory of the past, from the open scars of not having access to your home, origin or essence and trying to heal and vindicate them.

By contrast to the Nameless and the Diasporas, the sonic Criollo is not a point of access to America. It arises in the present of the problem of America. It does not have a pre-American position and it is not inclined towards the future or the past. It is the present in-between. It is not fixed to a particular position—thus the emphasis on it as a dancing sensitivity. It is a sensitivity that is enacted in the in-between, in the contradiction and the ambiguity of other positions; it is therefore, like an earthquake, not an essential property of something, but a sonic activity that transforms. It is enacted only while the earthquake lasts. Yet when the earthquake stops the fixed positions are rearticulated. The sonic Criollo is a menace between them.

Similarly as to how listening as doubting was proposed in Chapter Two as an action that accounts for both phenomenological and deconstructivist ways of listening, the sonic Criollo is proposed here as the sonic entanglement that is only perceivable in the present problem between the Nameless and the Diasporas. It is a dancing sensitivity that cannot be captured by either group and that does not exist independently of them. It only arises in the friction, in the dance between them.

In the next chapter, the vibration that integrates dance, trap and doubt—that provides the integral experience of vacilar—will be unfolded through the description of the final works of this practice based research. A possible conclusion of the vacilar vibration is that perhaps these works diffuse the limits between the practical works and this text.

## **The Vacilar Vibration**

In this last chapter, the integral experience of vacilar will be described as the vibration that entangles self-expression and its outside. For physics, the measuring of the centre of vibration of a complex waveform is ambiguous. Therefore the vacilar vibration is conceptualised as the vibration of a complex waveform that is ambiguous between dancing and doubting. That is to say, this is a vibration that is triggered by a sonic trap that disorients the limits of dance and doubt—the other three elements of vacilar that are covered in the other three chapters of this text.

In order to explain this vibration, this chapter mainly documents the realisation of the work *Romper el Silencio*. This work is an audiovisual concert-installation that was set up in February 2017 at Sala Aranyó, with the support of Fundacion Phonos, Barcelona. The audiovisual design builds from material gathered throughout the development of the research, recordings of texts written while doing listening exercises, and live performances. The space was a big hall and the installation comprised a multi-speaker system, three video projectors, a grand piano, a portable speaker-microphone-effects system and other elements.

The development of *Romper el Silencio* started once the different elements of vacilar had been clearly identified. Therefore it is the first work that attempts a conscious integration of vacilar as trap, doubt and dance. As is explained in the previous chapters dancing reconfigures the 'I' as non-essential or fixed; the 'I' reinforces its self-expression only as long as the dance lasts. Likewise doubting allows an opening to the outside of the 'I', to the ontological realm that would be unbiased by subjective, cultural perspectives and yet as doubt, it recognises this opening as embedded in a cultural/subjective position and therefore to be only a metaphorical opening. The trap is the method that allows for disorientation, reversibility, and ambiguity between self-expression and its outside. It is a mechanism that entangles their limits in order to provide the frame for the experience of vacilar. A mechanism to experience the 'I' as dancing and non-essential, to experience opening as



metaphorical and not phenomenological, to experience the inevitable conditions of contradiction as a reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological.

In *Romper el Silencio* the trap is the fixed format of the work. It is what can be documented, written as score or recording, it is what remains and what can be dismantled and redone elsewhere. Yet as trap, it only becomes a trap while acting as one. As object in itself it is irrelevant: it is a songscaping trap and not a songscape trap. Therefore an important element of *Romper el Silencio* is its evanescence. It is never accomplished; its realisation is then also its failure. In *Romper el Silencio* this element of auto-boycott is fundamental for the vibration of vacilar it provides. It is what enacts the disorientation, the ambiguity of doubt and dancing.

The vibration is then in the experience of the work and not in the installation itself. This experience is described in this chapter in terms of songscaping as personal trajectories through the work: the voice as walking, piano as echolocation, and fundamentally by the notion of the horizon of silence. These notions then also guide an improvised *songscaping soundwalk* I did while in Morelia, Mexico for the Visiones Sonoras festival in October 2017. This soundwalk will serve as a contrast to *Romper el Silencio* since it is a piece that does not require the element of auto-boycott and opens up an interesting path to continue my practice as sonic poet.

In front of the menace of the earthquake described in the previous chapter, the listening of the poetics of silence is relocated as a *horizon of silence*. Just as the horizon—a personal line that exists in the contradiction between the ocean and the sky—silence is not perceivable in itself. Listening can never be directed towards it, as this only carries a displacement of the contradiction—as happens with phenomenological listening that requires not listening to the shushed 'I'. Silence is none existent in itself and more to the point, it cannot be listened to, represented, analysed or even conceptualised in itself<sup>3</sup>. Silence, as the listening of the poetics of silence, is then the relegation of the menace of the earthquake to the horizon. It is the promise of the universal and neutral, yet it is inevitably bound to contradiction.

The horizon of silence brings forth both the eradication of self-expression and the corresponding openness to its outside while at the same time—as personal as the horizon is—it is

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<sup>3</sup> That is to say, it can only be conceptualised negatively, i.e., by what it is not.

far from eradicating the 'I'. The horizon of silence is a powerful way for the 'I' to survive and reaffirm its central position and to do it ambiguously. As a conclusion to this, this whole research is understood—as practice and in this text— as part of it. Therefore, the validity of its arguments and the extent to which they can be applied is confined to an entanglement between my personal expression and an opening to its multiple outsides. The proposed concepts are then part of the sonic experience of vacilar as an arts practice. A consideration beyond that scope would escape the contradiction of the horizon that both *establishes me* and is *established by me*. In fact, a consideration beyond that scope could be the material from which to start some future research, yet it escapes the limits of the intuition that propels this practice based research and its frame as South American sensitivity. That is to say, as a sensitivity that explores, as an arts practice, the reconciliation of sonic ontology and para-ontology through the inevitable menace of contradiction.

# Chapter One: To Trap

This practice based research tries to give a defined form to the intuition of an experience that is both self-expression and its outside—an experience that is built of ambiguous, reversible and contradictory intentions. This research develops works and explores ways of experiencing and articulating this contradictory experience by way of introducing and unfolding the concept of vacilar. As described in the introduction, this concept combines the different meanings of the word vacilar in Latin American Spanish: trap, dance, doubt and vibration. This chapter will focus on the element of trap.

## 1.1. A Trap that Entangles Different Modes of Sound Perception

A trap is a construction the hunter builds to satisfy its appetite. It is a mechanism that appropriates material configurations in order to change expected behaviours (Hyde, 2010). For example, with a hook the fisherman turns the worm into bait. The worm then instead of providing a fish with food, turns the fish itself into food. The bait trap disorients the expected behaviour of eating a worm for the fish. Likewise, for the fisherman the bait trap allows a continuum between himself and something external. Through technological intervention the worm unexpectedly becomes an extension of the fisherman's body. The bait trap disorients, reverses or reconfigures behaviours for all of those involved. 1) The fish by acting as a hunter becomes the hunted, 2) the worm from an autonomous organism becomes an extension of the fisherman's appetite and 3) the fisherman by observation of external behaviours is able to utilise them in order to satisfy its own agenda.

This chapter is then about the different strategies, methods and technologies that I have developed as sonic traps. These traps are built with the purpose of reconfiguring sonic intentionalities in multiple ways: of entangling intentionalities by creating disorientation, ambiguity and reversibility between them. The development of sonic traps could be understood in three distinct stages. At first I label the mechanisms of sonic traps that I developed as *songscape* and later as *songscaping*.

In this first stage of development, I conceived of the songscape as a sonic trap of Max/MSP patches (see USB stick for examples) connected to different microphone that mediated the real-

time interaction between song and environmental sounds. By 'song' I encapsulated every sound I would like to do. By 'soundscape' on the contrary, was every sound I would find unintentionally, every 'other' sound present while I performed 'songs'. The songscape trap was setup in rocks near the ocean, in the beach, in a hill, etc. It consisted of condenser microphones and piezo hydrophones capturing elements of the surrounding environment and a keyboard and a vocal microphone to directly capture the sounds I performed. The Max/MSP program—that was largely based on my master degree's main project— would therefore be listening in realtime to my performance and the environment. By manipulating these sources, the maxpatch autonomously created new sounds that disoriented the limits between expressing myself in sounds and acoustically discovering an outside of that self-expression. I would therefore engage with this songscape trap by doing improvisations with the keyboard, voice and small wind instruments that musically dialogued with the sounds of the environment and the maxpatches.

Conceptually, this songscape trap was conceived as a dialogue between different 'modes of sound'. In this stage I was engaging with acoustic presences and not with sonic concepts as would happen in later developments. Instrumental to this acoustic approach was Barry Truax's classification of auditory communication, as I will explain below. This approach bisects sound into compartments. Working with these compartments allowed a pragmatic approach to building this first songscape trap. Moreover, this schematic division has been helpful throughout this whole research for the development of the Max/MSP maxpatches as a *Songscape Toolbox* (included in the USB stick). This comprises different modules for building sonic traps. Importantly, this *Songscape Toolbox* comprises tools for creating songscape traps in the acoustic level. However as it became evident after the first stage of building songscape traps, the sonic traps I am after need to consider other modes of sonic experience beyond the acoustic level.

In the second stage of developing sonic traps I moved beyond the acoustic to embrace other types of sonic experience. This need arose as a conclusion of the first stage of constructing songscape traps as the real-time interaction between songs and soundscape. As will become evident below, in the first stage there was incongruence between how I was making sense of the experience of the songscape and the actual experience of it. Eventually, this opened up the

acoustic conceptualisation of the songscape into a sphere of concepts such as sonic entanglement and sonic intentionalities or agencies. These would encapsulate the acoustic approach and at the same time open up a wider consideration of the intuition of an experience that is both self-expression and its outside. I will return to this in more detail in the following chapters. In this second songscape stage, the building of songscape traps moved from the in situ real-time interaction into a set of improvisations and compositions in the studio as *songscape improvisations*.

Working in the field of auditory perception did not provide the tools to properly frame the fluidity and ambivalence of intentionality I felt akin to the sonic entanglement of self-expression and its outside. As I will explain below, in Karen Barad's agential realism I was able to find the conceptual tools to dive deeper into the notion of a sonic trap that entangled my musical performance with the sounds outside of it.

In the third and final stage of developing songscape traps, my engagement with sound was not limited to that of a musical performer. As a musician I had a fixed position that did not properly articulate the sonic experience I was after. Eventually a conceptual consideration of the sonic in connection to new materialisms such as the aforementioned Barad's agential realism, allowed me to frame my intuition properly. From this newly found frame I was able to develop the key aspects of vacilar as a songscaping trap that triggers an oscillation between doubt as a way of listening (see Chapter Two) and a dancing 'I' (see Chapter Three). This songscaping vibration is described in relationship to the work *Romper el Silencio* and the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* (see Chapter Four).

This chapter therefore describes the development of songscape traps that I approach as a musical performer, divided into two sections following the aforementioned songscape musical stages. The first considers the creation of traps through acoustic notions and the second through sonic notions. These cover the different mechanisms of trap creation that I develop in this research as a whole. In this chapter's conclusion I problematise the music performer position as it provides an anchored experience of self-expression and its outside. As such, the entanglement of self-

expression and its outside is too controlled. With this in mind, I develop strategies that bring the trap to a complete vibration of doubt and dance as vacilar, which I describe in Chapter Four.

## **1.2. First Stage: The V Region Songscape**

Going back to the inauguration of the project, the songscape trap was first developed as an attempt to have a realtime experience of sound that entangles different modes of sound perception. Our notion of what constitutes a sound is diverse and complex. The experience of sounds is shaped para-ontologically by cultural background, tastes, age, and gender, among many other properties. In this scenario, and following the fertile discussion in Nudds and O'Callaghan (2009), we can distinguish between three basic categories of sound perception: environmental, musical (non-vocal music), and speech. When defining the content of auditory experience, both music and speech occupy somewhat easily identifiable places as both have special traits and uses that set them apart from the rest of the auditory experiences. The category of environmental sounds could therefore be quickly defined in negative terms. Sounds perceived as lacking both musical or speech content fall into the category of environmental sounds. It is important to note that, although this categorisation could be read as a fixed hierarchisation that works in the detriment of environmental sounds, it is only used as a useful way to illustrate different modes of the perception of sound. Environmental sounds can include an array of sounds with different levels of significance to the listener, they are not second to musical ones and the boundaries between these categories are listener dependant.

For the first sonic trap that inaugurates this research, environmental, music, and speech were considered as the three basic modes of aural perception that as a listener, performer and/or creator I interact with. I developed this trap as the *V Region Songscape* project. This project developed in a coastal area of Chile as an acoustic trap that entangles in real-time self-expression and an opening to other sounds that lie outside self-expression.

### 1.2.1. Modes of Acoustic Communication

The classification of auditory perception into the three categories of speech, music and environment, follows a similar delineation to the one developed by Barry Truax in *Acoustic Communication* (Truax, 2001). Even more, the idea of bringing them together—as in the case of this

project—is also explored in his method. However, the implications of both our approaches vary greatly. My categories are defined from the level of perception, whereas I understand his to be defined as epistemological. Thus, they are fixed sets of acoustic properties, autonomous from the particulars of any individual experience.

Truax coins the term *acoustic communication* as a way to embrace all manifestations of sounds independently of conventional, or specialised and disciplinary perspectives of sound (Truax, 2001). Inside acoustic communication, speech and music are specialised sounds that share communicative roles, unlike environmental sounds or the soundscape. It is because of this communicative role, Truax argues, that the first two have been studied and developed amply. ‘The study of environmental sound is less unified, and generally more recent, perhaps because it lacks the essential feature of the others, namely the humanness of their communicative roles.’ (Truax, 2001, p.49). This humanness also establishes the way to link the three areas of acoustic communication as organised sound. ‘Speech, music, and the sonic environment can be linked most simply and effectively on their common basis as sound, which is certain, and as “organized sound”’ (Truax, 2001, p.50). If environmental sounds are understood as a soundscape that is also organised then ‘it emerges as an important system of human communication that is comparable to the others.’ (Truax, 2001, p.50)

From the idea of organised sound as the link between speech, music and soundscape, Truax establishes a continuum. This could be succinctly understood as a scale with speech and soundscape in opposing sides and music in between. The position of music is justified because of its abstract nature, on one side with its instruments as derived or refined from the sounds of nature, and on the other as the product of human thought processes. As we move from speech to soundscape, we experience an increase in the number of sounds available in each category, a decreasing strictness of syntactical structure and a decreasing temporal density of information (Truax, 2001, cf. 50-51).

Particularly useful for building songscape traps is Truax’s notion of a continuum of sound, sorted by its level of humanness, or by the structure of its organisation. As I will explain below, this notion was pivotal for the construction of the Max/MSP patches that I group as modules in the

*Songscape Toolbox*. It defines what types of behaviours different modules have, how they react and manipulate both the environmental sounds that surrounded me and the musical sounds I was performing.

### 1.2.2. Max/MSP: Permutation, Fragmentation, Superposition and Conciliation

The *V Region Songscape* is a work that explores interaction between the three categories of auditory content: speech, music and environmental. With the idea of creating a continuum between them, the trap could be understood then as a fourth category. As described earlier, the idea of compositions that offer a sound experience that entangles multiple modes of perception is a search for dialogue between different intentionalities perceived in sound. This dialogue both allows and fragments self-expression as leading intentionality—as *listening performance*. With this in mind, the fourth element is not from a category of sound perception, but a *structure of organisation*. The sonic trap is built as that structure to allow the dialogue between the different categories of auditory content given by perception. As a structural element, it allows for processes among the different categories, such as permutation, fragmentation, superposition and conciliation, to be experienced aurally. Therefore the trap built in Max/MSP is what allows for the entanglement of the different modes of acoustic communication to be perceived acoustically. As a program, it is built as a collection of patches that I labelled the *Songscape Toolbox* (included in the USB Stick).

Arguably, there is already a dialogue between self-expression and its outside without the aid of the computer, yet the Max/MSP patches make this dialogue acoustically palpable and concrete. If I, as a listener with a privileged position as a creator/performer were to do the *V Region Songscape* only to myself, perhaps I would not need the Max/MSP patches, as I would have the experience of the continuum between the different elements internally. However I wanted the interaction to be explicitly communicable to other listeners that did not have my position as creator/performer.

The programming of the *Songscape Toolbox* was therefore fundamental for the development of the *V Region Songscape*. The toolbox is organised according to the functionality of different patches. Some of these patches are meant to give the machine certain autonomy in its processes and decisions, others are controllable by me. The different patches are combined to



create bigger patches that I label environments. Over the development of the *songscape* I have designed multiple environments for different stages and to test specific elements. The patch labelled *Songscape Library* provides easy access to the different modules and functions of the toolbox.

Some of the patches give the computer autonomy over its decision by way of machine listening. Elements such as attacks or recurrent frequencies in the different signals (generated by the performance, the environment or the computer itself) will make the computer trigger modulations and change parameters. Also, the Max/MSP environments follow a master tempo and have a musical bar assigned. Through averages of recurrent information gather by the computer according to this musical frame, it can create sequences of behaviours.

The environments usually have multiple effects such as delays, reverbs and buffer-based processes. As a performer I control certain volumes and parameters, but I do not have access to all of them and the computer modulates most of the parameters on its own. Therefore, the Max/MSP environments are the trap that is both part of my performance and part of the external stimuli I listen and react to. These traps built in Max/MSP are therefore a tangible, acoustic entanglement of sound categories. Acoustic entanglements I identified as permutation, fragmentation, superposition and conciliation. I will describe these in relation to works from the second stage of the *songscape*.

Permutation occurs when a sound from a certain category is processed in such a way that it is *mutated* into a different category. For example in the *songscape* improvisation that lead to the work *Roca de Pluma*, there was a loud screeching of pelicans that was picked up by a delay with a feedback that transposed the frequencies, creating some sort of glissando effect. This glissando type effect was taken by a loop and opened up the way for a melodic, slow piano arpeggio that had a nice synchronization with it. In effect, the pelican sound was permuted from an environmental sound into a musical element.

Similarly to permutation, conciliation occurs when there is an agreement or congruence between sound materials, even though they might come from different categories. In the work *Respiración de Arena*, the vocal part consists of breathing and whistling that is picked up by a

distortion object and recorded into a buffer. This buffer is played back with a phaser synced to a master tempo. As the phaser ratio changes, the audio is played in normal and reversed direction at different speeds. These sounds combine with the sounds of sea waves—recorded with a hydrophone inside a bottle—in such a synchronous way that they even get confused. Thus conciliation between the voice and the waves is achieved.

Fragmentation happens when a sound category, or more precisely its logic, is interrupted by the presence of disturbing elements. Superposition is similar to fragmentation, but whereas fragmentation involves the interruption of the logic of a sound category, in superposition there is simultaneity of disparate elements. In contrast with permutation and conciliation, both these forms highlight how self-expression and its multiple outside coexist not as a coherent whole or as harmonic coexistent. There is tension, there is confusion, and there are ruined intentions and errors. The music performer experiences these ruined intentions and errors in the *songscape improvisations* and manages them. As I will explain in the conclusion of this chapter this is one of the reasons why I develop work where the music performer stance is not the only possible one.

### 1.2.3. Sonic Intentionalities: Beyond the Acoustic

Truax's model of acoustic communication was helpful in creating the songscape maxpatches, however his model builds a hierarchisation, an ethics of acoustics so to speak, that could not easily be linked to my practice. For him there is a responsibility towards the soundscape. 'Soundscape competence permits us to understand environmental sound as meaningful. Like musical competence, it is knowledge that can be neglected or fostered, and therefore there is a social responsibility involved in its education.' (Truax, 2001, p. 58). Furthermore, the fostering of environmental sounds is not a matter of only safeguarding the acoustic ecosystem, but of securing all of acoustic communication. '...all parts of the continuum of acoustic communication need each other and are inextricably related; they cannot exist in isolation. The health and survival of any one part depends on that of all the others. The continuum is both a human artefact and a human responsibility.' (Truax, 2001, p. 54-55)

By considering that the soundscape has its own balance and functioning and that it is a human responsibility to protect it, then the soundscape is epistemologically independent of any

particular listener's point of view. Although the protection of soundscapes might be an appealing idea that I might agree upon on a personal level, I don't believe acoustic communication is that readily fixed in a linear continuum. By defining the soundscape in terms of an ecosystem to which there is a human responsibility, there is a personal agenda that claims its own perceptions as universal—no matter how noble or desirable this agenda might be. Truax's three systems of acoustic communication are supposedly independent of personal conditions, yet what they posit is a particular standpoint: a personal trajectory of sound perception and sonic intentions.

According to my approach, environmental, music, and speech are taken to be three modes of auditory perception and not categories per se. They are dynamic and ambivalent. They might vary from listener to listener or from situation to situation. There is no intrinsic value given to any sound independently of the listener and what is more, it would make no sense to conceive of a sound without an active listener. A sound might be perceived as speech yet might be also perceived as music—or even something else. For example, Steve Reich's seminal piece from 1965 *It's Gonna Rain*, by way of phasing and repeating tirelessly 'it's gonna rain' completely overrides the perception of those sounds as speech. Similarly, Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room* from 1968 slowly transforms speech from a clear and meaningful discourse into pure resonating frequencies. Therefore seems to completely abolish the boundaries between speech and acoustic space.

As cited above, to draw upon the links between speech-music-soundscape Truax makes a distinction between on one side, 'sound, which is certain' or what he later explains as 'the level of physical acoustic behaviour' and on the other side the notion of 'organized sound', which is what allows for a 'system of human communication'. This distinction establishes a fixed and irrevocable dualism between the physical world and the human world—or between matter and meaning. As a model of epistemological objectivity, Truax's notion is committed to the sonic ontology identified in the introduction of this text.

Truax's notions gave me the first pragmatic impulse for the construction of sonic traps. However, conceptually it would be impossible for me to make sense of this project through fixed dualism as they undermine the possibility of a sensitivity that is both self-expression and its

outside—that is both ontological and para-ontological. My intuition comes from an understanding of sound that considers it not only as acoustic properties, but also as emerging from personal agendas, emotions, history, etc. not as a fixed dualism but as action, as entanglement of sonic intentionalities. Therefore it is a consideration not only of the aurally perceived and the acoustic but also of the sonic.

The different modes of sound perception—environmental, music, and speech—position me with multiple and even contradictory attitudes, insights and emotions. For instance, some particular cases of music will allow me to rejoice in my tastes and personal inclinations, whereas to cope with some unwanted environmental sounds I might need patience and renunciation. As such, the categorisation into these three modes of sound perception is never fixed or absolute, but always intertwined and evolving into different configurations. Indeed, the categorisation is helpful to theoretically demarcate different properties, yet my construction of traps aims at destabilising and highlighting the continuous and ambiguous shifts between categories.

Therefore the construction of songscape traps, following this pursue of ambiguity and reversibility would eventually need to use a different approach than the categorisation into the three modes of perception allowed. Indeed it became evident during the first stage, that the categorisation was somehow inadequate. For instance, at the start of the practice, I had an schematic idea of how different sound categories were to be divided between those of my self expression and those of its outside. However in practice this initial division would always be questioned. As soon as I started to work in the *V Region Songscape*, this initial division would endlessly morph into different configurations that broke the scheme. This morphing problematises the notions of the first stage and therefore the effectiveness of the songscape trap for the experience of vacilar—I will expand on this below in the next section of this chapter. Eventually the idea of sound categories was dropped and replaced with that of sonic intentionalities.

This change was relevant as sound categories are a way of classification that presupposes an objective access to the nature of sound. It is this objective access what would allow a purportedly unequivocal sorting it. On the contrary, the idea of sonic intentionality establishes a much more complex relationship to sound. In it, sounds are not categorised per se, they are

irreducible to autonomous objects. They are experiences in which the emotional state, health, gender, social background, etc. of the experiencer are fundamental. Indeed, and as noted before, the same 'sound' might be listed into different acoustic categories depending on the experience of who makes the list. Thus, the notion of sonic intentionalities replaces the idea of 'acoustic sound' with that of 'sonic' and of 'category' with 'intentionality'. Sonic, instead of sound, highlights the fact that sounds are not limited to their acoustic properties. Intentionality, instead of category, takes into consideration that the classification that I give to the experience of a sound is dependable on how it positions myself in relationship to it, that it can change, and that therefore it can be ambiguous or reversible. The conceptual frame that allows me to develop this new approach will be explained in the next section of this chapter.

The notion of sonic intentionality is fundamental to my practice and the sensitivity to reversibility that it entails. In the first stage, I built a songscape trap that allowed me to create an entanglement of sound categories by way of establishing permutations, fragmentations, superpositions and conciliations between them. As I moved beyond the fixed boundaries of sound as acoustic categories, it is this sensitivity to reversibility, this inescapable in-betweenness that prevails as a leading mechanism. For it takes into account not only sound manipulation (as with the methods of the *Songscape Toolbox*) but the whole possible spectrum of sonic experience as a vacilar—as the inevitable entanglement between listening and performativity (see Chapter Two)—and the dancing identity of the in-between it fosters (see Chapter Three).

Intentionality is therefore here a concept that opens up a field beyond certitude and fixed boundaries. The experience of sound can change from one sonic intentionality to another; from a purposeful melody gone wrong in performance to a noise becoming a rhythmical structure; from shielding a microphone from the wind to embracing the noises of handling recording equipment, etc. From the conclusions of the *V Region Songscape* realtime interaction, the notion of sonic intentionality becomes a way to encapsulate the experience of sound beyond acoustic classifications and, consequently, questioning the separation between the acoustical, out in the world experience, and the psychological or internal experience.

Sonic intentionality determines the experience of a sound, or combination of sounds, as that of a trajectory. Their sonic intentionalities are not a given fact. They are a developing narrative, a trajectory that is determined by interactions, impressions, judgements. As such, it is close to the experience described by Brian Eno (1986) of how expected listening and the actual experience differ while on the field. For example, while I was exploring the soundscape of a forest hill behind the beach, there was the incessant sound of a highway and occasional planes. Somehow the Max/MSP patch would pickup on those sounds much more that it would pickup on the subtle sounds of the leaves and insects. While I would be listening to the environment as that of the life in the trees and meadow, the microphones of the software were picking up a different environment—completely modifying my listening. Likewise, improvising on top of the rocks near the aggressive ocean of the Mar Bravo, would make me experience the abrasive sounds of waves hitting the rocks and of the low and dense roaring of strong currents—making their way through slowly carved tunnels in the rock—as the experience of a wild and violent environment: one to fear and respect. Yet somehow the sound of a lawn mower coming from a summerhouse nearby would rapidly destroy this feeling.

Sonic intentionalities do not differentiate between what is going on inside me—or any listener—and outside of me. In fact, this ambivalence of sonic intentionality confronts the idea of a clear dichotomy between an inside and outside, or between nature and culture. Therefore, key to an experience of sound as that of sonic intentionalities, is the quasi-ineffable definition of sound as a paradox. Both being something objective, measurable, determined and at the same time being subjective, evanescent and ungraspable. Kim-Cohen describes this paradox as the ambiguity of sonic ontology which he draws in relation to the notion that sound is both matter and meaning with the limit between the two being unclear (Kim-Cohen, 2016, cf.49). This paradox would eventually allow me to elevate the relevance of contradiction to experience the entanglement I was after and develop it as the notion of the horizon of silence described in Chapter Four.

After the first stage of this project as realtime in situ interaction and the considerations it opened, it is precisely the exploration and unfolding of contradiction what slowly starts to become the main focus of the practice. It therefore develops beyond a musical composition or interaction

practice and, as will be seen in the next chapters, takes into account the sonic in a wider context. The formless intuition that gave the initial push to this project was not limited to a musical one to start with. Indeed it is through a wider context of listening and a consideration of socio-personal identity that the experience of vacilar is sensitivity to the reversible, to the ambiguous and to disorientation. The experience of sound as both something that is and is not is explored here as something inevitable: as the inevitable contradiction of self-expression and its outside. Importantly, as will be explained in Chapter Three, this is not logic contradiction but sonic contradiction.

### **1.3. Second Stage: The Songscape Improvisations**

#### 1.3.1. The Sonic, New Materialisms and Agential Realism

The understanding of sound's nature as paradoxical unsettles traditional Western notions, not only of sound but also of materiality in general. It questions the transparency of the subject-object dichotomy. For David Toop (2011) sound traverses both spheres. For him sound is like a ghost that moves between spheres and therefore the listener would be a sort of spiritual medium. Sound therefore becomes not a material of perception but a different model of understanding and being shaped by reality. Moving beyond a visuocentric paradigm, sound is freed from the traditional philosophical classification of it as a secondary property of an object or from the physical classification of it as wave. Both these approaches fail to properly address the location and movement of sound and capture it in representational models akin to the functioning of the eye (O'Callaghan, 2007).

Contrary to these representational models, sound could be understood as a form of experience that undermines the basis of representationalism and the dichotomies it entails (Cox, 2011). However, there is a threat in this identification of sound. For sound as non-representational opens it up as the experience of flux, of a continuum that is a priori to the representational. By this mechanism sonic ontology and its quest for unmediated experience is reinforced. A positive outcome of this account is that sound ceases to be interpreted through representationalism, yet a negative outcome is that its paradox would be resolved. As such, sound would then not be the experience of contradiction but the paradox would be reconciled into a flux that favours sonic ontology in the detriment of para-ontological interpretations. I will address this problem in detail in

the next and fourth chapter. For the time being, it is important to highlight that for this practice the paradox of sound is not resolved. If sound then is ambivalent between acoustic presence and psychological or internal phenomena, it is at the level of the sonic and not of acoustical sound that the entanglement of the sonic trap is produced. That is to say, it is at a level that takes into account both the *real* and the *imaginary* nature of sound.

The sonic as a contrast to representationalism, could be understood in the wider context of new materialisms, object-oriented ontology or speculative realisms. These approaches share a common theme of rearticulating the relationship between human and non-human. Decentring given hierarchies and the limits of a traditional demarcation between subject and object.

In this context, the work of Bruno Latour in establishing the inseparability between pre-modern and (post)modern and of human/non-human among others (Latour, 1993) makes relevant points to understand the sonic. By way of denouncing the impossibility of modernism and the concomitant inability of renouncing myth, Latour is calling on a reconceptualisation of most of the Western conceptual machinery. Instead of endorsing bisections and the dichotomies of a great divide (Latour, 1993, cf.97-99), it calls for a consideration of the fluid and continuous relationship between myth and reason. A relationship that eventually requires a reconsideration of the demarcations of subject and object, or of human and non-human. The constant negotiation of this demarcation is fundamental for building and understanding how a sonic trap works as non-human sounds become entangled with human perception of them.

The idea of a sonic trap that takes into account both listening and performing, in which both the listener and the listened are formed, entangle human and non-human in an ambiguous demarcation. It demarcates them in a form akin to Jane Bennett's new materialism (2010). Her consideration on matter, especially in the mediation between the eater and the eaten follows a similar line than Latour's. Her conceptualisation of the vitality of matter, of the ability of it to act as agents or forces in their own right, dissipate onto-theological binaries such as life/matter and allows an understanding of materiality as a vital thing-power (Bennett, 2010). The eaten and the eater are configured only through their relationship; the eaten is part of the eater and vice-versa. In this relationship the limits between the one and the other are given ambiguously in a similar way as



listening is a form of performing and vice-versa. This notion of listening as performing is explored further in the next chapter.

A form of speculative realism particularly interesting for my practice of building sonic traps is found in Karen Barad's idea of agential realism (Barad, 2007), which I mentioned before. The understanding of sound as a paradox—as an intangible physical/mental force that is neither and both at the same time, can be compared to her practice-theory. Barad's agential realism is a physical-philosophical system that is developed from studies in the field of quantum physics. In the context of the songscape as a sonic trap that entangles performing and listening, her approach is particularly interesting as it is interchangeably a practical approach—that of scientific experimentation—and philosophical speculation. This is homologous to my practice of the songscape as being ambiguously a music practice that is also a sonic speculation. This is to say that they are intertwined in a way that the practice and the theory are not in a binary relationship. The music is created in the theory and vice-versa. Any scientific or music endeavour implies a philosophy, yet what Barad's agential realism implies is that they are only their intra-action. It is not that music/science simply implies a philosophical model that is prior and autonomous to them. Therefore, her concepts and lexicon are particularly useful for me to consider the songscape as inextricably and interchangeably linking practice and theory.

Quantum physics presents findings, such as the wave–particle duality, that are taken by Barad to establish a form of new materialism. Her interpretation and lexicon allowed me to frame the contradictory experience of sound I was after as the second stage of building songscape sonic traps. I will describe here some crucial notions from her interpretation that helped me illustrate and think about the methods or paths I then followed for the construction of sonic traps.

From the implications of Bohr's interpretation of quantum physics, Barad creates a physical-philosophical system that questions basic notions such as the clear-cut distinction between physical and human or between nature and culture—distinctions that, let us remind, would be key for the epistemological autonomy of Truax's systems of acoustic communication described above and of sonic ontology in general.

According to Barad, what Bohr 'took to be the heart of the lesson of quantum physics' was that 'we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand.' (Barad, 2007, p.26). Likewise, the interaction between speech, music and soundscape—as an entanglement of sonic intentionalities instead of modes of sound perception—unveils the ambivalence of the sonic material, the unclear limits of nature and culture. Therefore the entanglement is experienced as the inability to separate yourself from the material; or in other words, the inability to establish a clear-cut distinction as to where self-expression ends and its outside starts and vice-versa.

This inability to separate us from nature is the conclusion Barad draws from the fact that, as scientific experiments into quantic entities started to show, measurement itself interacts with nature to create reality.

The lesson that Bohr takes from quantum physics is very deep and profound: there aren't little things wandering aimlessly in the void that possess the complete set of properties that Newtonian physics assumes (e.g., position and momentum); rather, there is something fundamental about the nature of measurement interactions such that, given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded. Which properties become determinate is not governed by the desires or will of the experimenter but rather by the specificity of the experimental apparatus. (Barad, 2007, p. 20)

The implications of this conclusion pose a direct threat to an understanding of reality dictated from Newtonian physics—a model that plays a fundamental role in Western metaphysics. Even though the world at the human scale might not behave as it does at the quantum level, the implications of quantum physics might be taken to form a new approach to reality that is speculative and that threatens Western metaphysics.

In essence, Bohr is making a point about the nature of reality, not merely our knowledge of it. What he is doing is calling into question an entire tradition in the history of Western metaphysics: the belief that the world is populated with individual things with their own independent sets of determinate properties. (Barad, 2007, p.19).

Bohr's conclusions deny the traditional interpretations of reality as observer independent and populated by particles with a clear position and momentum. Instead, reality itself is configured by the measurements taken of and from itself as an apparatus. For Barad these conclusions should be read as an 'anti-Copernicanism, as it were, which places the human back at the center of the universe.' (Barad, 2007, p.26)

This anti-Copernicanism places the human at the centre of the universe, as it creates reality by way of the inseparability of human consciousness and nature. By doing so, the distinction between culture and nature dissolves; human and non-human forces are no longer opposing elements but complexes. It presents an understanding that is non-representational, or what Barad calls a performative approach.

Performative approaches call into question representationalism's claim that there are representations, on the one hand, and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation, on the other, and focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing, as well as the productive effects of those practices and the conditions for their efficacy. A performative understanding of scientific practices, for example, takes account of the fact that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a direct material engagement with the world. (Barad, 2007, p.49)

According to this performative approach, reality is 'an entangled state of agencies' in which each agency is 'a complex network of human and nonhuman agents.' (Barad, 2007, p.22). This idea of reality as an entanglement of agencies can be further comprehended by following Barad's notion that 'the primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena' meaning by this a specific reconfiguring or entanglement of the world that is primarily understood not by words but by 'material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted.' The dynamics by way of which this entanglement unfolds is defined as agency. 'Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world.' (Barad, 2007, p.141)

I believe this performative approach provides a powerful understanding that defies visuocentric common sense (O'Callaghan, 2007) by being, at the same time, deeply human as an anti-Copernicanism and yet non-individualistic and non-humanistic in its understanding of reality—as an entanglement of human and non-human agencies. For this understanding, the notion of the apparatus is of the utmost importance.

Apparatuses are not merely about us. And they are not merely assemblages that include nonhumans as well as humans. Rather, apparatuses are specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure space-timematter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming. (Barad, 2007, p.142)

'According to Bohr,' Barad continues 'apparatuses are macroscopic material arrangements through which particular concepts are given definition, to the exclusion of others, and through

which particular phenomena with particular determinate physical properties are produced.' (Barad, 2007, p.142). Therefore apparatuses are what configure reality as an entanglement of agencies. An apparatus is what configures the world both in words and in matter, in human energy and non-human energy. Importantly here I must remind the reader that I take this theory in order to conceptualise and understand how to build my sonic traps. I do not necessarily agree with all the theory. What is more, the notion of the apparatus relies on an 'ongoing dynamism of becoming' (Barad, 2007, p.142) which is incompatible with a consideration of contradiction as central and inevitable as I do. Flow, continuum, becoming are only experienced through contradiction and any consideration of them that bypasses this fact is unable to vacilar as I explain through the notion of sonic contradiction. This will become clearer in the following chapters as we move from the trap and into doubt, dancing and the vibration that integrates all the elements vacilar (see Chapter Four).

From Barad's theory I coin some useful concepts that allowed me to consider the building of songscape traps from new perspectives. 1) Sonic entanglement is the result of an experience of sound as the intra-action of sonic intentionalities. 2) Sonic intentionalities are performative agencies that are continually reconfiguring. 3) A songscape trap is an apparatus both making the sonic reality and being made by it. 4) The songscape trap is a material-discursive practice in an ongoing rearticulation. As such, it is not so much an object but a songscaping.

Barad's lexicon helped me reframe the songscape trap beyond the first attempt of handling it as an entanglement of different modes of sound perception. This reframing helped me make sense of the experience better. Especially regarding some concepts and methods that guided the in situ interaction, as these did not seem to properly fit the vacilar experience. For example, I felt that the notion of realtime—that was fundamental to trigger the practice—was somehow sustained artificially while developing it. The same happened to the notion of in situ or location. This and other elements, as I will describe below—allowed for the continuation of the *V Region Songscape* beyond its first stage. Barad's lexicon helped me frame the practice—from inside the music experiment of building songscape traps—beyond a comprehension of it as engraved to an in situ realtime musical interaction.

### 1.3.2. Problematising the Notions of the First Stage

Beyond the in situ realtime interaction, the project developed into the studio and live performances in what I labelled *songscape improvisations*. With the aid of the Songscape toolbox, virtual environments were created in Max/MSP. Using the field recordings gathered in the first stage these would recreate aspects of the V Region environments and combine them with elements of fantasy. I would improvise with these environments, mainly with the use of the piano and voice. The material thus gathered would then be fed back into the environment for new iterations. The studio and live improvisations would therefore become in themselves 'field recordings'. From the improvisations certain musical ideas gain force and become compositions in their own right, or more commonly, fragments of compositions that I would arrive to during an improvisation.

As a practice that entangles song writing with developing an exploration of sound that is apparently devoid of traditional music making elements this practice was standing on a contradictory position. Indeed, contradiction arises not in the use of the disparity of materials, but on the entanglement that disorients the limits between one and the other. Contradiction arises in the ambiguity of the material and as succinctly explained in the introduction of this text, it is a sonic contradiction that is not the same as logical contradiction (this will be explain in detail in Chapter Three). As mentioned before, the intuition of in-betweenness, of ambiguity and reversibility, is something I was after and it is through the building of traps that it arises. These *songscape improvisations* allowed me to dive and explore this intuition deeper.

In relationship to listening, in the first stage of songscape traps the idea was to combine a listening—as that described by Cage—with the ability to self-express. In short, Cage's listening can be understood as a listening to everything around, without any form of discrimination. In his own words:

The situation one is clearly in is not objective (sound-silence), but rather subjective (sounds only), those intended and those others (so-called silence) not intended. If, at this point, one says, "Yes! I do not discriminate between intention and non-intention," the splits, subject-object, art-life, etc., disappear, an identification has been made with the material, and actions are then those relevant to its nature. (Cage, 1961, p. 14).

However, I felt this non-discriminatory listening was not such for songscape. Similar to Truax, the identification with the material Cage describes somehow requires the perception of sound as autonomous objects accessible as pure experience. However, for me listening is better understood as an apparatus and is therefore performative. Listening is never an outside of personal experience and materiality is always shaped by the personal experience of it. This definition of listening will suffice for the moment, as Chapter Two will be devoted to exploring the notion of listening in the songscape in relationship to Cage and others.

The experience of sound is an apparatus through which both the listener and the listened are formed as agencies in intra-action. The identification with the material as Cage would have it, is then not only that but also a construction based on personal input. The dualities of subject-object, art-life, etc. do not so easily disappear only by not discriminating between intention and non-intention. In this sense, Luc Ferrari's series of compositions such as *L'escalier des aveugles* (1991) or *Far-West news* (1998-1999) offer an interesting starting point of reference for the *songscape improvisations*. *L'escalier des aveugles* is based on the recording of a conversation with a Spanish woman and other sounds such as Flamenco singing, the activities of a plaza and street noises. These sounds are processed with electronic effects and also with the adding of certain synth sounds. The *Far-West news* series of compositions is a project with similar sources and methods, this time documenting a trip through the U.S.A, always going west.

Both these series of compositions combine an encounter with a soundscape that is experienced through conversation and recordings. Then this material is manipulated and shaped by electronic processing to create an emotional experience of the soundscape. This is a type of practice that in a sense I absorb into the *songscape improvisations*, yet it doesn't account for the whole of it. Although Ferrari's compositions offer a sort of proto-listening as performance, there is a congruence between the emotional side and the soundscape sources that is never broken. There is no disparity between the different materials. A coherent whole is built. In this sense I understand of Ferrari's work not as unfolding self-expression freely, but only as it helps emphasise properties of the explored soundscape. Ultimately, this means a hierarchical structure of sonic intentionalities is sustained. Returning to the helpful quantum physics interpretation of Barad, in Ferrari's work

there is a sustain Copernicanism which is somehow maintaining a representational distance from the performed sound.

With the idea that listening is an apparatus—that therefore it is my performance and consequently that performing is also a way of listening—I could make sense of certain elements in the in situ interaction that were problematic and how to develop them beyond those constraints.

In a general panorama, the idea of realtime interaction was problematic from the start of the project. Although I did not have a fixed idea of what exactly I was going to play, I did know I was going to play the keyboards and that I would sing. From a long personal history of song writing, I could foresee more or less the type of sound I would create. Also, the songs were supposed to interact with the sounds of the environment, however as these are places I have been going to all my life and to which I feel a strong connection, perhaps the interaction was not so much with the present sounds but with my history of the place. Even more, I had doubts and asked myself where exactly is realtime? Is there only one line of time? Are my imagination or my memory in the same moment as my perception? Is not the music performance creating its own time? How is the experience of time in a place affected by past experiences of it? Or by the particular activity I was doing? Just as the clear-cut division between intention and non-intention was not such in practice, I realised that realtime in the songscape was also not only a realtime operation. As the effect my memories, desires, fantasies, imagination and emotions have in the perception of time, realtime is revealed as a performativity that confuses the boundaries between objective and subjective time. Indeed, the common and recurrent experience of an hour feeling like an eternity or just a moment, depending on the personal context, mandates the perception of realtime. As such, an interaction between self-expression and its outside needs to conceptualise realtime as a possibility and not as a given: as one temporal trajectory in a possible multiplicity of them, all of which can claim to be realtime independently if they are memories, fantasies, measurements of a clock or any other possibility.

Similarly, the idea of in situ, of immersion into a specific environment, was also problematic from the outset of the *V Region Songscape* project and opened for me a similar line of questioning. When am I in the location? Where and when does it start and end? For example as I walked on top

of a hill or moving through rocks near the ocean scouting for a spot to set the equipment, was that exploration part of the location or was it part of my expression? The fact I went to get some groceries before exploring the hill, was that part of the location? Did it affect the way I related to it? Many of the places I interacted with are places I have been going to all my life, was I then really listening to the environment as an outside of me? Or did my experience of those places have an impact on how I listened to them?

For some interactions, when I finally found the right place to set up the equipment, I would be tired from carrying all of it in my back for a long time. It seemed doubts about the method were springing everywhere. Was my tiredness part of the outside or was it part of my expression? Tiredness is the result of voluntarily carrying my equipment, yet it is at the same time something I did not choose per se. It is something I encounter and I have to deal with. Tiredness might have an important impact on the nature of the musical decisions I make or where I finally decide to set up the equipment. In fact, tiredness could be understood as what Garrelfs (2016) describes as procedural blending: everything I encountered could be understood as an input to the work I was trying to do.

The in situ, the location, is therefore an experience that already intertwines my self-expression and the outside. Just as with the perception of realtime, location is not a separate physical reality outside of myself, but it is already a mediation sustained by subjective impressions. Location then, is better understood not as a physical place but in terms of locality as a structure of feeling (Appadurai, 1996). My emotions, my lived experience of the location, are intrinsic to the experience of it and extend far beyond the limits of physical presence. Furthermore physical presence, as a body inhabiting space, is mediated by how this body reaches for objects and how objects extend what the body can reach (Ahmed, 2006, cf.110).

At the beginning of the project, even though I was aware of these considerations, I felt they could be somehow bypassed. That even though realtime and in situ are conceptual and personal constructions, they did survive pragmatically. They did provide a scheme from which to experiment an interaction between a personal expression and its multiple outside. Both testing an involvement with what I want and personally like, while at the same time providing openness to what is beyond



me forcing a renunciation of what I want and like. Realtime and in situ might have been controversial concepts, yet they allowed me to put in motion the practical work needed to unfold the intuition of inevitable contradiction that propelled me. However by the end of the first songscape stage, I felt they needed to be re-examined.

During the in situ interaction stage, one of the turning points that called for a re-examination of my approach was through the use of a piezo hydrophone. The first recording I did with it was in the close bay of Zapallar. From it I got a monotonous recording of what sounds like chips frying. My impression was that this was probably caused by small pieces of shells and rock suspended in the tide hitting the microphone. So for the next recording I did, I placed the microphone inside an empty plastic bottle of two litres to protect it. The microphone had a twenty metres long cable and I took it to the beach and threw it in the water. It would be absorbed and expelled by the waves. I would pick it up and throw it back in the ocean, giving it more or less cable to control its position in the waves. Gently moving the cable around, it felt just like flying a kite. The sounds that came out of the recording got me completely excited. The bottle would work as a pan-flute as it would resurface and go back underwater; sand would run through its body creating a hoarse murmuring; the bottle bouncing in the sand and pushed by the waves would suddenly become an old car's engine unable to ignite. This use of the hydrophone was clearly breaking the fixed boundaries I had in mind. It was not only a recording of an environmental sound but a musical performance with the waves. The oceans, the hydrophone and me were configured as an apparatus of self-expression and its multiple outsides—a configuration of multiple agencies that came to exist only as their intra-action, as a sonic trap that was different to the songscape trap I had designed and that worked as a songscaping.

This experience in particular, fuelled by the general considerations mentioned above, somehow gave me the feeling that the intuition that propelled this project was not being properly articulated by it as a realtime and in situ interaction. The project was somehow falling short or its achievements were not in concordance with my conceptual description of it. Hand in hand with this was the realisation that by recording and documenting the in situ interactions they were problematically surviving as specific works. The fact of considering the works themselves as works

was an issue. If they were truly realtime in situ operations, then they could not be considered fixed works. The simple fact of recording, documenting or even labelling these experiences was moving them outside of both their time and location. On the other hand, if I would not document or allow them to live outside the interaction itself, they would have vanished in the act of happening, without being articulated or leaving any trace. Therefore I would have no way of communicating the ambiguity or sensitivity to reversibility, that is to say not producing the experience of vacilar at all.

The fact is then that in order to work with the ambiguity of self-expression and an openness to its outside, there needs to be a certain frame that allows for the ambiguity to survive explicitly. As the ambiguity arises from the contradiction of both pursuing self-expression and opening to its outside, it is important that the sonic trap is built as a certain boundary that allows for the contradiction to be experienced. If such a boundary does not exist, there would be no need of giving room to ambiguity. In fact, it is only through boundaries that intentionalities of sonic agencies are established. These boundaries are not fixed or representational but performative and arise by interpreting the orientation of sonic agencies—therefore the songscaping sonic traps work by establishing orientations to demarcate sonic agencies as part of self-expression or of its outside.

I believe my most complete exploration of this came in the work *Romper el Silencio*, for which I develop the notion of a horizon of silence as a boundary of contradiction. I explain this in detail in Chapter Four. Yet to get to that conclusive stage, I first had to go through a stage of developing the songscape in the studio and in live performance, which allowed me to experiment with the achievements and problems that arose from the in situ interaction in the hope of unfolding more clearly the intuition of reversibility. Simultaneous to this new stage of the songscape—which I describe below—, I developed further the main concepts, especially those of listening to the outside—which I explore in detail in the next chapter— and the urge or the push for the vacilar sensitivity—which I describe in Chapter Three.

### 1.3.3. Sonic Events as the Trapping of Sonic Elements

The *songscape improvisations* are a project that both in the studio and in live performance involved music composition, video and audio programming, improvisation, listening and poetry

performance. For this project the construction of sonic traps problematised the transparency of notions that were pivotal in the previous stage—such as realtime and in situ.

The *songscape improvisations* consist of a series of works that combine pre-composed ideas and known materials with unexpected events and improvisations. Each work is built around the materials of the interactions in the V region. The process of creation of each work roughly starts with the design of master Max/MSP patches that I call environments. The *songscape improvisations* I have worked the most are *Respiración de Arena* based on the recordings of the hydrophone bottle-microphone and the surrounding beach, *Roca de Plumas* built from visiting a huge pelican and penguin colony and *Vientos Submarinos* that is built from free-dive underwater recordings. These three *songscape improvisations* I have developed in multiple formats as a musical performance with laptop, voice and electronic instruments; as performance with piano, laptop, and voice; and as an audio-visual performance (see USB stick for examples of *songscape improvisations*).

The Max/MSP environments are built in a way that allows me to present the work in both stereo and surround systems. They are built with recordings from particular in situ interactions in Chile's V region and with the audio signals generated as I perform the music. With the idea of creating processes of permutation, fragmentation, superposition and conciliation as described earlier, different patches from the Songscape Toolbox are combined and interact with the audio signals. In the process they create new audio signals, which are also fed back into the environment.

The environments are programmed or composed to allow different configurations of 'sonic events' through both my improvisation and computer autonomous processes. The improvisations build from pre-composed ideas and written lyrics. The environments autonomous processes create unexpected developments and manipulations of the materials. This has the relevance of forcing my action to be that of a listening performance. A *songscape improvisation* develops as the development of sonic events that are continuously being configured. For example, there is a continuous process through which the music is getting disrupted by elements that do not take it into consideration; or by listening to the autonomous environment without acting; or by trying to

build music from the autonomous environment; etc. My musical discourse is continually getting fragmented or being superposed with other sonic agencies that do not care about it. I have to permute my musical ideas to allow these other sonic intentionalities. By listening to them at times I might be able to find ways of conciliating them with my musical interests.

The *songscape improvisations* are therefore conceived as a series of sonic events that arise from trapping different 'sonic elements'. These events are the entanglement of multiple intentionalities encompassing those from my musical intentions to the emotionless and mechanic manipulations of an autonomous computer. As such, these multiple intentionalities have their own time trajectories; they are different possible perceptions of time. As different time trajectories, they allow for different perceptions as to what constitutes realtime. The different sonic elements at play in these series of compositions could be grouped as song, sound poetry, the coastal soundscapes (as field recordings and sound designs) and computer generated processes. Each of these sonic elements is a complex of different intentionalities. I might control some of their properties, while others follow unexpected paths. The sonic events could be defined as specific moments in which a sonic element is trapped. Certain sonic events can have their own structure or be pre-composed, others might be completely unexpected, and thus each has its own temporality. However, as there is a continuous flow and disruption of elements, every sonic event will eventually be transformed and evolve into a different one. The improvisations therefore unfold as a journey through different sonic events, combining pre-composed ideas, improvisation and listening. They do not have a fixed structure encompassing all the events in a composition, nor do they have a predetermined or ideal iteration. For example, in a particular performance, different compositions can be combined or played as one long improvisation or journey—as was the case at the Dark Sound Symposium in Falmouth University, April 25th 2015.

The composition process as the trapping of sonic elements to generate sonic events, can be better understood by furthering down a description of the three different modes of auditory content described at the beginning of this chapter, and unfolding the way they play a part in the composition process as sonic elements. It is important to remark once again here, that I am working at the level of the sonic as dealing not only with the acoustic. Sounds are not considered

here as autonomous physical objects but are configured as irrevocably fused with the perception of them.

Speech as a category is differentiated from all other types of sounds, by its clear-cut purpose of communicating and uttering meaning. The ability to signal internal processes via sounds modulated in the vocal cavity, could be considered the basic medium for human communication, from an infant's cry to the casual conversation of friends. These mysterious process raises questions of how and where meaning is heard (Smith, 2009); the importance of the voice for the articulation of the subject (LaBelle, 2014); and the divergence of speech and the properties of acoustic signals (Mole, 2009; Remez and Trout, 2009) among others.

As such, speech is a sonic complex rich in nuances, subtleties and open to multiple interpretations for different subjects and cultures. By contrast to the categories of music and environmental sounds, speech is distinguish from the perception of all other auditory content by its unique value for human communication. In the *songscape improvisations* it is developed through three different sonic elements: sound poetry, song lyrics and by conversations with people.

The perception of speech is not a straightforward matter. The relationship of sounds and meanings can have multiple layers; as different accents, tone inflections, breathings, etc. give shape to a diversity of meanings. In fact, the materiality of the body takes precedence over a clear, transparent communication of pure meaning. Even at the level of thoughts, meanings are graspable only through their physical articulations. The materiality of speech, the fragility of communication, the utterance and inaccessibility of meaning are all elements that are explored in the practice of sound poetry. From early examples such as Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate* from 1922-1932 or Vicente Huidobro's *Canto VII* from *Altazor* published in 1931 (Huidobro, 1976) to current practices such as the Writers Forum Workshop conducted by Lawrence Upton in London and in which I had the opportunity to participate.

For the *songscape improvisations*, sound poetry as a sonic element plays the vital role of shifting the expectations of speech. It allows me, for example, to establish a dialogue with the field recordings by way of onomatopoeic imitations of them. The composition *Respiración de Arena* (Sand Breathing) is a good example of this use. The main source material for this composition

comes from recordings done with a hydrophone inside a plastic bottle (The nature of these recordings was explained in the previous section). I organised the different recordings from the bottle-microphone into a bank of short extracts. I then proceeded to create a bank of similar length with vocal sounds that resemble the recordings.

In *Respiración de Arena*, using both banks—the onomatopoeic material and the recordings from the bottle-microphone— can become a sonic event in its own right, or it might be used as a sonic element to combine with other elements. For example, combined with songs, it allows for the latter to be disintegrated into the field recordings or reversely to ‘bring the song out’ of the field recordings.

Besides sound poetry as a sonic element, the other way speech is involved in the *songscape* improvisations is as lyrics for the songs. The lyrics are my original creations freely following Native American styles. In Pre-Hispanic Mexican literature from Toltecs to Mayans and Mexicas, chants and poems create an imaginary that combines an encounter with their environment and animals with the history of the people and their spiritual life (León-Portilla, 1992). Another source is the Mapuche oral tradition of literature particularly in shamanistic rituals by the Machi—lower rank shaman—or by the Renü—the wise men. Similarly to Mexican Pre-Hispanic literature, Mapuche's literature is riddled with animal-spirits and an intertwining of environment and history of the people (Aukanaw, 2013).

The lyrics I wrote follow the tone and rhythm of this Native American songs and I play with the mythological idea of environmental and animal spirits from my own personal perspective. However I do not try to appropriate their beliefs and history or to play the role of a Machi or Renü. The main language of the lyrics is Spanish, however in compositions such as *Roca de Plumas*, that is based in the exploration of a bird colony, I built voice improvisations imitating the sounds of the seabirds with the aid of the phonemes of their Mapuche names—names that most of the time have an onomatopoeic appeal.

The use of this type of lyrics for singing and onomatopoeic interaction with field recordings, allowed me to work with speech from a subjective perspective and to establish a corporeal interaction with the environment. Accordingly, the work of some sound poets that have develop

work in ethnopoetics are influential in the development of my style, such as Jerome Rothenberg, Charles Morrow, Cecilia Vicuña and particularly the work of Lorenzo Aillapán, also known as the Mapuche Bird Poet.

Another important aspect of the use of lyrics in the *songscape improvisations* is that the melodies of the songs were developed independently of them. This allowed for the lyrics to be a sonic element in their own right. Indeed, the same lyrics were used for multiple melodies or recited as spoken word, or in general they were not given a fixed sound.

These uses of speech allowed me to reflect upon and channelise a relationship with the V region's human and natural past and present. It allowed me to articulate and communicate my impressions and perspectives on the one side and on the other it influenced my way of listening to the totality of the *songscape improvisation*. Through speech then, my listening is affected and opens up to different understandings of location and time.

The second category of auditory content considered is music. Music (that is non-vocal, non-speech music) is, as speech, a very powerful human interaction through sounds. However it lacks speech's determination for meaning and understanding. The argument for its categorisation as a particular type of auditory content is therefore a bit more complex and is well illustrated in the two following musicological theories.

According to Roger Scruton (2009) music is a special mode of perception that is not equivalent to the perception of other sounds. In his view, when we hear musical sounds,

We attend to sequences, simultaneities, and complexes. But we hear distance, movement, space, closure. Those spatial concepts do not literally apply to the sounds that we hear. Rather, they describe what we hear in sequential sounds, when we hear them as music. In other words, the concepts that provide the fundamental framework for musical perception are applied metaphorically, in the act of acousmatic attention. (Scruton, 2009, p.66).

As an acousmatic mode of perception—borrowing and extending Pierre Schaeffer's notions developed in the context of *musique concrète*—musical sounds are independent of their sources. To hear musically is then for Scruton to hear sounds (and sound relationships) as pure events contained in themselves. Thus for him musical sounds are 'acousmatically' detached from the actual sounds that we hear.

As Andy Hamilton shows (2009), this definition is at odds with the music experience of many listeners and musical styles. To hear musically might also involve the appreciation of the virtuoso playing of an instrumentalist or hearing to a particular performer. Moreover, Hamilton argues that the perception of music is not tantamount to only hearing the sounds. 'Experience of music is not purely auditory. We feel as well as hear sounds; indeed, some music seems to emphasize this fact. (...) In Varèse, a sense of sound as vibration is integral.' (Hamilton, 2009, p.166). According to this view, integral to music is the perception of sound as something else than merely sound. Vibration and rhythm are elements in music that are transmitted not by hearing sounds but by feeling them, which Hamilton illustrates with Varèse's *Ionization* for thirteen percussionists, a piece considered as one of the first Western compositions for solo percussion.

Hamilton does not so much oppose Scruton's account of music as acousmatic attention to sound, but complements it with '[the proposition of] a twofold thesis, which states that listening to music involves both non-acousmatic and acousmatic experience, and that both are genuinely musical aspects.' (Hamilton, 2009, p.170).

Both Scruton and Hamilton, therefore, argue in favour of music as a special type of auditory experience. There is something unique in music perception that sets it aside from the perception of all other auditory content. This uniqueness, if following the case of acousmatic attention, will divorce our perception of music from hearing sound as connected to their sources or any worldly attachment. Although I personally believe that Scruton's acousmatic theory hides an idea of pure music that implies the supposed epistemological transparency of structure, and therefore the universality of certain repertoires (Subotnik, 1996), it serves as a valid theoretical standpoint to describe some properties that set music apart from the experience of other sounds for a listener.

The *songscape improvisations* involve music composition in two sonic elements: songs and instrumental music—mainly for piano, but also for electronic and recorded instruments and in certain modes of controlling the computer. Inside each particular *songscape improvisation*, there is a relationship between the musical material of the instrumental themes and the songs, a bond that is constructed through rhythmic motives, harmonic progressions or melodic phrases. In this sense, the musical material is created and developed by way of the acousmatic attention described



above. However, at the same time, the musical compositions developed are not fixed and do not have a proper autonomous life on paper. I use notation and experimental notation, as a way to aid my memory or to develop particular ideas, yet these scores are not sufficient in per se for the understanding of the music. As such, my use of music is closer to a twofold thesis.

The idea behind interconnectedness between songs and instrumental music is to have both these sonic elements able to interact in diverse ways as a coherent musical unity in a tonal, or quasi-tonal style. This coherence allows for the creation of multiple sonic events, as the quantity of possible relationships between songs and instrumentals is enormous.

An example of this multiplicity of musical worlds is found in the *songscape improvisation Vientos Submarinos*. Contrary to the other compositions of the *V Region Songscape*, in this one the field recordings do not lead the compositional process. This composition was developed after a free-diving exploration, however I considered the field recordings gathered from it to be too monotonous. This allowed for the development of musical material more freely. Beside a lot of different vocal melodies and possible songs, this *songscape improvisation* has one main piano composition that is organised by two themes. These themes in turn can be related by two possible secondary themes. The song material is developed loosely following the Andean style of huayno. The field recordings only make certain appearances from time to time. An electronic texture of bass frequencies was constructed as part of the musical-soundscape composition, and is almost continually playing in the background. This material integrates some of the underwater recordings and is built in such a way to create the illusion of an underwater soundscape.

Therefore music in this case is building up the underwater environment, it is listening to it. As such it presents perhaps the best paradigm in the *songscape improvisations* of performing as listening. The boundaries between the field recordings and the musical material are not as clear as in the other *songscape improvisations*. The surreal feel of the underwater environment itself is somehow listened to more accurately by such a depiction than through staying only in the monotony of the acoustic recording. This monotony is unable to listen to the perpetual oscillation of tides, the feeling of abyss and darkness, the strange nature of some of its creatures, the distance of light and air, etc. Elements that nonetheless are such powerful and evocative elements of the

sonic experience of the environment. They do stimulate my internal listening; they are a fundamental part of my sonic interaction with the environment, regardless of them not being present in the field recordings.

The third category for the perception of auditory content is environmental sounds. This category arises from encompassing all possible sounds that a listener encounters but that are neither music nor speech.

Environmental sound is, consequently, a category of a slippery definition. I believe this is something fundamental to and inextricable from the category. Indeed, the fact that it defies definition, except by opposition to music and speech, is to my understanding the only possible definition one can attempt of the category as such. When understood this way, it is possible to view the category of environmental sound more like a placeholder that contains multiple categories of sound perception. These would be categories that are not contained in music or speech, such as found in certain sound practices like acoustic ecology or certain forms of sociology and archaeology.

For the first stage of the *songscape* traps, environmental sounds were originally understood as soundscapes available around a small coastal town in Chile's V Region. As the *songscape improvisations* were developed and tested in different formats and live performances, I started to gather new materials, new 'field recordings'. These new 'field recordings' offered a different start, a mediated location and an extraneous temporality that allowed for a listening to the environment that is not only a discovering of an autonomous outside but that is also shaped by my personal impressions of it. That is to say, an environment that is the inevitable experience of listening as performing.

At the beginning of the project, the acoustic exploration of environments was to account for the outside of self-expression. They were considered the real time presence of sounds that happened in a situation regardless of my song or of the hierarchy of sounds I was building from my self-expression. This acoustic notion shifted and gave room to a sonic understanding of both self-expression and what lies outside of it. A pivotal experience in this change was the underwater environment and how I interacted with it in the *Vientos Submarinos songscape improvisation*. Later

on, I furthered down this path of listening to the outside not only guided by an acoustic encounter with an outside, but by listening to the integral sonic experience of the outside. I discuss this in the next chapter.

#### **1.4. The Songscape Performer Conclusion**

Through different performances and sharing of my project, I've found that the contradictory stance of the songscape as both being a project of self-expression and openness to its outside might be unsettling to some. I have performed these works in a multiplicity of different contexts from circles of experimental music, academic and general audience events. Put simply, after conversations with friends and members of the audience I could conclude that for some that are attuned to experimental music and a diversity of sound arts, the *songscape improvisations* are perceived as some form of alternative music perhaps close to the progressive rock of Pink Floyd or Frank Zappa: as those artists, they might have some non-traditional turns yet that they are nonetheless pop music. From the perspective of those that have an ear for pop music and not so much for experimental music, the *songscape improvisations* are perceived as full of mistakes; that there are confusing noises, glitches, interruptions and the songs and sounds sometimes follow a beat and are harmonious, yet other times they get out of sync and do not behave as expected.

In both cases, I believe there is a critique that can be understood from an email sent to me by Professor William Rowe the 23rd of June 2014, after a performance of mine. Rowe is a friend from poetry circles in London and after I asked him what he thought about a performance of mine he attended, he gave me a detail response. He replied 'I think the introduction of tonality, with the song element which you bring in later, makes a change of code (of genre maybe also) with collapses the logics of sound poetry - I mean I don't think go well together.'

I found this description fascinating. It was exactly this collapse of logic, this disparity of codes what was allowing a shift through different sonic intentionalities. The incoherence, the changing codes, the collapse of logic are all to me ways of describing the ambivalence, the ambiguity, the in-betweenness and the reversibility I am after: they are the experience of vacilar as a vibration triggered from a trap that entangles dance and doubt.

However Professor Rowe's critique did shed a light on something that I needed to address in the project as a whole. As specific works, I believe the *songscape improvisations* were successful in creating an ambiguous tension between self-expression and its outside. However they were also a staged situation that had me as a musical performer behind a microphone and a piano. There was no ambiguity in that. Somehow I felt that the sensitivity to reversibility I was after, was not surviving or being properly transmitted if my position was unequivocally that of a musical performer. In other words, the sensitivity to reversibility, the ambiguity of multiple intentionalities was something that I—as a composer-performer—was experiencing, yet for the audience the experience they were in front of was completely different.

I knew the changing codes, the disparity of logic were there in order to create an ambiguous in-between. A reversibility of intentionality sustained by a listening as performing. However the audience did not know this and not as their fault: I was being able to experience simultaneously self-expression and listening to the outside, yet this was not being communicated. Somehow the *songscape improvisations* were effectively a listening as performing experience but only to those who were actually performing musically.

As the model of reality offered by the Bohr-Barad interpretation of quantum physics shows, nature is only defined as real through measurement. Human and non-human are always intertwined complexes. Song writing and performance is as such a listening exploration, or a measurement so to say, of the environment, just as listening is a way of performing. Reality, as the performative configuration of different human and non-human agencies, demands that self-expression be reintegrated into listening. Otherwise a clear-cut separation between human and non-human is still enforced, that is to say the representationalist model with its visuocentric apparatus still dominates listening. Likewise, song and music performance as human expression, are also always estranged. My self-expression is never mine but an entanglement of different intentionalities defined by the trajectory of a diversity of agencies as configured in an apparatus. For example, the sound of my voice in my head is not strictly the voice of my vocal cords; the speakers that amplify the keyboard change its timbre; the expressiveness of a melody is shaped by my present feelings and impressions. The list could be grown ad infinitum and the conclusion is

always the same: self-expression in music is not a close-system or essential property of an 'I' but the workings of human and non-human agencies. The sonic entanglement I propose as the basis of my practice is based on this understanding of both listening to the outside and self-expression. Taking into account their irreducibility to autonomous compartments—therefore understanding them as the intra-action of multiple agencies and/or intentionalities.

The V region realtime in situ interaction and the *songscape improvisations* stages of the songscape trap had results I was satisfied with. However there was a fundamental problem to tackle, in accordance with the basis of my practice. As the sonic entanglement of self-expression and its outside, the scope of the trap seemed to be limited to the experience of a music performer. As such, the much wider panorama of my practice as pertaining to the wholeness of the sonic experience in relation to sonic ontology remained untreated. This is addressed in the following chapters by stepping outside the musical and instead of considering the building of sonic traps, focusing on two other elements of vacilar: to doubt and to dance. In the fourth and last chapter the totality of the experience of vacilar is attempted by the element of vibration that brings together trap, dance and doubt.

# Chapter Two. To Doubt

## 2.1 Doubting and Listening to the Outside

This practice based research is about unfolding the vacilar sensitivity through the experience of entanglement between self-expression and its outside. This entanglement is experienced as the vibration between dance and doubt that is triggered by a sonic trap—a description that is built from vacilar's polysemy. In the previous chapter we looked at how the entanglement is produced by songscape traps. We looked at specific methods and techniques to build traps that disorient sonic elements in order that music playing (creating or performing an intentional sound event according to my tastes and personal feelings) and listening (as an attentive immersion into the outside-of-self-expression that surrounds it) entangle as one experience.

In order to articulate this entanglement, theories that question a fixed distinction between human/non-human or subject/object proposing instead fluid relationships, such as that between the eater and the eaten (Bennett, 2010) or primordially Barad's physics-philosophy model of quantum mechanics (Barad, 2007) gave the theoretical framework for the methods and mechanisms needed to develop songscape traps. This framework provides concepts and a lexicon to clarify the distinction between self-expression and listening to the outside, without falling into static, representational divisions of materials and experiences into two opposite sides. Broadly speaking, the distinction between self-expression and its multiple outside grows out of giving space to all stimuli, such as thoughts, feelings, perceptions, cultural heritage, etc. This giving space is achieved by a negotiation of agencies between those perceived as arising *from me* and those coming *towards me*, a negotiation between giving and receiving. An emphasis is given here in that this opposition is perceived: it is not definite and is open to change and reconfiguration.

Schematically, it could be affirmed that if I perceive something as coming *towards me*, something that I encounter as an involuntary presence, then it is outside. Reversely, if I perceive something as coming *from me*, if I perceive myself as the engine that puts it in motion, then it is my expression. This opposition of from/towards is a shifting and fluid binary that articulates an ever-evolving position of uncertainty and contradiction. From it questions arise such as, is my body from

or towards me? Is my voice? Is the sound of a hammering outside my window? Is this thought? Vacilar is an experience that precisely vibrates in this uncertainty. It therefore develops from/towards opposition in performativity, as an action that is open to their reconfiguration, their ambiguity and reversibility. This ambiguity and reversibility will be described in detail in Chapter Three as the concept of sonic contradiction.

The opposition of from me and towards me is then a matter of perception, interpretation and action. It could be understood in relationship with the feminist phenomenologies of Judith Butler and her distinction between the performativity of gender and the fact of biological sex (Butler, 1988) or Sarah Ahmed's notion of how orientation mediates the relationship between bodies and objects (Ahmed, 2006). Indeed, it is the performativity or the orientation of a body what establishes its definition and not fixed, pre-given definitions. In the case of vacilar, it is the orientation that I perceive or interpret in a sonic agency what establishes it as part of my self-expression or of being outside self-expression. This act or performativity of assigning orientation is fundamental for the element of doubt that is part of the vacilar sensitivity. This chapter will unfold the concept of doubting and how it rearticulates for my practice listening and the hope of access to sonic ontology.

Doubting expresses uncertainty, questions validity, is sceptical. Doubting hesitates, falters, it distrusts the reliability of what has been taken as true. It therefore expresses for vacilar the act of suspending self-expression and opening up to multiple outsides of it. In my practice, doubting is the method by which the quest of sonic-ontology is both pursued and integrated into a para-ontological stance. Sonic ontology, let us recall, in its quest for accessing the universal, natural realm of sound has to set aside any perception or inclination that implies a cultural or subjective discrimination. Para-ontologies on the other side claim this is an impossible quest: any ontology is always biased and therefore it always reinforces a particular subjective/cultural appropriation of sound.

Vacilar is a sensitivity that tries to maintain the hope of accessing sonic ontology while simultaneously acknowledging itself as a para-ontology and therefore defy the possibility of ontological access. In order to achieve this, vacilar requires a reconfiguration of some of the

methods of art practices that in one way or another advocate for the ontological access to sound. In this chapter, these practices will be grouped and described as poetics of silence and doubting will be identified as the method by which my practice dialogues with the poetics of silence. As will be shown, at the core of this poetics is the need to suspend—to silence—personal and cultural conditions that might distort, filter or somehow obstruct a clear experience of sound. By comparing different practices that conform the poetics of silence, a certain mode of listening will emerge as the main mechanism by which the suspension of the 'I' is achieved. It will be shown that this listening provides for the poetics of silence: a) An engagement with sonic material that is non-intrusive or only subtly so b) A non-discriminatory practice as listening cannot provide shelter from undesired sonic agencies that might arise while listening. Importantly for this research, the type of listening that is at the core of the poetics of silence provides an important aspect for the entanglement of vacilar as it provides the desired openness to the outside—or multiple outsides—of self-expression.

As part of vacilar, doubting absorbs this listening to the outside of self-expression. Doubting accomplishes this as the action that acknowledges the performativity involved in assigning orientation to sonic agencies. In order to understand this, I will describe the inevitable condition of listening to the outside as paradoxical at its root. Succinctly, this is the paradox of listening being an action of removal of the 'I' and simultaneously being an action reinforced by the 'I'. Stressing this inevitable condition links listening with waiting. Even though as a listener an awareness of it as waiting is not necessary, the fact the paradox is at its root anyway, inevitably marks listening as a waiting for the 'I' to resume. Indeed, listening is the expression of the 'I' that shushes itself in order to listen to the outside of itself. Thus, doubting is the method to maintain the ontological quest of listening to the outside while stressing its inevitable conditions of shushing the 'I' and waiting. Indeed, doubting encapsulates this ontological quest as goal driven, as performativity that is para-ontologically reinforced. Doubting integrates listening to the outside as the quasi-ontological action of establishing orientations.

Leading the process of unfolding this doubting, I developed the *London Transport listening exercises*. Whereas in the musical works described in the previous chapter, there was the



construction of traps as a way to produce the entanglement between self-expression and its multiple outsides, in these listening exercises there are no construction of traps, nor is there any performance other than listening. The idea of the exercises was to have as little as possible to do besides listening. If vacilar is experienced as the entanglement of self-expression and its outside, then this project had the objective of unfolding how such an entanglement could work only through listening.

The *London Transport listening exercises* consisted in listening and recording a commute from my flat in North London to South Kensington, where I was taking French lessons. The journey took about 50 minutes to complete and the lessons started at 8.30 in the morning. I did this journey everyday for two weeks and recorded half of them. Importantly, I did not monitor the recordings; I left the recorder inside a pocket of my backpack, so as to concentrate in listening and not in the handling of the equipment. The commute gave me the perfect opportunity to test a project of listening to the outside. 1) It was the need to do this commute that commanded the nature of the exercise and not the other way around. Therefore, it was not a creative impulse but an opportunity to listen that arrived by itself. 2) The idea of recording a commute seemed to me commonplace and boring. I would rather be experimenting with microphones or testing exciting resonances, exploring remote places and acoustic behaviours. Perceiving the commute as uninteresting gave me the perfect starting point for a silencing of the 'I' as a creator. Only the fact that I was recording gave it a frame as creator. 3) The nature of the commute as both something I want and I don't want gave me an interesting angle to try the reversibility of from/toward as the 'I' was divided into two. The commute forced a renunciation of my likes, as it required the effort of waking up early and be in uncomfortable, closed and busy spaces for almost an hour—all to arrive to take lessons that I would rather not have to take on the first place. On the other hand, this is something I was doing because of an ulterior motive, because of needs that justified the discomfort.

The exercise helped me identify listening to the outside as doubting, for which listening is in a state of waiting. In the experience of waiting, the present—the here and now—is divided into an irreconcilable state of being something you don't want for something you want. While my intentions can be flying away into projections of my goals and interests, my body is trapped in silence. Just as

the French lessons, to experience the outside is a goal I want to pursue. As will be explained below, listening to the outside makes me sacrifice inclinations and personal interests to achieve its goal, just as the commute does.

Listening to the outside of personal-expression is the silence of my personal interests, and this silence can only be so while waiting for personal interests to resume. Silence and waiting are therefore agencies that are inextricably connected in doubting. They provide the basis from which a listening to the outside can survive in dialogue with self-expression and the fixed format of the final work (see Chapter Four). Through the recognition of the listening experience of the outside as being inevitably an experience of waiting, listening is understood as a faltering between doubting and dancing—both moving me and being moved by me. In this chapter I will develop this idea in an attempt to describe a listening experience that is ambiguously about listening to the outside while at the same time listens to the 'I'.

### 2.1.1. The Outside, the *Towards Me*

For my practice, the outside is initially defined as the archetype of what is orientated *towards me*. That is, the outside means whatever is not intentionally positioned or articulated *from me*, whatever lies outside my personal expression. Thus the outside is not necessarily defined by physical boundaries but by being present regardless of my interests or inclinations. Listening to the outside is defined by a displacement of the centrality of the 'I', by strategies of removing the 'I' altogether, neutralising it or perceiving it with estrangement. Thus the outside can flow in my inside: in imagination, thoughts or feelings as long as these are not explored by my own agency.

Consequently, I initially define the outside as that that can only be listened to. Any other way of engagement with it erases it as it turns it into material for something I am doing. The outside is listened to by a shushing of self-expression, it is a listening that can only be by silencing of the 'I'. As such, the outside is evanescent as it is lost as soon as the 'I' appropriates it, yet it is omnipresent and can never be fully eliminated. Furthermore, what I consider my own agency is shifting within the context, the 'I' is becoming and continually opening to its outside. As it fades out from one place, the outside will fade in in what seemed to be part of my self-expression or pop out

in other unexpected places. This is a process through which the 'I' and its outside—the *from* and *towards me*—are open to perpetual reconfiguration and reversibility.

While sitting on a busy morning bus, I receive the outside as the unpleasantly loud chewing of a cereal bar by the person sitting next to me. I shush my unpleasantness and concentrate on the squashing sounds it produces. It absorbs me into fantasy dialects of warped electronic transmissions. I start to enjoy it, shifting it from a *towards me* to a *from me*, until somehow the regular biting triggers in my head an annoying melody. This now reconfigures the sonic agency as a *toward me* as an ear-bug that is stuck in head.

### 2.1.2. Shushing and Listening the I

On this chapter I propose doubting as a listening that is displacing the 'I' while also retaining it. In order to achieve so, drawing from my listening exercises I will expand on the idea of listening to the outside—in connection to the work of other artists and theorists grouped in the poetics of silence— and why I feel this listening that removes the 'I' is important. On the other hand, I will present other ways of listening and arguments that question the possibility of listening to the outside and that ultimately force the reintegration of the 'I'. Listening as doubting attempts to navigate these irreconcilable positions as the experience of vacilar between the outside and self-expression.

As I will show, different notions of listening as silencing have played a fundamental role in the development of a variety of practices in music, sound art and other disciplines of the last decades; from Cage to Oliveros, LaBelle, Ashley, Voegelin and many more. In fact, it could be considered as the epitome of listening itself for many of these practices. Listening as a shushing of the 'I' promises opening, tolerance, it promises to give proper consideration to what is not understood or known. It could be said then that it is invested with optimism for a better coexistence both socially and environmentally.

However, as some authors have shown and will be described below, listening to the outside requires a silencing of the 'I' that is impossible to achieve in a pure, unmediated state. It therefore only survives as fiction. The access to the outside is not as transparent as it might seem. Listening

to the outside requires silencing and this is also an action. A doing through which ultimately the 'I' survives.

In order to appreciate the outside, there is a need for an action of awareness, of nurturing it so to speak. The protective action of silencing the 'I' allows for the fragility of the outside to be experienced as unmarked by personal intentions. This action of shushing the 'I' is fundamental. However listening to the outside cannot listen to the shushed. Indeed, not to listen to the shushed is the condition of listening to the outside. The shushed therefore functions as an (unheard) outside to the outside.

Listening to the outside would require an ability of openness and unmediated access to that which the 'I' leaves untouched. Therefore, such a stance requires the possibility of an encounter with the outside as a plenary phenomenon. This unmediated experience would be conceptually possible only as preceding the shushed. Indeed the shushed would encapsulate all that needs to be removed in order to appreciate the phenomenon of the outside, as it is in itself before the constructions of the shushed.

Authors such as Varela (1991), Derrida (1981) or—in the context of sound art—Kim-Cohen (2016) provide critiques of this model and give insights into why this plenitude is not conceivable. The arguments they present problematise the plenitude of listening to the outside. As will be explored below, the arguments they present are valid and bury the possibility of such a listening as nothing more than a metaphorical enactment of itself. Instead of nurturing the outside, these critiques nurture the shushed: the 'I' that is neglected and repressed through the discipline of silence. On the other hand, I am not happy to dismiss listening to the outside altogether, as I do believe much can be learned from it. Even though its appraisal might need to be reconsidered outside the phenomenological frame that binds it to an unachievable ontological plenitude.

The problem this chapter will address then, is how to combine these opposing listenings of both the outside as the mechanism of shushing the 'I' and at the same time of allowing the shushed to resurface: of listening the 'I' that is there inevitably, even if listening to the outside tries to ignore it.

Listening as doubting is therefore an ambiguous listening of both silencing and at the same time of the impossibility of silencing. Vacilar is both my action and something that happens to me. It breaks the static and fix; it weights equally the real and the imagined. It keeps me aware and enacting my self-expression and at the same time it silences it to listen to its outside. Moreover, the fact that listening as doubting is then contradictory, effectively articulates the reversibility that the vacilar sensitivity develops. In fact, vacilar doubts and is even indecisive as to where the reversibility is exactly as a shifting point of intersection.

This shifting point allows me to reframe listening to the outside in my practice. In the final format of the works developed in it, there is a practical paradox between listening to the outside and their formats as multimedia works with clear boundaries. It could be asked, how does this listening survive inside the frame of a fixed work that is inextricably intentional? What is then listening to the outside of personal expression? The notion of listening as doubting offers for me a way to deal with this, as it constantly oscillates between the outside and self-expression. Listening thus resides in a shifting point of intersection between openness to the unknown, to the unexpected and on the other side on personal-cultural reactions and interpretations. Listening as doubting occurs in-between, through intuitive and involuntary responses on the one hand and through decision and motivation on the other. Thus it positions listening as a state in which the agencies that flow *from* or *towards* me—the dichotomy of giving/receiving—is experienced as a continuum via contradiction: a state in which oppositions are always changing and are open to reversibility. For the development of works, this listening as doubting is what eventually allows developing trajectories of songscaping (see Chapter Four).

### 2.1.3. Silence and Listening to the Outside

In my practice, an embracing of elements that are beyond my control and that are autonomous could be understood preliminary as an embracing of silence understood in Cage's terms—as was succinctly described in Chapter One. Elements that don't care about me: such as errors and the presence of intrusive, unexpected, noisy agencies that alter and fence off my personal expression. The songscape would then be the sonic experience of a perpetuate shifting between 'me' and 'silence'. This 'me', this 'I', as a sonic intentionality is a narrative that constructs

'my' experience as a line of actions lead by 'my' will. Accordingly, what this 'I' leaves behind or can never appropriate, we will call for now silence, as it is sustained by the silencing of the 'I'. I will expand about this relationship later on in regards to the horizon of silence, a horizon that will render this definition of silence inefficient (see Chapter Four). For now, this definition of silence will suffice in order to encapsulate strategies and practices of other artists that are relevant to my practice of listening to the outside.

Silence, developing from Cage's definition, is an attentive and accepting experience through listening (Cage, 1961). It is a void that opens up mysterious and multiple territories. By way of renouncing the self as a fixed point or anchor it would allow a connection to a beyond, to nothingness, to infinity. Silence is not only a sensorial experience of the sounds outside, but a state of awareness to the sonic agencies that occur in every direction. Silence is an openness to welcome whatever is that surrounds me, both out there in the external world and inside of me. Silence is an experience of encounter, a state of acceptance that cuts through the real, the imaginary and all possible and impossible in-betweens. As liberation from personal intentions and tastes, it could be the key for finding a meditative state of inner peace or a basis for social organisation.

As silencing the 'I', silence is an infinite territory of noise and otherness—a territory that is opened through silencing your own point of view. It suspends preconceived notions and expectancies to allow whatever is happening, to keep happening. It forces a neutralisation of personal agenda and opens up to all possible agendas. In listening as silencing, the self is an empty chamber resonating with every sonic stimulus.

In my practice, these notions of silence guide my first approach to listening to the outside. Silence encapsulated my listening as an attentive perception of sounds beyond my tastes or interests. Silence made me deal with the sounds around me and focus on them, liberated from my own hierarchies and intentions. It is through the exercise of the *London Transport* that—building from the previous experience of the songscape traps (see Chapter One)—I turn my attention into the vacilar of listening by both allowing this silencing and an awareness of the shushed. For example if, as I wait for a bus, the engine's noise of a car passing by seems boring to me, then

silence is the method through which I try to listen to the engine with renewed ears. Even if at times I renew my ears, I will also indulge my boredom—listen to the shushed—and start singing a song in my head in order to control the sonic experience.

## **2.2. The Poetics of Silence from Cage Onwards**

The notions of silence and listening as silencing that I work with are initially fuelled by the work and theories of John Cage yet also by the practices of other artists that develop and modify the concepts further. Even though there might be major differences and subtleties in the different theories and practices described, they could be held together as a common poetics that I label poetics of silence—as I will describe below. A notion that also nurtures my own concepts of listening as doubting and the horizon of silence which spring from my practice, even if by these concepts the possibility of the silence of the poetics of silence is ultimately abandoned (see Chapter Four).

### 2.2.1. Listening as non-hierarchical

Silence in Cage arises as a form of acceptance of all sounds, as liberation from personal intentions and tastes. This would allow a path to enlightenment, a path that in Cage's own words helps 'to sober and quiet the mind, thus making one susceptible to divine influences' (Cage, 1995, p.15). This silence can be pursued in a constructed or artistic setting, but it lies in everyday life. A bus ride, a bank cue, a waiting room, an intrusive construction site are all fertile ground for a surrender to silence. As such, silence offers a therapeutic value for city dwellers, as it would allow them to find beauty in everyday life (Joseph, 2002, cf. 144-147). Silence in Cage would allow for opening, for an experience that postpones the ego and permits the flow of multiple agencies. An insistent hammering or a mosquito disturbing your sleep, instead of triggering stress and impotence, would offer a way into a deep state of acceptance and awareness of the present moment. It is a silence that neutralises personal agenda and opens up all possible agendas (LaBelle, 2006, cf. 11-12).

Cage's silence is calling for a new relationship with sounds that is also a call for a new social order. Cage was particularly concerned with the political implications of musical form (Joseph, 2002, cf. 149-155). He develops silence as music based on noise lawlessness, with a revolutionary optimism for a new world order. He envisioned a new enlighten era of peace and

understanding by silencing the ego. A coexistence based on an anarchist, Zen-infused individualism (Cage, 1969, cf. xiii-xiv).

Cage's silence involves a silencing that falls prey to different critiques. For example, Douglas Kahn (1997) and Slavoj Žižek (2011) see Cage's work entrapped in a contradiction as they denounce Cage's figure as that of a traditional composer. While apparently he is opening up the acceptance of all sounds, in a more profound layer he is just a composer that is not renouncing to his powers of being a small god, therefore not questioning music's position in regard to sound. In Kahn's critique, he understands of Cage as musically silencing the social and therefore carrying the legacy of Western music tradition of music a-referentiality (Kahn, 1997). In opposition to Cage, Satie and his furniture music seems to Žižek a more radical approach. Whereas by furniture music Satie would be renouncing the position of the composer by way of degrading music to background noise—to a piece of furniture in the room—Cage would be doing the opposite by elevating background noise to the level of music (Žižek, 2011, cf. 117-119).

Regardless of these oppositions, Cage's silence is for me a gateway to open up sensitivity to the outside. To allow time and space to the experience of listening and take it as an important experience—through which much that would go otherwise unnoticed can be appreciated. Defending Cage from Kahn's attack, LaBelle highlights Cage's paradox as a constructive lens. In relationship to *4'33"* he states that 'the work aims for music, as cultural practice and as context' (Labelle, 2006 p.15)

When Cage's work is taken in its cultural practice and context, I believe Kahn's and Žižek's critiques are narrow minded in that they consider Cage as a musician and fail to acknowledge him as a polyartist (Kostelanetz, 1996) or even as an experimental or performance poet (Perloff, 1981). If Cage's work is understood through these other prisms then the relevance of his traditional musicianship is diminished. Cage is perhaps performing or playing the part of being a composer only as context. The consideration of Cage's work without weighting the relevance it plays beyond music into the field of experimental poetry, performance and even the visual arts is for me not framing his work correctly.



As LaBelle, I believe the silence mindfulness of Cage is constructive and needs to survive beyond the paradoxes or weakness that can be ascribed to it. Aside the perhaps exaggerated promise of anarchist, individualist and selfless coexistence that Cage proposes, his practice of enabling silence both in the acoustic realm and in the semantic, starts to unfold a listening sensitivity that surpasses the limits of musical practice. It opens up the consideration of the sonic as a different paradigm for perceiving, understanding, experiencing—questioning the models and logic of most Western philosophical and cultural heritage, music included. This thread that Cage builds from his American culture (see Chapter Three) is explored through paths of acoustic and sonic imaginary exploration beyond Cage's steps and in a multiplicity of directions.

As part of Cage's music-philosophy of silence, I am particularly drawn to David Tudor's *Rainforest* as a work that illustrates Cage's notions of silence and also as a work in which the silencing it requires is clearly and explicitly taken into account. Tudor was a lifetime collaborator of John Cage, and was the original performer of *4'33"*. His practice remained close to Cage's notion of silence. In fact, when asked about his involvement with electronic music, Cage declared that '(David Tudor) is doing such beautiful work in electronic music that I have no desire to do any in that field.' (Cage, 1995, p.17). *Rainforest* is an environment of 'sounds electronically derived from the resonant characteristics of physical materials' (Tudor, n.d.). This environment was developed in multiple versions starting in the mid 60s.

The sound material and the way it is produced in Tudor's *Rainforest* is illustrative of the practice of silence; the relationship between different sounds/individuals and the type of sounds it embraces. In this work, the composer is clearly at work giving life to an environment. He is connecting electronics with physical objects to create it. The process of composition is then a process of silencing, of allowing sounds to follow their own behaviour instead of forcing personal tastes on them. It is at the same time a fictional environment. It is an environment protected by the silencing act of the composer. For me, the fact that Tudor's environment is both allowing a listening to silence in Cagean terms and that it is explicitly an intentional construct, allows for a clear framing of the practice that Cage's silence entails.

Likewise, as I am sitting on the bus, walking down the station or riding the subway I am connecting the different sounds of the environment that surround me, developing a listening that takes them all in. As in Tudor's *Rainforests*, I am navigating an environment of sounds that are devoid of my feelings or intentionality and at the same time I remain central to them. They become an environment only through my commute. Just as Tudor might be seating behind a mixing table, combining the different sources that make up a *Rainforest* composition, I am building my environment as I travel through it.

### 2.2.2. Listening to Others

If I am building my environment, I am active in the act of silencing my will and allowing for other intentionalities to take precedence. This requires an action of interpretation of sonic intentionalities. I need to be able to decide which sonic agencies are *from* me and which are *towards* me. In this sense the level of Cage's or Tudor's silence is rapidly broken. The sound bleeding from someone's headphones, the rattling of the bus or the loud phone conversation of a passenger are towards me only because I interpret them that way. However I could reverse this and consider them as part of my own intentionality. This experience takes into account a layer of sonic agencies that is not touched by Cage or Tudor. In the experience of listening to Robert Ashley's work I find a practice that conjugates Cagean silence with this layer of the sonic. As such it provides a listening to the outside of self-expression that is closer to what I experience as I commute.

In the late seventies, Robert Ashley starts to develop a body of works that I hear as referring back to Cage's silence but with a new social approach that, instead of silencing the body, somehow allows for bodies to taste and feel. Cage's welcoming of every sound, of allowing every sound be themselves meant the appreciation of sounds as individual, autonomous entities found in a neutral environment—as allowed by a silencing process. In Ashley's work, roughly starting with *Automatic Writing* from 1979, there is a relationship to sounds that gets more complicated psychologically. In *Automatic Writing* there are a variety of sound materials that seem to be on different depths. Closest to the listener is Ashley's voice modulated through a warped vocoder. His voice is incomprehensible and seems to be some sort of moaning uttered at a low volume. The

intimacy of this moaning is exacerbated by a woman's voice that is a bit clearer than Ashley's and that to me sounds reassuring. She speaks in a soft, relaxing tone that also sounds eloquent and firm. The woman's voice is close to Ashley's voice but she sounds further away. Her voice seems 'natural', like that of a standard spoken voice recording—there are no electronic manipulations as with Ashley's voice.

The impression I get from this quasi dialogue is that as a listener, one is inside of Ashley's head, that we are able to hear his voice from the inside. His moaning is soft yet it sounds loud, as you would hear your own self softly moaning through the vibrations of your skull. The electronic manipulation of Ashley's voice and its incomprehensible utterances provide a feeling of unrest and of aseptic thought: of an incommunicable otherness residing inside. By contrast, the woman's voice provides calmness and a certain shelter to the 'inner outsideness' of Ashley's voice. Yet the woman's reassurance is also distant and at the same time that it provides certain warmth and closeness to Ashley's voice, there is an unsurpassable distance in that there is no semantic communication established. Although Ashley's utterances seem to be mainly just sounds instead of words—and the electronic processes further obscure them—his voice seems to be trying to speak in the English language. At some points of the piece this is more evident and clear and you can almost understand him. On the other side of the conversation, the woman's murmur seems to be in French.

On a different layer to this assumed dialogue there is what sounds like an electronic pipe organ playing, perhaps like a radio in the room where the dialogue is taking place. Further away and coming and going, you can hear some popular music of which the low end—the bass and drum—are more clearly identifiable, as if coming through the walls from a different room in the same building. These musical pieces are very disparate between them and highlight the lack of communication between the different sounds of the piece.

The last sound source I identify is the noise from the recording itself, the level of which is quite high. For me this white noise provides another level of separation. It makes the voices sound as a fixed transmission, disembodied the communication and isolating the participants. Conjointly with this, the noise makes the materiality of the recording palpable and evident. I cannot but hear

this piece as a mediated object, as a recording. Therefore, as a listener I am both inside Ashley's voice and radically outside of it. For me this dual, contradictory listening, provides a final displacement of the self in listening.

As a displacement, I am first placed in myself and then outside of myself—In order to be displaced or estranged, I need to have, or consider I have a place beforehand, a somewhere where I am not strange. Ashley's voice is trying to communicate and yet fails to do so as it is unable to articulate words. The woman is trying to be reassuring but she is foreign and incomprehensible. There is music in the room but it is interfered by the music next door. This displacement—that negotiates sonic intentionalities as from or towards the 'I'—is what for me ultimately unifies Ashley's work with Cage's silence, while at the same time allowing a different social relationship to sound that is not silencing tastes or feelings but displacing them.

Ashley's work *Automatic Writing* could be understood by Brandon LaBelle's characterisation of noise (LaBelle, 2006); a characterisation that inextricably links noise with Cage's silence. The perhaps interchangeable nature of Cage's silence with LaBelle's noise is relevant as it highlights the fact that silence can interrupt, it can be interference, it can be unexpected and it is unstoppable. Silence as noise is therefore not necessarily the ground for meditation and individual peace envisioned by Cage, but a call for action that demands social organisation. It carries on the Cagean heritage of silence as acceptance of all sounds into a language more fitted to social interaction, to the inevitable politics of sharing the world with others.

Brandon LaBelle proposes that 'what it means to listen' (LaBelle, 2016, p.76) is to realise that there are always sounds to the side of other sounds. Listening is not defined by the sounds I want to listen to—in LaBelle's example it is a band playing— but by those sounds I over-hear. These are sounds that are all around—again, in LaBelle's example this is the loud chatting in the venue distracting from the band. They provide interruptions, sensitivity to the crowd; they multiply perspectives and promise the outside (LaBelle, 2016, cf.76-77).

LaBelle encompasses these over-heard sounds as noise. Noise is thus defined as what challenges my sense of what I am intentionally listening to. It constantly supplements this listening by something else. Noise as the unavoidable, over-hear supplement of my focus, brings into

question the stability of my intention. It unsettles and dislocates its fixity. Noise introduces the Other, the stranger, the social in-between (LaBelle, 2016, cf. 84, 86, 89).

This understanding of listening to noise proposes a de-centring of the self. Via a definition of the self through hearing as opposed to sight, the self is not considered a point but a membrane—a channel through which sound travels. Noise defines ‘a self always already extra, an extra to itself, and already involved in the echo soon to come.’ (LaBelle, 2016, p.88).

LaBelle’s listening to the supplement as the overarching presence of noise—defined as opening up your ears to that that is always happening regardless of your interests or intentions—manages to bring Cage’s silence forward and articulate it in a way that Cage’s perhaps naive formulation, is dropped and replaced by a language more akin to the social implications of noise/silence.

The sounds of the over-hear and the estrangement of the self, open up the field of listening to the outside beyond the material or acoustic frame of listening to silence in Cage’s terms. Instead of taking sounds as just material things in themselves, it considers different sounds as sonic trajectories with particular directions, intersecting and interrupting each other. Always making noises, they can never be silent and they coexist in the always-happening presence of multiple trajectories. In my practice, this dynamic of the over-hear is continually being negotiated. In fact, the trajectory of personal expression is in constant modulation and reinterpretation as the presence of different noises is weighted in.

I hear in Robert Ashley’s works, at least from *Automatic Writing* onwards, that they bring this particular kind of silencing, involving the noise of the over-hear in a manner that is relevant to me. They are works attentive to a multiplicity of sound trajectories that involve both acoustic presence and internal experience. This resonates with the listening as doubting that the vacilar sensitivity implies.

In Ashley’s work, different sounds are the trajectories of parallel sound-lives: different musical styles that coexist and are overheard. This is not only the case in *Automatic Writing*, but it is for me the leading feature of much of his later work—such as in the operas *Perfect Lives* (1978-1983), *Celestial Excursions* (2003), *Dust* (1998) and others. What interests me of this repertory is

the negotiation between bodies and feelings, between different intentions that cannot ever be in full synchronicity or agreement. Taken all these different trajectories as a whole—as one musical composition, unity or consciousness—then these multiple trajectories are a migration of consciousness that traverses different sonic landscapes and situations in a constant fragmentation of itself (Noble, 2013).

This sensitivity to a multiplicity of trajectories, to the migration of intentionality and to noise, moves beyond the realm of the acoustic. It relates to a different space of noises, beyond the 'real' world of acoustic events. It considers orientation towards the acoustic events and questions the discrimination between 'real' and 'imagined' sounds. It establishes listening as the ability to perceive integrally multiple, fragmentary and disparate intentions. By listening to their happening together as one musical piece, it fulfils a wholeness that unifies all fragments into one. This for Ashley is a mechanism that he labels as Neo-Platonism. He states that 'Neo-Platonism is sort of like holography: the idea that the whole thing is contained in the smallest detail.' (Ashley, 1986, p.118)

The unity of the thing is therefore the plenitude of a consciousness that is able to listen to itself by listening to the outside of itself. I understand of this as linking Ashley's Neo-Platonist work with Emerson's idea that 'Nature is the symbol of spirit' (Emerson, 2008, p.16). As such, by listening to Nature (or consciousness listening to the outside of itself) the spirit would be at the same time listening to itself. It therefore relates the listening of Ashley's work to the notion of listening that ascribes as its essence, the ability of listening to the self. For this notion of listening, listening is inevitably to hear oneself listening. Ultimately this is the radical claim that to exist is to listen, and that to feel is the most intimate form of listening (Nancy, 2007; Belinfante, 2016; Iddon, 2016). Just as LaBelle's listening to noise is given via a self as membrane that is able to listen to itself.

Back to my listening exercises, when sitting on a bus I hear the conversation of another passenger and, even though I cannot understand the language, I can tell he is having a good time. The tone of his voice and the bursts of laughter remind me of good times and I am sonically transported into memories of conversations with friends. I hear in my head their voices and the

music we shared while the bus keeps its route and keeps me anchored with the repetitive announcement ‘the next stop is...’

Robert Ashley’s work allows for an exploration of the noises, sounds or music I like and also to keep an open ear to those I do not like but are there nonetheless. This is accomplished by a displacement that ultimately makes of me a listener that does not identify with any particular source but with the in-between of the sources—as a Neo-Platonic/LaBelle membrane that is able to make sense of this in-between as itself, as a listening to itself. For the sonic entanglement of vacilar I try to create a situation in which this is not the ultimate case. As there is doubt between listening and dancing, identification with some specific sources is reinforced as I build my own trajectory (see Chapter Four).

The happy conversation of another passenger, my memories, the sounds of the bus are all different sources that I take in and inevitably I reinforce the experience of one over the others as my own trajectory. Even though I listen to all of them I do not identify myself with the in-betweenness of them. I state my preference and wish to highlight it. I want my personal expression to lead and not to be submerged in a Neo-Platonic in-betweenness of fragmentary overheard trajectories.

### 2.2.3. Embodied Silence

As a listening that questions the limits of the acoustic and the imaginary, I believe Ashley’s work is related to that of La Monte Young and Pauline Oliveros. This is a listening that is informed not only by the sounds outside but perhaps also by otoacoustic emissions and non-cochlear sonic events. Listening to silence is then not necessarily perceptions of acoustic events from the outside, it does not discriminate its perceptions, giving the same weight to sources from all across the field—from acoustic sounds to those caused by hallucination. From imaginary sources and the emissions of our own human physiology to the fixed sounds of musical compositions. This form of listening could be understood through the notion of listening described by Salome Voegelin. Succinctly, for Voegelin listening is defined as an attention to the thing *thinging* (Voegelin, 2014). Whereas the thing as a determined configuration belongs to the realm of the visible, listening opens up the possibility of the impossible, of that thinging yet to be determined.

Comparing John Cage and La Monte Young, Jeremy Grimshaw is able to point out their differences and at the same time their similarities. Whereas Cage sought the acceptance of a multiplicity of sounds, Young goes for singularity. Through meticulous, directed scrutiny each event can be considered as a world unto itself (Grimshaw, 2011, cf.70). Young himself talks about living inside a sound (Young, 1995). This is most effectively taken into practice in Young's permanent installation of *The Dream House*, done in collaboration with his lifetime partner Marian Zazeela. This is an apartment in New York turned into an environment of sound and light. It has been going on through different seasons, places and variations for decades now since its first version of 1969. The sounds are carefully constructed by ratios of frequencies to create an undulating drone that is always changing. *The Dream House* is similar to Tudor's *Rainforest* as they are both pieces that create environments. Whereas Tudor's relate to Cage's multiplicity of sound, Young's environment creates a sound environment that carries the infinite individuality of each sound. Focusing on specific frequencies, their characteristics are in a fluid becoming. What you hear changes as you move your head. You cannot place clearly the beatings of frequencies as happening outside yourself or inside of you. It is a thinging that creates a continuum of the sonic experience.

Similarly to Young, I understand of Oliveros' practice of *Deep Listening*, as a listening that through attentive listening is able to open up a terrain of wonder and other-worldliness. This is clear on in early electronics works of her such as *Bye Bye Butterfly* from 1965. Here we listen for most part of the piece an undulating sinusoid with some added delays until at some point this is juxtaposed with an epic classical piece. The insistence of the sinusoid, its long duration, the lack of communication between the sinusoid and the music, all point to a listening of disparity. Of simultaneous yet independent sources that are forced into dialogue only because of their simultaneity. A major point of difference between Young and Oliveros is that I see the latter's work more attuned to the experience of listening with the body in its cultural and social context. This can be clearly appreciated in her voice and accordion works such as *Horse Sings from Cloud* from 1982 on which both her playing and singing seem to be punctuating a listening experience. A second difference—that arises from the embodiedness of her listening— is offered by Oliveros' practice of *Deep Listening* having a community appeal. As an institutional practice, the listening



together of its different members develops it. Oliveros' *Deep Listening* is therefore not the solipsistic listening of Young but an interdependent, non-subjective practice on which each other's listening affects what you hear. Oliveros calls this quantum listening. This is a listening that takes into account not only *listening to* but also *listening with* (McKeon, 2016, cf. 49-53).

#### 2.2.4 Deconstructing Silence

All these different forms of listening, notwithstanding their important differences, develop a common theme of listening as silencing the 'I'. This is for me a very important notion of listening that I wish to pursue in the songscape as well. It is a listening that through different methodologies is trying to reach for a non-discriminatory experience—in the hope of providing an experience of universal tolerance through an access to sonic ontology in itself. I understand that what ties these takes on listening is the consideration of listening as a sort of 'anterior sense'. I borrow this term from Eugenie Brinkema and her consideration of silence as a future anterior sense. That is to say, listening is anterior as it would be before cultural appropriation, yet it is future as we are already immersed in the cultural and need to move beyond it to reach the anterior. (Brinkema, 2011, cf. 212-213).

As an anterior sense, listening is approached from a form of sensorial specialisation that requires a silencing of the 'I', to access its archaic nature. Indeed, a 'phenomenological' listening that is before the 'noise' added by knowledge or rationalisation (Voegelin, 2010, 2014), a silence before sound becomes a vehicle for man-made ideas (Cage, 1961) or an understanding of 'what listening means' as the foregoing priority of the over-hear (LaBelle, 2016). These pristine listening practices demarcate fixed and uncrossable boundaries between intention and its outside—justified as a sequential temporality in the mode of phenomenology. Cultural and personal agendas—or para-ontological notions—are bracketed to allow for an otherness anterior to it. However, as deconstruction explains, this sensorial specialisation is only an ideal literary construction. It is therefore not anterior to the formation of the 'I' and carries its own non-silent noise, its own para-ontological agenda in the form of the shushed.

According to Derrida (1981), phenomenological bracketing is never free from deconstruction as there are relationships between different agencies that are irreducible and

always obstruct the possibility of the phenomenological in itself. These irreducible relationships make evident that the bracketing of phenomenology is always tainted and therefore that there is no unmediated access to presence.

The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be present in and of itself, referring only to itself. (...) Nothing, (...) is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (Derrida, 1981, p. 26)

From a different perspective, the neuroscientist and philosopher Francisco Varela sees phenomenological bracketing as confined to the standpoint of the cogito and therefore leading the mind to an abstract attitude. He offers instead the idea that through a mindfulness practice, cognition becomes the enactment of a mind and a world (Varela, 1991, cf. 9-28).

With these critiques of the phenomenological method in mind, I believe that listening as silencing—that is built from the phenomenological method—cannot claim a priority to other forms of experience and listening. In fact, silencing is a mechanism of the will, and therefore is only articulated as a metaphorical enactment of itself. The phenomenological, outside-of-personal-noise state it requires, is never accessible but always mediated by some form of personal noise—a noise that I have defined as the shushing of personal interests.

In the context of sound art and drawing from Derrida's critique, Kim-Cohen states that phenomenological plenitude, 'this 'simply is,' this self-evidence, is a fantasy.' (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p. 21) Instead of it, he proposes:

The only irreducible component of works of art, the only thing that all works of art produce, are relations: between the artist and the audience, between each audience member and the collective audience, between each of these actors and institutions, between the present and history, between one artwork and another. (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p.13)

The poetics of silence described above, leads for Kim-Cohen to 'an artistic mode of passivity that offers no resistance.' (Kim-Cohen, 2016, cf.32). This is a passivity of the will, of the subjective and cultural, of the para-ontological. Even though listening can be an aggressive or disruptive experience, it is passive in relationship to the 'I'. The key for Kim-Cohen's conceptualisation lies in the idea that practices such as those of sound and listening of the poetics of silence are encapsulated in his concept of ambience. He describes ambience in relationship to Sterne's 'audiovisual litany' that creates a list of commonly assumed oppositions between hearing

and vision<sup>4</sup> (Sterne, 2012, p.9). For Kim-Cohen, hearing is replaceable with ambience in this litany (Kim-Cohen, 2016, cf.4-6). As I described before, listening to the outside requires not listening to the shushed. In a similar approach, Kim-Cohen describes the contradiction inherent to ambience work of the 'foregrounding of the devaluing of foregrounding.' (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p.34). That is to say, ambience work can only be about ambience by foregrounding ambience, thus treating it as foreground. Once this contradiction is assimilated, then listening to the ambience becomes also an action and not the ambience per se. A work based on listening, once this contradiction is acknowledge, 'isn't exactly listening to yourself listening. It's more like *reading* yourself listening.' (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p.34) Reading highlights the fact that listening is not pure but mediated by an act not sustained in listening.

The impossibility of pristine listening, the fact that listening is 'my' performance, it is 'my' dance, is not explored in the practices of the poetics of silence from a straightforward angle. I believe that when Voegelin states that 'it is a matter then of accepting the a priori influence while working towards a listening in spite rather than because of it. The task is to suspend, as much as possible, ideas of genre, category, purpose and art historical context, to achieve a hearing that is the material heard, now, contingently and individually.' (Voegelin, 2010, p. 3) she is precisely referring to this same issue. Yet, for her the phenomenological bracketing survives by removing as much as possible the a priori luggage carried in perception, to construct a clean slate for listening. A similar approach is found on Cathy Lane's piece *Score for Everyday Tender Listening* (2017) in which a listening experience is proposed based around considering changes to your gender, health, age, nationality, etc. Thus, proposing a listening that considers a bracketing of the para-ontological to open up other possibilities. In my practice, I believe that this is impossible to sustain in that terms. What Voegelin (2010) or Lane (2017) do not address is that to listen in spite of the para-ontological can give the illusion of the material heard, of the now. Yet its mechanism, its in spite, is to shush certain influences that remain in your action nevertheless. As shushed, these influences are also now but remain unheard. I believe that recognising the shushed offers the way

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<sup>4</sup> Succinctly put, this litany identifies being immersed in experience as inherent to hearing and detachment and representationalism as inherent to vision.

for a reconfiguration of the relation between self-expression and the neutrality of intentionality pursued by the practitioners of the poetics of silence.

In fact, I would venture to say that the setting aside of personal expression is the common ground that ties all the above listening practices and theories together as one poetics of silence. The dismissal of personal expression in a search for listening as the activity that promises to get as close as possible to universal neutrality. Yet this listening as a silencing of the 'I' is never there by its own: shushing always reinforces it. Therefore it is only the intention of suspending the 'I'. It is a metaphorical enactment of sonic ontology. Personal expression is unavoidable and a listening that renounces it, can only do so by way of personal expression. It can only renounce it by the personal expression of renouncing it, which reveals renunciation as a waiting to resume personal expression: this is the listening that I experience in my commuting to French lessons. If silencing is waiting then I am acknowledging that listening as silencing cannot claim anteriority to personal expression. Instead, silencing is reinterpreted as the active shushing of personal expression: an action that silencing does not properly take into account.

The unheard noise of the shushed is not to be confused to the aforementioned noise of LaBelle's theory. As it was seen, his noise complements Cage's notion of silence. By contrast, the noise of the shushed is what the poetics of silence keep silent in order to allow silence/noise. If we understand of noise/silence as the outside to the 'I', then the shushed is the outside to the outside. This opens up the terrain of sonic contradiction (see Chapter Three), of ambiguity and reversibility, which I pursue as the experience of vacilar.

Noise as that that decentres me is at play, beyond an acceptance of the noises of the sides. Even when I am exercising 'sensitivity to the crowd' in LaBelle's words, there is a noise to that sensitivity as well. In order to develop sensitivity to the crowd, a silencing of my 'other' intentions needs to be executed. I have to decide to behave in a particular way, to listen and interact in a particular way. This is the behaviour of silencing. Therefore, as a behaviour silencing is supplemented by the shushed and not by noise—in LaBelle's example of the band, this could be the shushed music sensitivity that might be exciting my body to move beyond the aural. In other words, shushing is the behaviour that allows listening to noise/silence. Moreover, the fact that there

is a multiplicity of shushed intentionalities waiting to resume while listening to silence, means that the opening to silence/noise comes not as a neutral or primordial mode of listening, but as a specific form of listening. For me this is a desirable mode of listening, yet the fact is that the sonic entanglement of vacilar is created not by the inclusion of the outside only, but also of the shushed. As such, the silencing that allows for a sensitivity to the over-hear and noise is for me also the behaviour of waiting. Silencing can be defined as a desirable listening experience that weighs equally my likes/dislikes, my intentions and non-intentions, which opens me to all possible sonic worlds. Yet it is also inextricably the experience of waiting. It is waiting in so far as I am accepting a distancing from my contingent intentions in order to accomplish something else that I believe is worthwhile. I am silencing my emotions and submitting and postponing myself in order to experience a listening I believe to be desirable.

Listening as silencing opens up the evanescent and infinite realm of possible worlds—it is desirable as it provides an experience that could inform new ways of social organisation, of philosophy and human comprehension from Cage's inaugural silence to more contemporary understandings such as those of LaBelle or Voegelin.

Perhaps unfortunately, if the inevitable waiting that is implied in listening as silencing the 'I' is acknowledge, listening as silencing cannot be taken as the ultimate understanding of listening. At some point the wait is lifted and the shushing is broken. In fact acknowledging silencing as waiting destroys silencing at its inauguration. Silencing outlives itself only as a staged renunciation of personal interest, as the intentional being outside of intention, of having no-intention, of being open to all intentions. It survives as the action of shushing, as the paradoxical para-ontological stance of reaching the ontological.

I desire things, I use space, I breath, I get tired, I love, I share, I litter, I age, etc. Listening as doubting is shaped by these inevitable conditions of being human and claims there is no anterior listening to them. My personal expression is unassailable and I believe that the search for silence must acknowledge this. Personal expression can be call in to doubt, but it cannot be abandoned. The poetics of silence, in all its different ways, is not able to satisfactorily silence personal expression—it is impossible to do so. Listening as doubting addresses this and in Chapter

Four I reconceptualises the silence of the 'I'—the common link to the different practices of the poetics of silence described here—as part of the horizon of silence.

The poetics of silence provide an invaluable experience of listening, of opening to otherness, of displacing myself and accepting whatever it is that I hear from all directions. It is an important influence for my practice and is a fundamental part of the element of doubt for the sensitivity of vacilar. I value positively the poetics of silence and how silence, noise, listening are explored as intertwining with emotional involvement, with social interaction and organization and how they can provide a different perspective and sensitivity to existence that breaks free from the visual-centred standards and biases of modern culture. As such, the poetics of silence can bring positive changes to the way we coexist in the world yet their listening need to be reconciled with the inevitable survival of para-ontological biases.

Listening as silencing is unable to shake off the search for a universal, neutral or overarching notion. Via phenomenological bracketing or other similar methods listening is embraced as the neutral consideration of a phenomenon that would allow ontological access to it. For me this ties listening as silencing to the Western modernist music search for a universal language. It renovates the same aims as those of structural modes of composition that were pursued as objective and universally valid (Subotnik, 1996). Listening is proposed as having a similar appeal by widening its frame outside the musical tradition and looking beyond music and into other cultural practices. For me this universal is never achieved, as silencing is simultaneously the personal expression of waiting to resume personal expression. Silencing is a fundamental aspect that I try to pursue in my practice. In fact, I understand it to be at the core of it. However, by recognising my intentions and actions as inevitable, listening as silencing is also part of the performance of my personal-expression and, simultaneously, my personal-expression is constantly open to the outside of itself. Therefore, for vacilar, a different consideration of listening that takes into account the shushed, needs to be conjugated with the listening of the poetics of silence.

As I take the underground train and continue listening at some point I forget that I am listening. My mind wonders of. A few moments later I am abruptly brought back into listening, as there is a loud message through the loudspeakers. Not only are the speakers almost touching my

ears, but there is also a feedback going on between the train operator's microphone and the sound system that is painful. The mechanic, repetitive nature of listening in the underground as the train starts, speeds, slows down and stops in the next station has a rhythm. This rhythm is highlighted beyond the aural by the vibrations of the coach, which provide a visceral, tactile listening. Painful listening and visceral listening appear then as modes of listening to which listening as silencing cannot claim access, since these are listenings unable to shush the 'I'. That is, they are both forms of listening that point towards involuntary personal reaction to the listened material. As Gallagher explains:

From Cage to counselling to consultation, we are told that listening is essentially liberatory, that if there were more listening the world would be a better place. Such notions overlook the fact that listening can be used for a wide variety of purposes. (Gallagher, 2013, p.43).

Some of such purposes are audio recordings of CCTV, crime-detection systems, court hearings and interrogations (Gallagher, 2013, cf.42-43). Listening is then not always a good experience and can be experienced as violence against the 'I'. In a more reassuring context, the visceral experience of listening provides an understanding that also differs to the openness of silencing. Group and personal expression are primordial to this experience of listening. In the case of Jamaican sound systems, Henriques explains that bodies are sonic bodies and sounds are not nouns but a sounding. As such, listening is propagation through the bodies in the dance hall. For him, this is an experience of visceral thinking through sounds (Henriques, 2011, cf. xv- xxviii).

Interestingly, for Kim-Cohen it is dub music—or the sound system music—that is able to combine ambience and foreground without becoming ambience work but its 'pointed antithesis' (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p.53). It is through echoes, repetitions and other resources that for him dub music presents a complicated relation between ambience and foreground.

Rather than integrating seamlessly with a listening or viewing environment, dub unsettles its environment. Disruptions become intentions. Obstructions provide inspirations. Errata is data. As Michael Veal puts it, dub responds to the socio-historical horrors of modernity, specifically the African slave trade. (Kim-Cohen, 2016, 53)

The key for the reading of dub as the antithesis of ambience for Kim-Cohen lies in a parallel between atmosphere and sonic ambience.

(W)e no longer take the atmosphere to be simply natural, beyond the influence of cultural activities such as burning coal (...). By being in it, we alter it.

The atmosphere is anthropomorphized. Likewise, sonic ambience is subject to the motivations, interventions, and imaginations of producers and listeners. (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p.54).

Both in violent and visceral listening an anthropomorphised relation to sound is inevitable and offers a listening experience in which to sustain a shushed 'I' becomes impossible. They both make latent the impossibility to listen to the outside, how the 'I' always mediate it.

#### 2.2.5. The betrayal of Deconstruction

On one side then, we have a listening to the outside that is positive and looking for openness to other possibilities. On the other hand, we have the inability of such listening to take place. The task that remains is to clarify how these two can be experienced simultaneously in listening as doubting.

Listening to the outside could be compared to what Kim-Cohen identifies as ambience and self-expression with what he identifies as foreground. Yet for me, as noted earlier there is also reversibility, an ambiguous nature that the opposition between ambience and foreground does not emphasise. That is to say, if ambience and foreground are formed of relations—and not things in themselves—then each person or agency involved weights differently what is considered ambience and what foreground. Ultimately, this means that ambience cannot be completely evaded. As my engagement brings to my foreground my self-expression, this demands that it remains open and not against my outside, or the ambience, that surrounds it. Even though I cannot claim an access to the outside, or I cannot have a pure listening of it, it is nevertheless continuously establishing the boundaries of my self-expression and vice versa. Hence, even though I cannot claim access to a self-evident here and now, to a plenitude of the phenomenon, I also need to act as if I had access to it. Otherwise I could not take action. If I am anthropomorphizing the sonic ambience I need a sonic ambience to anthropomorphize in the first place, even if it is metaphoric.

As Rorty's critique of Derrida shows (Rorty, 1991), there is an inherent betrayal at the inauguration of Derridean deconstruction. This betrayal arises from the attempt to have a unique, total and closed vocabulary while at the same time abandoning the tradition of ontology and the metaphysics of presence (Rorty, 1991, cf.92-93). According to Rorty, this leads Derrida into tripping himself up, as he needs an ontological, metaphysical system to establish a closed



vocabulary. For Derrida the way out of this paradox is claiming that his concepts like *trace* or *différance* are neither words nor concepts and therefore that deconstruction is itself open to deconstruction in an endless spiral. However, for Rorty this would be selecting 'a few magic words as incapable of theological use' (Rorty, 1991, p.103).

Beyond the merits of the philosophical discussion, what Rorty's critique of Derrida shows is that at least in a practical level, Derrida requires to write as if the metaphysics of presence he is rejecting is nonetheless real. Otherwise his critique could not form. The same applies to Kim-Cohen's critique of ambience. In order to have a foreground, in order to be against ambience, you are required to act as if you had access to the total phenomenon. As if it was a thing in itself and not only relations, otherwise it would be impossible to shape a critique of it as a determined thing per se. For this project, this 'betrayal of deconstruction' is fundamental to listening as doubting just as the shushed.

For me the opposition between self-expression and its outside takes into account both the betrayal of deconstruction and the shushed to establish a sonic entanglement that falters. Through a listening that moves between dancing and waiting, doubting takes into account not only noise and silence but also the shushed, that is, the neglected voices that do not want to or cannot listen to silence. Therefore, listening as doubting relates to the visceral sonic thinking of the sound system by acknowledging the shushed but it also relates to silencing by acknowledging the betrayal of deconstruction.

Yes I can be open to the noises of the bus, to the rattling of a window, to the chewing, the repetitive voice alerts and I can let sounds take me in a non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory experience through multiple dimensions and yes I will snap out of this experience and focus on me. I will never really be only in that listening experience as I am carrying a set of relations that trace my own engagement, my own personal expression. Vice versa, I will never close down the otherness of experience that inevitably unfolds next to my own, as this otherness is necessary to establish my expression.

As a listener I doubt my 'I' and listen to the outside, I am therefore between being a sonic body that propagates in a continuum of sound and on the other side of being in doubt and listening

for something else. I vacillate between waiting to act and acting. As I understand it, there is no way out of this inevitable condition. Listening as doubting closes the multiplicity of options, of possible worlds, of otherness. It firmly performs its position and waits for the dance to resume. Doubting discriminates yet remains unsure, open to other possibilities. It can hope to listen for an ontological, universal, neutral, in-itself sonic experience yet it cannot claim that it is possible to experience such a listening.

For my practice, I take from the *London Transport listening exercise* the need to develop a 'new persona' so to speak. The interaction between self-expression and its outside as developed in the realtime and in the studio stages of the *songscape* traps, had been established as that of a songwriter/piano player and its outside (see Chapter One). Yet the vacilar that makes me not only dance but doubt, requires the introduction of another shushed voice: perhaps the voice of my listening as a doubting experience. A form of commentator, a spoken word, that would both be completely separable from the listened material and yet be connected to it. A connection sustained not by acoustic relations, but through a different sonic sphere of meaning and narrative. With this in mind I developed some environments constructed with materials from the in situ interaction in the V Region, the *London Transport* recordings and the *songscape* improvisations in the studio. While listening to these environments I wrote poetry and thoughts that punctuate my listening. Mainly loose lines and short fragments. These new environments and texts are included in the work *Romper el Silencio* (described in Chapter Four).

## Chapter Three. To Dance

The previous chapter focused on what doubting means for the vacilar sensitivity. Doubting is a mechanism that allows the quest of sonic ontology while at the same time it frames it para-ontologically, therefore also denying it. Sonic ontology aims at a naturalisation of the experience of sound. As such an ontological experience of sound would be universal and accessible to all regardless of personal or cultural traits. This quest of sonic ontology is developed through different artistic practices that in chapter two are grouped as poetics of silence. In short, listening as a silencing of the 'I' is identified as the common method developed by the poetics of silence for the experience of sonic ontology. In fact, for this poetics, through listening as silencing the 'I', sonic experiences provide uncharted territories for exploration and open possibilities untouched by personal or cultural inclinations.

This listening quest of the poetics of silence is also part of the vacilar sensitivity. Vacilar provides an entanglement of self-expression and its multiple outsides. As such, silencing the 'I' is a fundamental method by which the outside of self-expression is experienced. Yet the sensitivity of vacilar is shaped in ambiguity and contradiction as it acknowledges the inevitable. With doubting, listening as silencing the 'I' is present as openness to the uncertain, destabilising what is taken as given. Doubting therefore is close to the poetics of silence and provides opportunity to the quest of sonic ontology: doubting provides a quasi-ontological listening. At the same time doubting overturns listening as silencing the 'I': Whereas listening as silencing the 'I' cannot account for the shushing it requires—shushing is a condition of listening to the outside that can only be accounted for by not listening to the outside—doubting can acknowledge both listening and shushing. It therefore recognises the para-ontological effort that is required for the listening quest of sonic ontology. In chapter two listening as silencing the 'I' is interpreted from a phenomenological frame and shushing from a deconstructionist one. Doubting is proposed as a vacilar mechanism to entangle and reconcile these opposed frames.

### 3.1 Towards the sonic Criollo

In this chapter I will focus on a different vacilar mechanism: dancing. With this the three mechanisms of vacilar—trapping, doubting, dancing—will have been described and the next chapter

will attempt to describe the integral experience of vacilar as vibration. Dancing is an action that emphasises the event, the connection, and the energy between subjects, objects and any other element that might participate in the dance. Dancing is therefore not about what those elements are independently of each other, but about how they move and are moved by the same pressure, the same environment, the same sonic energy. As a body dancing, I am faced with an action of reversible orientations between what is from me and towards me—see Chapter Two for a detailed description on the reversible orientations from and toward me. On one orientation dancing is my doing and on the other is doing me. As doing me, it is sound what propels me to dance. It is rhythmic patterns in sound that call my body into action. It is sound that is doing me. On the other orientation, as my doing, it is I who willingly join the rhythm. I become part of the dance as I decide to take part in it. As having this reversible orientation, dancing can be comprehended from different perspectives that emphasise action.

As my doing, dancing opens up the possibility of the experience of the human proposed by Ingold (2015). He borrows the verb *homificare* from Ramón Llul to define the human. With this verb he proposes a shift in what is considered to be human, replacing the noun 'human' with the verb 'humanifying'. As humanifying, human existence is indistinguishable from its activity, it is defined as a doing. Therefore dancing could be understood as a clear experience of this humanifying. In dancing, the experience of humanifying could be understood in connection with the from me orientation of dancing: dance is my doing.

The reversed orientation of towards me provides an understanding of dancing as doing me. As doing me, the emphasis is not on the human but on the sound. It is the sound that dominates the human and makes it a part of its action. Henriques (2011) proposes a consideration of sound as sounding. That is to say, that 'Sound, even as the playing of a recording, is always “live” at the point of hearing. Sounding has to be embodied as an event in a particular time and place, as distinct from being “frozen” (...)' (Henriques, 2011, XVI-XVII) As always embodied, sounding proposes the human body as a sonic body and knowing as a sound logos that breaks the traditional schisms of Western thought, such as Descartes' mind-body dualism. Instead it proposes

the body as 'enminded' (Henriques, 2011, cf. 243-253). Therefore, Henriques sounding could be understood in connection with the towards me orientation of dancing: dance is doing me.

Both humanifying and sounding emphasise action and event from different orientations. If the orientation emphasises the human, then it is from me, if the orientation emphasises the sound, then it is towards me. Dancing is an experience that uses both orientations and is therefore able to disorient them, and move ambiguously between orientations as part of the vacilar sensitivity. As such, dancing is not committed either to humanifying or to sounding. It is vulnerable to both and importantly, because of the reversibility of orientations, it also acknowledges that the dance will stop. Dancing is an evanescent event that I do and that also does me. As such, while the dance is on my current state is reinforced. Simultaneously, as the dance will finish, I am aware of that state being evanescent. In fact, the dance will stop and a new dance might shape a different state.

Dancing thus provides the reverse mechanism than doubting for the sensitivity of vacilar. As described in chapter two, doubting allows the ontological quest of the poetics of silence for vacilar. Doubting tries to listens to sound as untouched by personal or cultural traits and hence tries to listens to sound as neutral and universal. Yet doubting takes action and acknowledges the shushed that cannot be listened. Doubting therefore takes the ontological quest and embeds it in a para-ontological stance: it makes clear that the universal is never accessible and cultural or subjective traits are always mediating access. Dancing takes the reverse orientation. As an action that is both humanifying and sounding, it reinforces personal or cultural traits. It is an experience that is not about doubting those traits but of developing or being developed by them. However as the dance will stop it is also able to foresee the end of those traits. Dancing is therefore a mechanism through which a para-ontological stance is not an essential property but is only an evanescent action: it opens the para-ontological to the ontological. In vacilar, dancing takes the reverse orientation of doubting to arrive to a similar ambiguity between the ontological and the para-ontological.

As an evanescent para-ontology, dancing is then a way to reinforce the 'I' without arriving to fix, essential properties for it. If the vacilar sensitivity entangles self-expression and its multiple outsides, then the self-expression of vacilar cannot be a closed system or bound to irrevocable

properties. It is a dancing 'I' that reinforces an evanescent para-ontology. Therefore it is able to dialogue with both the quest of sonic ontology and with the para-ontologies that deny the validity of such a quest. On this chapter I will describe how this dancing 'I' is experienced as the in-between of the irreconcilable positions of ontology and para-ontology, and how its properties might be understood as the menace of the earthquake.

This chapter is perhaps the most ambitious part of this dissertation, as it requires multiple clarifications—It is worth reminding here that there is an appended glossary that might become handy to follow this chapter. In order to make sense of the dancing 'I' and its properties as the menace of the earthquake, this chapter will need to clarify first an overarching concept that allows for both the conceptualisation of the fissure in sonic arts and the dancing 'I'. Recapitulating, the fissure in sonic arts is between practices that attempt the experience of sonic ontology—the attempt for sonic experiences that would be neutral, natural or universally accessible—and on the other side practices that stress mediation—para-ontological experiences of sound for which cultural or subjective traits are unsurpassable. As has been stressed from the introduction of this text onwards, this practice based research is about a sensitivity that is ambiguously situated in both the ontological and para-ontological sides. It is at the same time a South American, para-ontological position and by its inevitability provides an ontological certainty.

The key concept for unveiling the bond between the dancing 'I' and the two sides of the fissure in sonic arts is identified for this research as the problem of America. In short, the problem of America addresses the urgency of both achieving universal understanding and simultaneously acknowledging the inability of universal understanding or the inability of closing all difference in one all-encompassing system. By understanding the problem of America 1) the para-ontological stance that sustains the ontological quest of the poetics of silence will be revealed as the 'Nameless America' para-ontology 2) what ties together different art practices that deny the ontological quest will be identified as 'American Diasporas' and 3) an explanation of the dancing 'I' as a South American para-ontology that transcends to the ontological realm will be attempted in the form of the 'sonic Criollo'.

### **3.2. The problem of America**

The problem of America addresses America not as a continent but as the conceptual inauguration of the new world. This new world encompasses what could be considered some of the main current issues at a global level: globalisation of the economy, human triggered global warming, cultural clashes, identity crises, etc. As the problem of America we can therefore understand the history of dramatic change, at a global level, that started with the arrival of Europeans to the American continent. Although many of the issues the problem of America addresses were not new to the world at the moment of the arrival of Europeans to the American continent, the radical nature and reach of these issues was inaugurated by that milestone. Some of these issues are: the extirpation of cultures, genocides, globalisation of diseases, waves of both voluntary and involuntary immigration and exile, the destruction of ecosystems and extinction of species, etc. Since the arrival of Europeans to America these issues have acquired global dimensions and have become more and more relevant to the world at large ever since. The America of the problem of America is therefore not a continent, but the conceptual inauguration of a new world as an era of globalisation and in which human activities have had a global impact previously unknown.

In fact, the annexation of America is considered by Leswin and Maslin (2015) to be the key unambiguous event to establish the start of the Anthropocene Era—that is to say the geological era on which we would be currently living and that would be defined by human force acquiring the capacity to shape the direction of the world as a force of nature. The problem of America is therefore not about a continent but the opening of a new geo-conceptual era that has brought an unforeseen context of globalisation and human intervention. By understanding of the problem of America not as the 'discovery' of a continent, but as the inauguration of a new world condition—a unified, globalised world—I dare say that ever since that inauguration it is the whole world that has been going through a process of Americanisation. As such the problem of America provides a univocal conceptual frame from which to make sense of sonic experiences of sonic ontology, para-ontology and the dancing 'I' of vacilar. In fact, it is a global frame that ties them together conceptually, for the problem of America demands reconciliation between, on the one hand,

universal understanding and, on the other, the acknowledgement of unsurpassable differences and irreducible otherness.

The poetics of silence were identified in the previous chapter as the poetics of sonic ontology. As such, it is a poetics that tries to experience a pure state, a phenomenological plenitude, and promises neutrality. As sensitivity to the problem of America, on this chapter the poetics of silence will be identified as the Nameless America para-ontology. For it America is seen as a virgin, nameless territory that welcomes all and is open to all possible human endeavours. For the Nameless, the problem of America is to be approached then by searching for ways and mechanisms that would reveal a priori universal structures, principles, or material conditions that would be autonomous of cultural determinations. The utopia of the Nameless America is that by finding these universals the problem of America will be solved or at least minimised.

On the other hand I identify as American Diasporas art practices that prioritise mediation. For them the problem of America cannot be resolved by finding universals because this is denounced as impossible. For the Diasporas universals are not accessible, in fact universals are always mediated by approaches or conditions that are cultural or subjective. The Diasporas therefore stress distance, the lost of essence, origin, identity, roots, etc. Art practices of the Diasporas are developed in what I label poetics of mediation. These are poetics that deal, for example, with the specifics of the African Slave trade, the estrangement of race, or the lost of homeland by Native Americans. As such they are created as artworks from the fringes, of the oppressed, the colonised. For the Diasporas, the problem of America has to be dealt by restoration, healing, vindication, decolonisation, etc.

As the following sections will show, both the Nameless America and the Diasporas are points of access to the problem of America. As points of access both make sense of the problem of America in contrast to a pre-American world. However the Nameless and the Diasporas drift apart in how they deal with the problem of America. On one side, the Nameless emphasises the future as the promise, the hope of universal understanding. On the other side, the Diasporas emphasise the past as the context that should not be forgotten, as the edifice that sustains both the present and the future of the problem of America.



By contrast with both groups, the dancing 'I' or sonic Criollo oscillates in the present of the problem of America. It does not come from a point of access, as it has no pre-American condition. It is both the Nameless, the Diasporas and neither at the same time. It is the interaction, the friction, the becoming of the coloniser into colonised and vice versa. It has no fixed point. It is not given as a set of essential features but arises as the contradiction of agencies. It relates to multiple histories, contexts and social behaviours always being able to distance itself from them and always being dragged by them as an action. The sonic Criollo, as will be explain in this chapter, can be understood as a sonic force that demarcates both the Nameless and the Diasporas just as the earthquake demarcates mountains and valleys.

With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will be divided in two sections. The first one will describe the points of access to the problem of America. Section two will focus on the dancing 'I' or Sonic criollo, develop the notion of the menace of the earthquake, speculate about its South American para-ontology and how I have integrated it into my practice.

### **3.3. Section 1. Points of Access to America**

#### **3.3.1. The Nameless America**

As discussed on the previous chapter, the poetics of silence was proposed as a way to describe different listening strategies that have in common a silencing of the 'I'; be it through removing it completely, displacing it or estranging it. This silencing of the 'I' would allow an unmediated contact with the materiality of sound, to experience a plenitude of presence in sonic perception—a phenomenological ability of bracketing all personal intentionality to listen indiscriminately, non-hierarchically. To be open to all possible dimensions through which the sonic might propagate. Be them part of external experience and the acoustic or of internal experience such as imagination and memory.

From the first approximations of articulating such a listening in John Cage, to more recent ones in LaBelle or Voegelin there is also a common theme regarding the social implications of such listening (see Chapter Two). The silencing of the 'I' would be responsible or constructive in shaping a society that would tend to the coexistence of all, to a free society of reciprocal and universal understanding.

I believe this to be deeply tied to the point of access to the problem of America developed in the United States of America. This point of access makes sense of America as a vast, virgin land that would welcome everyone to pursue his or her own dreams. In fact, the grounds of such an understanding would be successfully articulated by authors of the literary American Renaissance of the nineteenth century such as Emerson and Thoreau as outlined below.

### **3.3.1.1. *The American Renaissance***

Let's start by succinctly considering Emerson's philosophy. Commenting on his work, 'John Dewey has recognized the sustained tone through his whole production and has called him "the one citizen of the New World fit to have his name uttered in the same breath with that of Plato." Dwelling also on the importance of Emerson's restoration to the common man of all rights of art and culture, which always tend to be perverted to mere sectarian and class uses, Dewey has found him the philosopher of democracy.' (Matthiessen, 1941, p.4). As such, Emerson's idealism is a democratic Platonism—which strongly resonates with Ashley's Neo-Platonism discussed in the previous chapter.

His democratic stance was purveyed by a deep regard for individualism. This can be seen when Emerson reconsiders the essential element to the decade of 1830-40s.

(Emerson) found the key to (the period of 1830-40s) in the fact that "the mind had become aware of itself. (...) The former generations acted under the belief that a shining social prosperity was the beatitude of man, and sacrificed uniformly the citizen to the State. The modern mind believed that the nation existed for the individual, for the guardianship and education of every man. (...) the individual is the world."(Matthiessen, 1941, p.6).

Emerson's transcendentalism may be viewed as an American out-take on romanticism—one that emphasised to new heights the importance of the individual. The individual is everything; 'the infinitude of private man' (cf. Matthiessen, 1941 pp. 5-13) is incommensurable. His unconstrained, primordial and essential relationship to the world pre-exists any other affiliation that the individual might subscribe. His existential solitude is intrinsic to the experience of reality and cannot be alienated from him—let us note here how individualism is conceptualised in a similar fashion to how silence is for the phenomenological listening described in the previous chapter.

This all-encompassing individuality is the most precious and essential element of existence, the main role of the state being to protect it. In his 1844 essay *The Poet*, Emerson describes the

relationship between thought, words and actions that are illuminating about the dimensions of his individualism. He states, 'Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.'(Emerson, 1982, p.263)

By equating words and actions he is establishing the primordial relationship of both to thought. Both words and actions are 'indifferent modes' of the embodiment of thought. Later on in the essay, he continues 'We are symbols and inhabit symbols; workmen, work, and tools, words and things, birth and death, all are emblems' (Emerson, 1982, p.270). Everything is a symbol of thought, and thought is only graspable through symbols. Thought in itself resides in 'the infinitude of private man' as divine energy, as spirit.

This solipsist individualism can be seen as the basis of America's worldview in its most pure and disembodied form. As such, equating Emerson with Plato from an American standpoint seems correct. Just as every philosopher in the Western tradition has to deal, in one way or another, with the foundational school of Platonism, Emerson's thought is the fundamental source for the construction of an American society based on individualism and freedom. However, his thought is highly ethereal and detached from contingent reality. Therefore, it would be through Henry D. Thoreau that Emerson's individuality would serve as the starting point for a new form of materialism. Emerson writing on Thoreau, described him as someone who 'was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State' (Emerson, 1982, p. 395). Indeed, Thoreau chose to maintain a distance from any cultural edifice, that made his materialism one of embodied individualism. Emerson continues, '(Thoreau) chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature.'(Emerson, 1982, p. 395)

This embodied individualism would shape up much of the American spirit that would since then form the basis of America's worldview as the New World of pluralism and democracy through individualism.

The difference that would set apart Thoreau from Emerson was based on their relationship to the body and therefore to the sensorial. Whereas Emerson conceived actions and words as symbols of thoughts, Thoreau conceived a more direct relationship with the senses. By

establishing that nature is a symbol of spirit, Emerson is establishing a representational model. As such, it is a model that limits the sensorial to the powers of the eye alone. 'What separates Thoreau most from Emerson is his interest in the varied play of all his senses, not merely of the eye' (Matthiessen, 1941, p.87). Nature might be the symbol of the spirit, but the spirit is fully embodied. It cannot be isolated from an immersion in experience, through the varied play of the senses. This is what leads Thoreau to make a remark in the mid nineteenth century that carried 'his practice such a considerable distance from his master's (Emerson): "We reason from our hands to our head."'(Matthiessen, 1941, p.87)

Thoreau's account of the relationship between thought and action (or words) was therefore less representational than Emerson's. He did not work from the eye but from all the senses. Thoreau wanted a full immersion in experience. His writings were not guided by idealist accounts, but by a 'determination never to record an abstraction, but to give himself and his reader the full impression of the event.' (Matthiessen, 1941, p.88). In the vein of this determination, it was in sounds that he found one of the most important elements for his account of events.

(Thoreau) gave his most rapt attention to sounds. These alone among his sense impressions were to have a chapter devoted to them in Walden. He can hardly find enough verbs of action to describe what they do to him. They melt and flow, and he feels himself bathed in their surge (Matthiessen, 1941, p.88).

Therefore it is in Thoreau's immersion into the senses, and the particular position he gives to sounds, that the listening of the poetics of silence (described in the previous chapter) finds its most evident foundation. Sounds, as a flow from a source to a listener, do not account for Emerson's representational model of things or neither can they serve the purpose of an abstract detachment from things. Moreover, as an evanescent flow, they are the paradigm of experience as performativity. They are the basic sensorial mechanism through which the necessary embodiment of spirit in nature is experienced.

Therefore by this material shift, Emerson's individualist Platonism was being completely conceptualised in American, New World terms. Thoreau's materialist model frames Emerson's idealist model of the 'infinite of private man' in the material encounter of the individual with his surroundings. That is to say, in the material encounter with America. America, as the 'isolated and provincial' New World compelled Emerson into an extreme form of Romanticism, yet in Thoreau

forms the basis for immersive experience. Through the senses themselves, freed from a representational model that imposes cultural hierarchies over the individual, the 'infinite of private man' is able to unfold unconstrained. Therefore, for Thoreau America would become the material reality where such individualism is conceptually possible. In fact, the 'heart of Thoreau's revolt was his continual assertion that the only true America is that country where you are able to pursue life without encumbrances.' (Matthiessen, 1941, p.79). Furthermore, Emerson himself described Thoreau in the following terms

No truer American existed than Thoreau. His preference of his country and condition was genuine, and his aversion from English and European manners and tastes almost reached contempt. (...)

What he sought was the most energetic nature; and he wished to go to Oregon, not to London. "In every part of Great Britain," he wrote in his diary, "are discovered traces of the Romans, their funeral urns, their camps, their roads, their dwellings. But New England, at least, is not based on any Roman ruins. We have not lay the foundations of our houses on the ashes of a former civilization (sic)." (Emerson, 1982, pp. 398-399)

### **3.3.1.2. *The American Experimental Tradition and the Poetics of Silence***

The American Experimental tradition of music, that is one of the main sources of the poetics silence, found in Thoreau its forefather. This is most clearly illustrated in the work and writings of John Cage. Both in the social and the musical, Thoreau contributes to the way John Cage accounts for the universal necessity of America. A universal necessity sustained in America's privileged access to a New World order in which the hierarchies of the cultures of the Old World (or the world before America) no longer apply. A New World order that can safeguard a fresh, unmediated and nonrepresentational relationship with the phenomenon of reality.

Thus defined, America secures the access to this individualism for everyone. That is to say, it allows every individual to be what he or she wants to be and not what culture imposes. Similarly, Cage's experimental music allows for sounds to 'be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments' (Cage, 1961, p.10). Cage developed his musical methods to abolish cultural hierarchies in sound so as to focus on sound in itself. The similarities between his enterprise and Thoreau's notion of music are astonishing.

(Thoreau) has much to say about the good cheap music of nature, the hum of insects, the booming of ice, the fall of a distant tree, or the voice of a neighbor singing. He recounts the endless excitement that the humming of the telegraph wire brought him. (...) he says that "one will lose no music by not

attending the oratorios and operas,” and that only in proportion as man has a poor ear for music must he go to art for it, we are faced, as so often in Thoreau, with the odd balance between the poverty of the materials of his experience and the fertility of his resource. (Matthiessen, 1941 p.89)

As Cage sets to allow ‘sounds to be themselves’, he develops his concept of silence.

‘Formerly, silence was the time lapsed between sounds.’(Cage, 1961 p. 22) However for him, in experimental music ‘silence becomes something else—not silence at all, but sounds, the ambient sounds. The nature of these is unpredictable and changing.’(Cage, 1961 p. 22-23) Therefore these sounds have been relegated to silence because of their lack of musical intention. In fact, they ‘are called silence only because they do not form part of a musical intention.’ (Cage, 1961 p. 22-23) Silence is then, for Cage, the cornerstone of the liberation of sounds from hierarchies. For Cage, through embracing silence, sounds are finally themselves and not tools for some cultural or personal construction.

Under such a definition of silence, Cage is able to make remarks that disdain Europe in much the same way that Thoreau did. ‘The difference between the Europeans and the Americans lies in that the latter include more silence in their works.’ (Cage, 1961 p.53). Cage not only grounds silence as something natural for the American composer, but something of a universal value that Europeans will have to learn to accept.

The silences of American experimental music and even its technical involvements with chance operations are being introduced into new European music. It will not be easy, however, for Europe to give up being Europe. It will, nevertheless, and must: for the world is one world now. (Cage, 1961 p.72)

The priority, the universal need of America would be sustained from America’s ability to unify the world into one by liberating individuals (or sounds) from imposed hierarchies. Silence as the frame to allow all sounds to be themselves is tantamount to America’s freedom for all individuals. Just as silence is the liberation of sounds, the namelessness of this nation of united states is therefore fundamental to—supposedly—allowing all names. This feeling of the need of Americanisation of the world, of how America would be holding the keys to a New World order would even justify U.S.A’s imperialism. This seems to be Robert Ashley’s interpretation when he states:

I don’t think we have a responsibility toward the rest of the world just because we have dominated them. (...) (When) you see Africans wearing polyester shirts and listening to stereo cassettes and drinking Coca-Cola, I don’t

think they are being Americanized, I think they are being 20th-century-ized. We are becoming 20th-century-ized at the same rate that they are.' (Ashley, 1986, p.105).

According to this understanding, the nameless America and the twentieth century would be synonyms.

Even though the most aggressive, imperialistic need of Americanisation of the world is definitely distant from the poetics of silence, it is nonetheless justified from a common theme. The namelessness of the U.S.A justifies their world dominance—their intervention in all the other 'named' parts of the world—as a supposedly neutral, non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory force that would be there, bracketing the names, to liberate and open up all possible dimensions. Although in a repulsive fashion, this is precisely the same method of silencing the 'I' that unifies the poetics of silence (see Chapter Two).

Silencing the 'I', becoming nameless, might be a beautiful utopia of coming together, of finding one common ground for reciprocal and everlasting understanding between all of humankind. It is certainly a positive ideal. As a listening sensitivity I feel it fundamental to somehow maintain it in my practice. In fact, in the vacilar experience I want to include this listening to the outside, I want to have an opportunity to explore it. At the same time the tabula rasa of the 'I' it requires will never be so, the namelessness of silencing is only an illusion. Therefore in the vacilar experience I will keep singing and doing my songs as dictated by my own expression.

What the Nameless interpretation of America provides is a neutral, ideal, fertile ground to freely define your own name without the pain, the struggles and the baggage of your old culture. Somehow this American ideal has grown and become an important narrative that has permeated other parts of the world. In fact, as Doreen Massey (2007) identifies, the celebration of London by 2005 London Mayor Ken Livingstone, is given in a similar fashion. London is praised for its rich ethnic and cultural diversity, as a city where you can live your life as you choose to do rather than as somebody else tells you to do. It welcomes multiculturalism as a universally valid principle and claims London to be somehow the future (Massey, 2007, cf.1-6). This is no doubt the disembarkment of the Nameless America utopia into European soil, perhaps just as John Cage predicted. In fact, the listening method of John Cage—as the leading mechanism to experience

sonic ontology—has continue to develop to our days in the United States, Europe and beyond as a poetics of silence (see Chapter Two). Nonetheless, all of these developments can be framed under the same para-ontology of the Nameless America.

### **3.3.1.3. Americanisation and Altermodernity**

An interesting concept of Americanisation beyond the United States is given by Bourriaud's notion of altermodernity and the radigrant artist. I would like to stop and look a little bit further into this idea of the radigrant artist, as I believe it is somehow calling for the sonic Criollo, although it does not leave its Nameless America stance. Bourriaud talks about creolisation and about queer identity in a way that I see inclined towards the sonic Criollo, but tied to the supposed universality, freedom and neutrality of the Nameless. Therefore, the radigrant artist provides an interesting case of the Nameless America agenda beyond its inauguration in the United States. In the context of multiculturalism, Bourriaud proposes the notion of the radigrant artist. This is an artist that is not concerned with origins. It 'resembles those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them, as ivy does.' (Bourriaud, 2009, p.51). As such, for the radigrant artist:

There is no single origin, but rather successive, simultaneous, or alternating acts of enrooting. While radical artists sought to return to an original place, radigrant artists take the road, and they do so without having any place to return to. Their universe contains neither origin nor end. (Bourriaud, 2009, p.52)

Bourriaud finds in creolisation the natural habitat of the radigrant. In relation to the work of artist Mike Kelley he states:

Creolization produces objects that express a journey rather than a territory, objects that are the province of both the familiar and the foreign. Thus, in the work of Mike Kelley, para religious Chinese practices, folk art, and popular culture no longer represent instances of otherness in relation to a dominant culture, but simply elsewhere or other ways, on the same basis as classical Western culture. (...) From this point of view, Mike Kelley's work is elaborated in the non-place of global creolization—in a radigrant space. (Bourriaud, 2009, p.74)

Bourriaud sees this creolisation positively as it would allow a complete freedom of movement and detachment from roots. 'Why should the fact of having been born in a place serve as a pretext for denying us the right to be merely temporary sojourners there?' (Bourriaud, 2009 p.76) Therefore creolisation amounts to freedom of movement and general liberation from the weights of history and cultural heritage. However, Bourriaud's view is nonetheless constructed by



presuppositions well rooted in the same mechanisms he is supposedly breaking from. Although some of the properties of the radicant artist he describes are close to the sonic Criollo, it is the mechanisms I describe below that place the radicant artist as an interesting case of dealing with the problem of America from a Nameless perspective, albeit a perspective that moves beyond the first conceptions of the Nameless America as specifically North American.

The radicant assumes a fixed portrayal of cultures. They are given in the world and cut in black and white. Therefore he proposes the radicant as a translator. As the bearer of creolisation, the radicant produces a new modernity, a twenty-first-century altermodernity based on translation.

This twenty-first-century modernity, born of global and decentralized negotiations, of multiple discussions among participants from different cultures, of the confrontation of heterogeneous discourses can only be polyglot. Altermodernity promises to be a translation-oriented modernity, unlike the modern story of the twentieth century, whose progressivism spoke the abstract language of the colonial West. (Bourriaud, 2009 p.43)

However, translation presupposes a realm of universal signification. If the radicant's altermodernity is based on translation, then it is a modernity that is unfolded from a meta-culture that allows for the translation from one culture to the other. For this meta-culture to be all-encompassing and therefore to allow a translation-oriented modernity, would mean that culture is accessible in its entirety from an ideal, disembodied subject. A cultural cogito that is not fixed to any of its embodied manifestations but that has equal access to all possible embodiments—be they in any cultural language. In other words, we are back into the realm of the nameless as able to frame all possible names.

Even though the goal set by Bourriaud for altermodernity might be desirable, creolisation is not such a simple task to accomplish. As human beings we do not have freewill access to different cultures. We are not immaterial cogitos untouched by material circumstances. Even though if 'the artist refuses to become a member of any fixed space-time continuum' (Bourriaud, 2009, p.57) or 'refuses to be assigned to any identifiable and irrevocable aesthetic family' (Bourriaud, 2009, p.57), the artist nonetheless is determined by a series of elements it cannot control. Following up with the metaphor of the radicant plant, for as much as the ivy will move in every direction without an essential root, it will remain being ivy: it won't translate into roses just by sharing the same soil with them. The artist's freewill might be the ivy deciding where to follow its journey, yet this freewill does

not control the constitution of the ivy artist. The way an artist paints, sings, thinks, etc. is not only the product of free will but constituted from its body and context. Creolisation as Bourriaud envisions it, is a product of a mind that could by itself mix at freewill elements of different cultures without any noise from elements that are beyond that mind's control.

What is interesting for me in Bourriaud's theory is firstly, that it illustrates how the ideals of the Nameless America have arrived to Europe, providing a clear example of the Americanisation of the West and secondly, how through it we can discover an important element of the namelessness of the poetics of silence. Put simply, that it is a point of access to the problem of America that emphasises the future. It is not about the Old, pre-American world or about roots, but about the possible, the ideal modernism that the New World could open.

### 3.3.2. American Diasporas: Poetics of Mediation

From Emerson to Bourriaud there is the common ground of an essential namelessness devoid of any external impositions—a plenitude in which the individual is open to all possible dimensions. A freedom to take the name it pleases. I see this ideal as that of a nameless point of access to America. The blank slate of listening to the outside, the radicant artist, and the plenitude of the individual are all ways to make sense of the problem of America, from a nameless frame. They welcome the diversity, the multiculturalism as an opportunity for the plasticity of human experience, for openness to all possible human endeavours. As such I find the Nameless America sensitivity a metaphor, an idealistic or simplified rendering of the New World as a promise of a better future.

The priority of a namelessness stage that would support and give rise to all the named options seems to be a compelling idea. Yet it is utterly unattainable just as listening to the outside is finally just a metaphoric stance. Namelessness is an ideal but it is only achievable through naming. There are always tensions, there are always networks of elements and relationships that make up the current situation a mediation that cannot be reduced to pure experience (see Chapter Two). The nameless stage just as sonic ontology is always mediated, there is no access to it and the stage of the para-ontological is never truly abandoned.

I group as American Diasporas a point of access to the problem of America that takes the irreducibility of para-ontology at its core. It is therefore a point of access that is contrasted to that of the Nameless America. This is an American experience that takes into consideration not the neutral, universal, clean slate that the New World condition could bring. On the contrary, it is a sensitivity built up from the real life struggles, the violence and cultural extirpations that build the New World. This concept of Diasporas is not only about being forced out of your homeland and into new territory. It is that—as in the case of Africans and Asians brought into America through the slave trade—but I also consider as part of the American Diasporas the estrangement of your own homeland, as is the case of most Native American societies.

Therefore the notion of diaspora I use is a lax definition not tied only to the geographical displacement of people but of many other experiences of displacement that have been taking place since the arrival of Europeans to the American continent, displacements that not necessarily involve the migration of people. For example, the Mapuche people in the south of Chile would not fit in a strict definition of a diaspora, yet the forceful dominance of the Chilean state over their lands, the arrival of immigrants from different areas of the world, the imposition of a new language and culture, the replacement of their natural habitat with Oregon pine and Eucalyptus trees for exporting woodchips, etc. amounts to a diaspora of consciousness. They have been completely removed from their homeland in almost every respect except geographical location. I would argue that this understanding of diaspora relates to Sara Ahmed's understanding of diasporic space as an inhabiting of space, as continuity from the body to the space around it as it is orientated. The diaspora is then experienced in the space, as estrangement of the space you can call home (Ahmed, 2006, cf. 9, 149).

I group the artistic practices that imply an American Diaspora sensitivity as the poetics of mediation. I choose this label as it highlights the impossibility of unmediated plenitude that is the basic condition of the experience of sonic ontology to be universally valid. Importantly, this description of poetics of mediation is only illustrative for the purpose of unifying the Nameless America, the American Diasporas and the sonic Criollo as three possible ways of relating to the

problem of America. However this research is not about American Diasporas per se and therefore this is not an exhaustive account of poetics of mediation.

I will give below some example of practices of poetics of mediation that deal with the problem of America from the perspective of the American Diasporas by two different ways. Firstly, I will describe two examples of practices of the poetics of mediation that experience their own body as diasporic and secondly I will describe practices that experience their homeland as diasporic.

### **3.3.2.1. Embodied Diaspora**

As examples of poetics of mediation that deal with the problem of America through the diasporic experience of their body, we can find performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and hip-hop artist Outkast.

Coco Fusco offers an interesting perspective of poetics of mediation. As a performance artist, her approach is far from the disembodied cultural appreciation of Bourriaud. For her, the body assembles identity as a material expression of the history and culture that bred it independently of the artist's will. As a Cuban Latina she views her body 'as a decorative layer that conceals a non-identity.' (Schultz, 2008 p.13). This consideration of her body comes from her identification with a people that is 'consistent throughout Latin and Central America' and that is composed in 'hybridity with indigenous populations'. A people that 'find themselves at physical, cultural, and metaphoric crossroads, because Spanish rule and the slave trade created diverse populations.' (Schultz, 2008 p.13). Her body is decorative as this history and hybridity is present in her constitution, yet it does not go deeper than a superficial layer, as underneath it there is no essential identity.

A similar example of this is also to be found in Outkast's video of the song *Hey Ya!* directed by Bryan Barber in 2003. In this video, André 3000 performs as the eight members of the fictional band *The Love Below*. The video is set on a TV studio resembling those of the sixties like the one in *Ed Sullivan's show*. There is a huge audience of girls screaming and being 'possessed' by *The Love Below's* music. Throughout the video, the screaming of the girls makes it difficult to hear the song clearly. The setting and the screaming make a clear reference to the invasion by British bands of the U.S.A. in the sixties, of which The Beatles are the most famous example. In *Hey Ya's*

video all the characters are black people except for a few such as the TV presenter. The TV presenter is a white male with a British accent. The video is therefore a complete reversal of the British invasion of the sixties. The song itself has a clean melodic line with a strummed guitar and a cheerful vibe that also resembles the music of white British bands from the sixties.

For me, this video and song are a brilliant portrayal of hybridity and of the body as a decorative layer. White British bands influence the music, yet at the same time these bands were actually drawing from the styles of black American musicians. There is a certain amount of irony in the way André 3000 performs the different characters and in the music itself. They point to a lack of essential, fixed truths. They point to a diaspora, a displacement of personal identity. An audience of black girls dressed in 2000's style behaving like sixties' white girls. André 3000 performs all the musician's rolls with very distinct personalities and styles. There is no fixed point, no homeland. In this video there is a reorientation of culture in which black American musicians invade a British society and in which the black behave like white.

As devoid of a central essence, Coco Fusco's work is also based on a journey of creolisation, yet this is not the journey of the radicant artist's freewill. Similar to Outkast's video, it is a journey of how different cultures and histories are manifested and performed by bodies. Writing about her collaborator Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Fusco describes what she terms 'transcultural experience'. With similar implications to the creolisation of altermodernity, this transcultural experience 'evokes a view of contemporary society in which the social formations of different historical periods and cultures interact.' (Fusco, 1991, p.46). From this interaction 'a new generation of multicultural, multiracial, "deterritorialized" border citizens emerges as primary agent.' (Fusco, 1991, p.46)

Dealing with these issues, Gómez-Peña and Fusco performed *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*. This piece exhibits both of them as fictitious Amerindians at display in a cage. This performance mimics 'the real history of ethnographic exhibition of human beings that has taken place in the West over the past five centuries.' (Fusco, 1994, p.143). It also draws inspiration from a fictional story by Franz Kafka of 'a man from the Gold Coast of Africa who had lived for several years on display in Germany as a primate.' (Fusco, 1994, p143). Fusco was interested by that

story as an account that, even though it was 'fictitious and created by a European writer', it 'stressed the irony of having to demonstrate one's humanity' (Fusco, 1994, p.143).

The authors 'were intrigued by this legacy of performing the identity of an Other for a white audience' (Fusco, 1994, p.143). In this sense, their approach relates to the concept of mimicry developed by Homi Bhabha.

In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'. (Bhabha, 1994, p.90)

In effect, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* successfully embodies the play of power between a Same and an Other that hides no essence. Thus it works through mimicry to create a tension between an almost non-human exotic Other and a human Same.

Fusco's embodied mimicry proposes a material approach to creolisation that considers it from the flesh of those constituted by its violent history. Contrary to the freewill creolisation of the *radicant*, it is built from a particular condition that was not chosen by its protagonists. Bourriaud sees this approach with caution, as it would 'obliterate any possibility of dialogue among individuals who do not share the same history or cultural identity.' (Bourriaud, 2009, p.25). Therefore, for him the creolisation proposed by practices and theories such as those of Fusco or Bhabha fails 'to elaborate a critique of modernist ideology that does not lead to an absolute relativism or to a piling up of "essentialisms."' (Bourriaud, 2009, p.25). Be this so, what they stress is that the freewill of a *radicant cogito* cannot set them aside.

In this sense, Fusco, Gómez-Peña and Outkast provide experiences of the problem of America from the perspective of American Diasporas. They provide examples of poetics of mediation that through the experience of the body emphasise the displacement of identity, that the pure is unreachable, and therefore that there is no ontological access without para-ontology.

### **3.3.2.2. *Diaspora and Homeland***

As examples of poetics of mediation that deal with the problem of America through the diasporic experience of their homeland, we can find Colombian Picos, Jamaican Sound Systems, and the Mapuche rapper Beto Bustos Paillan.

Colombia's Picos and the Jamaican Dancehall Sound Systems are musical forms that share a lot in common and that can be described together for these illustrative purposes. One of the unique characteristics of these musical forms is the use of the sound system itself as its main instrument. The sound system is for Henriques 'Africa's musical gifts to its diaspora' (Henriques, 2011, p.13). In sound system events, music instead of being performed by live musicians comes from recordings that are played back through the system, with the addition of effects and live vocals. The fact that the music is playback offers a starting point of displacement, of not being in direct contact with the music's essence. The African roots of the music are experienced as far away. The origin is not present but mediated.

The fact that the recordings emphasise the backing tracks (bass and drums) brings forth the background, it 'turns the canvas inside out' (Kim-Cohen, 2016 p.53). At the same time, this music is heavily grounding you. With an emphasis on the low end, it is a bass materialism that anchors you to the ground. The rootedness of the music is illustrated by the dancers and their movements in contrast to those of ballet 'that aspire to have as little contact with the ground for as long as possible.' (Henriques, 2011 p.18) That is to say, the heavy bass and drums enroot you to a sound system that is nonetheless mediating a homeland that is not accessible. Therefore, both Colombian Picos and Jamaican Sound Systems are diasporic in relation to unreachable African roots.

A final example I want to bring forward as an example of a diaspora in your own homeland, is from the Mapuche's hip-hop scene. Beto Bustos Paillan is a rapper from the Araucania region that goes under the name Chicha con Harina or Don Chicha (mister Chicha). He gained some notoriety on YouTube in 2011 with the release of his album *Chupilka*. This is a homemade album, freely distributed that can be downloaded from sites such as Mediafire.

In an interview on 2011, Don Chicha claims that Chile has no identity (Bustos-Paillan, 2011). Yet his hip-hop music is not sung from the perspective of a Chilean. He is a Mapuche, with lyrics that criticises the Chilean state for taking over his homeland. In his song *El criollo y el Indígena* he laments the palm trees that have been planted in the squares of the Araucanía (by Chilean authorities) and that suffer as they try to reach the Caribbean where they belong. 'In Chile there is a country that is not recognised' he sings in *Temuco Harinao*. He is a Mapuche forced into being a Chilean, with his ancestral identity submerged and unrecognised by a Chile without identity.

His criticism is not a violent or obvious criticism but is manifested through commenting his experience of estrangement on his own homeland. The most popular song of the album is *Chicha con Harina* that has a video on YouTube with over 300,000 views. Chicha is a rural wine that might be compared to cider and that is popularly drunk with toasted flour (harina). This drink is the name of his main song, the name of the album—*Chupilka* being the Mapudungun word for chicha con harina— and also the name he goes by. Also most of the songs have references to the drink.

In the song *Chicha con harina* he praises the drink as being able to connect him with his ancestors, as bringing his people, the peñi (brothers) together. He raps that chupilka inspires lucidity, vitality and activates a *lost sense*. Drunkenness here acquires an essential way of being connected to something that is not present in sober reality. As the Mapuche have lost their homeland, it is through drinking chupilka that the non-identity they have been forced to is broken and they can reconnect with their lost homeland.

In the *Chicha con Harina* video we get a grasp of the everyday rural life of his community. We see their agricultural activities, we see the apples from which the chicha will be made, we see some Mapuche people toasting the flour, we see them preparing the chupilka and drinking it.

He sings mainly in Spanish but from time to time adds some Mapudungun words and concepts. His hip-hop style is close to the 'gangsta' style of hip-hop. With dark beats, heavy scratching and insistent string loops. The music is therefore reminiscent of Coolio's *Gangsta's Paradise*. However there is nothing 'gangsta' about Don Chicha. He is not an intimidating character and his music is not calling for violence or illegal activity, but calls for sharing and living in an



ancestral community. He is not singing from the shadows in some dodgy building. He is in a rural, familiar setting. He is sharing drinks with old people, perhaps his grandparents, and with friends. His ideal is not that of the rapper that wants to sing in front of the most expensive cars and be surrounded by luxuries and women. He sings in front of his yoke of oxen and wants to share chupilka with all his community: as the diasporic experience of reconnecting with their lost homeland.

*Chicha con Harina* is not the only Mapuche artist working along these lines, but there is a whole social movement that has, during the last ten years or so, been taken shape in both Argentinian and Chilean ex-Mapuche territories. This hip-hop movement is expressing the Mapuche's political activism of resistance and historic demands through a musical language internationally recognised as music of resistance (Rekedal, 2014).

Colombian Picos, Jamaican Sound Systems, Oukast, Coco Fusco and *Chicha con Harina* provide examples of artistic practices of poetics of mediation. As such, they are practices that emphasise distance or the inability to communicate directly or without interference to their origins, identity or essence. Importantly, this mediation is not brought up by free will, but rather they are forced into this mediation by their own body constitution or in relation to their homeland. They experience the problem of America from the sufferings and histories that brought them up to be named as who and where they are. This name is not voluntary and is not optional but an inescapable mediation that clearly states that para-ontology cannot be suspended.

So far, I have identified the Nameless America and the American Diasporas as two points of access to the problem of America, one from the perspective off ontology and the other from para-ontology. I identify the problem of America as a frame from which both these opposed stances can be comprehended and from where their reconciliation can be understood, in the form of the dancing 'I' or sonic Criollo. As stressed before, I am not interested in the strict truth or historic accuracy of my account but in it as sensitivity. In this sense, and as will become clearer in the next chapter, this American account is in itself part of the dancing element of vacilar.

As I take up the microphone or put my hands on the keyboard, as I make choices between harmonies, noises and sound sources, I want to articulate and experience a reversibility, a continuous reorientation of multiple agencies both arising from me and coming towards me. From my own personal experience I cannot help but feel this to be embedded in the relationship that I can establish to cultures, location and history from my South American standpoint. I identify this standpoint as that of the sonic Criollo which for me is explained through a recognition of the two points of access to America I described above. The sonic Criollo as I understand it, is not a point of access, but present action. As such, it might be identified as friction between the nameless America and the American Diasporas as will be explored in the following section.

### 3.4. Part 2. Sonic Criollo

The dancing 'I' appears as the pressure between opposite positions, between doing an action and having an action done to you. As part of the vacilar sensitivity it turns dance into doubt as it oscillates in ambiguity, contradiction, and the reversibility of orientations. When understood as the sonic Criollo, the dancing 'I' is situated as the present of the problem of America from a South American para-ontology. As sonic Criollo, it gives no priority to the past or the future of the problem of America and entangles and disorients the future and the past. Therefore, it is both an American Diaspora and a Nameless America and at the same time it is neither. By vacilar, it oscillates being and not-being to provide reconciliation between the para-ontological and the ontological for the sonic arts. In fact, the sonic Criollo could be understood as sensitivity to the pressure between the opposite positions of the para-ontological and the ontological.

From the problem of America, we have seen that the ontological is identifiable as the Nameless America. The Nameless tries to solve the problem of America via a wilful detachment of culture or personal traits, a suspension of your name that would open up an unbiased terrain from which universal understanding could be achieved. As such, the Nameless understands of America as the promise of a better future for all by a neutral and natural access to the ontological. In the sonic arts, the main mechanism through which the poetics of silence that is associated with it works, is listening as a silencing of the 'I' to open up the possibility of a natural-neutral sonic ontology.

On the other hand, the Diasporas face the problem of America from a position of forceful imposition. As such, their sensitivity to the problem of America does not stress the promise of a future of universal understanding, but the inability to forget the past. The scars of the past are not healed and names cannot be suspended. Personal and cultural traits survive beyond the actions of the will and mediate any approximation to what is considered universal, natural or neutral. As poetics of mediation, sonic experience is always enmeshed in relationships that cannot leave the realm of the para-ontological.

### 3.3.1. Methods in my practice

As the dancing 'I' of the problem of America, the sonic Criollo is the dance, the present friction that appears between the Nameless and the Diaspora. In my practice the sonic Criollo is enlivened by simultaneously enforcing and displacing self-expression. One of the first methods I used for this was by tuning my songs in just intonation. As opposed to equal temperament, the distance between semitones in just intonation is irregular: sometimes they are larger and others they are smaller than equal temperament's. The latter's regular intervals provide stable relationships throughout the twelve tones. All intervals—a minor second, a perfect fifth, a major third, etc.—are always equal regardless of the tones involved. As equals, transpositions from one tonal centre to a different one in no way change the characteristics of the harmony. In contrast, just intonation is not a specific system but a law for the construction of systems. Therefore there are multiple possible tunings depending on what route is taken. The basic law of just intonation is that the ratios between tones respect the ratios of whole numbers. In its traditional use, this means that the tones are 'purer' in that the vibrations of frequencies are physically congruent. Therefore, a 'pure' fifth would be more in tune than an equal temperament one.

The problem with just intonation is that the tuning systems created strictly by it tend to be impractical. By working with only whole number ratios you must start with one fundamental tone from which all the rest are derived. Ultimately this means that certain tonalities become dissonant inside a system. For example a tuning based on C will work well inside diatonic harmony and modulations into close tonal centres such as F or G. However transposing to F sharp might be out of the question if the tonal quality is to be preserved. The solution to this would be to either tune

the instruments for each piece of a repertory, or having a repertory that uses the same tonal centre throughout with very little harmonic modulation.

In my case I was driven into using just intonation precisely because of this limitation. My songs use modal or tonal harmonies in a variety of different tonal centres. I tune my digital piano to Fokker's twelve-tone 7-limit just scale and always have C as the centre tone, irrespectively of the harmony of the song. This makes certain tonal centres and harmonic variations to have 'pure' tones and others to be rarefied. As rarefied, even though the harmonic logic of the song might ask for certain relationships to be experienced as rests or resolutions, the tuning gives them uncertainty or ambivalence. In fact this displaces my self-expression. Even though I am willingly trying to do a song, the tuning system interferes with it in ways that take it elsewhere. The dancing 'I' appears as the fissure between my ideal song and the song as given by the just intonation system.

My use of just intonation is a way to play with the sensitivity of openness of the Nameless, while at the same time retaining my 'I', my name. As described above, the contrast of the tonal centres as given by harmony and the constraints of a just intonation tuning system create a tension, a disparity between my expression and something that escapes it.

Similarly, the in situ practice of the songscape (see Chapter One) was organised as a way to interact with sounds around me in a coastal town and its surroundings. The motivation to interact with these sounds came from understanding them as being interruptions and obstacles to my songs. There was in no sense a search for portraying the beauty of the soundscape or an idyllic feeling of communion with Nature. Moreover, there were technical and practical constraints in doing this in situ interaction. The amount of studio equipment I could take and battery life of it was limited, plus there was the struggle of carrying all of that on my back through steep paths under the sun.

As part of building songscape sonic traps (see Chapter One), these difficulties were scripted. Welcomed precisely as a way to open up, of silencing my expressive 'I'. Of having to deal with issues extraneous to performing songs in order to fracture and position them outside their comfort zone. As such the practice would oscillate between expressing the 'I' and an openness to

its outside. Therefore this method was a strategy to work in the direction of reconciling the nameless utopia with the context that names me as acting a particular 'I'.

The dancing 'I' is a mechanism that is in-between actions I do willingly and actions that happen to me. As this practice based research has developed, it is this dancing 'I' what is ambiguously leading all my creative decisions yet it is also what always escapes the definite forms my works take. In fact, the dancing 'I' is always pushing away from the works and yet it is only enacted in them. If for example some of the *songscape Improvisations* described in the first chapter might sound as having a South American rock style, it is the dancing 'I' both what desires this music and at the same time it is what will not identify with it. It is, so to speak, both the call of my tribe, of my heritage and upbringing and simultaneously it is distancing from it. Importantly this distancing is only possible through an immersion in the music. That is to say, the dancing 'I' acts the music, it identifies with the South American rock by singing and playing instruments. However, by committing to the music, the dancing 'I' is also breaking from it through the sonic trap. This is a condition that emphasises how dancing is both what the 'I' does and what happens to the 'I' and also the acknowledgement that the dance will stop—as described at the beginning of this chapter.

This condition of the sonic Criollo is to be understood in relationship with an entanglement of time that takes into account the points of access to the problem of America: the Nameless and the Diasporas. As described above, the Nameless is irrevocably compromised with the future of the problem of America and the Diasporas with its past. The sonic Criollo is not committed exclusively to either and brings both forward as the present of the problem of America. As present it gives no priority to the past or the future and is unclear about the boundaries between them. For example, going back to the South American rock element of the *songscape improvisations*, if seen as a formed work, as a given musical expression, then the dancing 'I' is not there anymore. The music style is the trace the dance left behind. On the other side that music style was pursued by the action of the 'I' and it remains as trace only because of the action of the 'I'. When listening to the South American rock element then the intentions of the 'I' are enlivened and provide openness to a possible future: A possible future in which perhaps South American rock will control the whole

of the *songscape improvisation*. However this musical element is never present alone, but entangled in a sonic trap.

Therefore the dancing 'I' is always present in my practical work as an unclear fissure between the past and the future. This condition is what allows elaborating its properties as the menace of the earthquake—as I will do below. In order to arrive to the menace of the earthquake I will proceed by giving my understanding of what sonic means. With this definition in mind it will become evident that I use the earthquake as a sonic experience and not as a metaphor. Indeed, the earthquake—as an energy that disturbs and shakes the tectonic plate—is the adequate sonic experience to describe the properties of the sonic Criollo. Moreover, the sonic experience of the earthquake is perhaps a cornerstone condition for the formation of the sensitivity of vacilar.

### 3.3.2. Sonic Contradiction and the menace of the earthquake

The sonic Criollo is somewhere in between the Nameles and the Diasporas. Even more, the criollo does not precede the relation between the two but it is the result of their interaction. As mediation between them, the criollo does not occupy a position in itself. It is a silent agency that flows, destroys and establishes the in-between as the contradiction between the other two. As stated in the introduction of this text, contradiction in vacilar opens up confusion and ambiguity. It is a contradiction that is not the clear demarcation between being and not being—a contradiction that is at the basis of logic. The concept of contradiction I use here goes further than logical contradiction. The clear demarcation between being and not being is what allows logic to say if A contradicts B then something cannot be A and B at the same time. However by having that clear demarcation, logic's contradiction only works inside a system that can clearly identify A and B. It is therefore for me a weak concept of contradiction. Instead of this, a strong concept of contradiction contradicts the whole system. The clear demarcation is erased in ambiguity and the reversibility of orientations. It is unclear if A is not B and vice versa. This strong contradiction is then not about being or not being but it is about being uncertain if being or not being. Therefore, instead of depicting strong contradiction by logical notions such as coherence or unity, it is through sonic notions that we can experience its confusing presence as propagation through a medium, in the way sound does or more clearly as earthquakes do. Strong contradiction is a sonic contradiction of

disorientation, ambiguity, and reversibility. As an experience of sonic contradiction, the dancing 'I' is enacted in the ambiguity that disorients the limits between the freewill of an 'I' and how that 'I' is the way it is by elements beyond its control.

Sonic contradiction can be understood in relationship to a critique I develop of the concept of the sonic elaborated by authors such as Christopher Cox (2013) and Salomé Voegelin (2014). In short, for these authors the essential property of the sonic is flux: a continuous flowing that is always taking shape. I agree with that description yet I understand that this flux is only graspable through sonic contradiction. That is to say flux is never perceivable in itself but flux is only a deduction that arises from sonic contradiction. I will expand on this below. Whereas the access to the flux in itself would privilege the sonic as providing a natural and universal ontological experience, the sonic as contradiction is ambiguous between the ontological and the para-ontological.

Describing the principles of what he terms sonic philosophy, Christopher Cox proposes that sound 'affirms an ontology of flux in which objects are merely temporary concretions of fluid processes' (Cox, 2013). As such 'this flux ontology replaces objects with events' (Cox, 2013). For him 'the sonic flux is not just one flow among many; it deserves special status insofar as it so elegantly and forcefully models and manifests the myriad fluxes that constitute the natural world.' (Cox, 2013). This sonic flux encompasses other understandings of the sonic such as Voegelin's idea of listening to the 'thing thinging' (Voegelin, 2014), to Henriques' notion of propagation (Henriques, 2011) and outside sound studies, also to Barad's notion of agential realism discussed before. This notion of the becoming offers an insight into the present as the point in which whatever is, is in the process of reconfiguring into something else. As such, the sonic flux describes the nature of the present as the paradigm of that that is not fixed and always in action.

Even though this is partly the case, the emphasis in the flux is to me oblivious to the dynamics of silencing the 'I' and shushing (see Chapter Two). To my understanding, flux needs to be complemented by something else—namely, by the inevitable contradiction intrinsic to sonic experience. If the sonic could be understood by flux alone, then no fixed 'I' would remain. That is to say, cultural and personal traits would only be secondary attributes of the flux. As ultimately no 'I'

would survive the flux, the present would always be inclined in favour of silencing, in favour of the Nameless: in favour of a natural and universal ontological realm. However, I believe the sonic solely identified as flux is leaving behind important properties of it. These properties are evident in one of the strongest sonic experiences I have experienced: the experience of an earthquake.

The earthquake, just as sound, is a wave of energy that is experienced as it pressures its medium. For the strong earthquake of February 27th 2010 in Chile I could first hear a strong bass coming from below the ground, this bass then grew and the whole room started to shake with such intensity, that I could feel the whole room swinging back and forth. The earthquake is sonic dominance that not only grounds you as Henriques (2011) suggest is the case with Jamaican sound systems but is a sonic dominance that also detaches you from the ground. The mechanism of the experience of an earthquake is the same as that of experiencing sound but in a bigger scale. That is to say, a sound could be understood as the experience of a micro-earthquake. Therefore, any consideration of the sonic, should take into account the experience of the earthquake as a stronger experience of sonic flux than sound. Considering a sound—or a micro-earthquake—as the paradigm of the sonic, one could stay with the conclusion that the sonic is simply a flux. However, if one acknowledges that the earthquake is also a sonic experience, then earthquakes reveal the sonic not as the experience of flux per se but of flux as sonic contradiction.

An earthquake is far from the description of the sonic as continuous flow. It fragments, it ruins and transforms in multiple ways. More importantly, the earthquake is never experienced per se but only through its manifestation in other materialities. I believe this can be expanded to the experience of the sonic in any of its manifestations. What the earthquake brings forward is the fact that the sonic is not only the paradigm of flux, as Cox (2013) would have it, but of strong contradiction. The earthquake shakes, vibrates through other materials articulating their fissures and separations, their lack of unity, our incapacity to make sense of them as a unified flow, indeed it emphasises their separateness.

The earthquake is an experience of the sonic as flux yet it is perceived only through discrete differences. That is to say, the earthquake unveils that flow is perceived not by flow itself but by difference. If flow would not be experienced by discrete or compartmentalised differences,



then there would be no way of perceiving it. In fact, there would be no way of acknowledging how it changes or flows. Therefore the only way of perceiving flow is by sequential differences, something which is evident in film's most fundamental technique: the sequencing of still images to give the impression of movement.

In an earthquake our perception of the solid is disoriented, what was taken to be the ground is swinging and instead of supporting you is pushing you. The earthquake creates confusion between what is and what is not. It is therefore an experience of sonic contradiction and as such cannot establish a system that clearly demarcates what is and what is not. Indeed, it provides the basis for the experience of the sonic not as flux, but acknowledges that flux is only perceivable by strong contradiction.

From my Chilean context, the earthquake is an important element in providing a starting point for developing the sensitivity of vacilar and the entanglement between self-expression and its outside. The earthquake is a real menace that, as in other parts of the world, you have to learn to live with. It is the menace of the solid turning into fluid, of destroying what is fixed and static. Beyond the description of the sonic as a flow, the earthquake forces a consideration of the sonic as destruction and forcefully limiting the ability to live your own intentions. It is a powerful and energetic bass that does not ground you—as that of the sound system—but destroys you. As the present, it is not only a flow from the past to the future but their inherent contradiction. Thus, the present of the earthquake is constantly experienced as the past and future menace of destruction. In this sense it relates to the notion of disaster as always differed—as always past, as a stop to becoming, as the impossibility of a future in which to think (Blanchot, 1995).

The menace of the earthquake is then a sonic sensitivity that I believe to be at the heart of the intuition that motivates this practice. The menace therefore starts from the real sonic experience of earthquakes, yet it is also an overarching force through which I conceptually make sense of the vacilar experience from my Chilean context—not only geologically. Culturally, for some of us Chileans, we are part of the West and culturally identify with paradigms of the U.S.A. and Europe. However this consideration is menaced by at least two elements. Firstly, there is the geographical location of Chile. If we are part of the West, then our cultural centre is geographically

far away from us. This inevitably makes us to be away from ourselves: our Same is an Other. Therefore our identification as Westerners can only come as an estrangement of our bodily location. Secondly, the West does not consider us Westerners. While in Chile you might believe to be a part of it, yet this is not the case when you are in the Western centres. Where, at least talking from my own experience, our culture is hardly known and thus considered an exotic Other.

Historically, our independence could be considered as a frustrated attempt. In fact, the independence movement was set to free us from the Spanish government so that we could govern and decide for ourselves. Yet, far from being that the case, what happened was that the independence opened the doors for new colonisations. During the late nineteenth century (1879-1883) an 'independent' Chile went to war against Peru and Bolivia in what resulted as Chile making enemies of them until this day, all to secure access to saltpetre for British business (Robles, 2015; Lynch 2010). In the twentieth century our independence has been closely monitored and intervened by the U.S.A. with the imposition of dictator Pinochet as the most recent and dramatic example—as has been admitted by the CIA in recent years (CIA, 2000). Therefore, our action of self-determination has been frustrated and allowed its opposite to flourish.

Finally, perhaps in a more poetic context, I believe there are other elements that help me shape the menace of the earthquake from my experience as a Chilean. The fact that for us the West is to the East, or that our calendar follows the festivities of the Northern Hemisphere, are among such elements. For example, we are accustomed to celebrating Christmas with all its winter imaginary in one of the hottest time of the year. Moreover the traditional food for that date is “pan de Pascua” (perhaps brought by the German colonisers of the south of Chile?) which is clearly a winter cake that is far from suiting the appetite of the dry heat of the season.

All of these elements, among others, I sum up as the menace of the earthquake. They are constantly reminding us of the vulnerability of our objects, of the fragility of our notions, that our constructions and fixed essences are going to be destroyed. Yet this menace is only experienced through those constructions and essences. Therefore the menace of the earthquake is the activity that configures personal-expression and its outside as the dancing 'I'. Identity then becomes a sonic, present action taking place as the contradiction of things—material or otherwise—but not

ascribable to any of them in particular. The menace of the earthquake is present as the dancing of the sonic Criollo.

What interests me is how this sonic Criollo oscillates in the problem of America. Both keeping its 'I' and opening to its outside, both being culturally defined and bodily aware of its history as the Diasporas and pursuing the American utopia as the Nameless. Personally, I choose to sing my songs in Spanish. I choose to play the piano, I choose to label my music as Andean rock, I choose to be the producer of recordings by myself even though this might jeopardize the quality of the final mix. I choose to allow mistakes throughout. I could sync some of my equipment via midi, however I might not do it and allow for the beat to get loose. I choose not to fix the signal latency in recording to the computer even though it messes up the 'groove' of a song, as different tracks are recorded in different moments. All of this I choose in the face of allowing other voices in my actions, of allowing other agencies to take precedence over my intentions. My intentions are therefore never materialised into their ideal object, they are always confronted with their outside. An unclear bound is maintained between these forces and what survives is the friction, the contradiction or, in other words, the menace of the earthquake.

The inexorable menace of the earthquake is a sensitivity to the inevitable fragmentation, collapse, and reshaping of the solid. The destruction and the regeneration brought by the mysterious and ungraspable sonic energy of the earthquake is what allows for a reversibility of the solid and the fluid. A reversibility that—at least in Chile—transcends the geological and touches every aspect of life: the East is the West; Winter festivities are in the summer; Americans whose name has been appropriated by others; colonisers turned colonised; our cultural centre is away from us and we are neither Native, European, nor "Americans" (from the United States that is); we are in the constant menace of being not who we are yet being who we are. This menace disorients the limits of certainty and entangles the past with the future: it is the enactment of a dancing 'I' that from a South American para-ontology opens up to an ontological certainty.

This chapter has primordially focus on the understanding of the problem of America and the two points of access to it, and explained the dancing 'I' as the sonic Criollo or the menace of the earthquake. As such, this chapter provides the frame to understand the dancing 'I' and some of its

fundamental properties. The full scope of this South American para-ontology will be developed further in the next chapter once the concept of the horizon of silence is explained as part of the integral experience of vacilar. The conclusion of this dissertation will also provide some new perspectives on the idea of the menace of the earthquake and the appendix provides some more insights on the sonic Criollo from my Chilean background—describing examples of artists that allow me to construct the idea of the sonic Criollo, and how this idea differs from traditional notions of the Criollo.

## Chapter Four: To Vibrate

### 4.1. The Songscape: from the V Region Songscape to London to Romper el Silencio

In this last chapter I will attempt a unification of the elements trap, doubt and dance as the experience of vacilar. This integral experience of vacilar is conceptualised by the last meaning of vacilar: vibration. In physics, vibration is measured as a wave that oscillates from its highest amplitude value (maximum positive) to its lowest amplitude value (maximum negative) through time. This peak-to-peak amplitude change is clear and easy to measure for simple waves like sine waves. However for complex waveforms the measuring of peak values becomes ambiguous. This is because there is an arbitrary decision to be made to establish the centre of the signal as either the middle point between the maximum positive and maximum negative or of both values relative to the mean. This ambiguity in the measurement of the centre of a complex vibration provides a good starting point for the conceptualisation of how the experience of vacilar integrates dance, doubt and trap.

Attempting such a conceptualisation in one paragraph could be as follows: A sonic trap triggers the vibration of a signal that entangles self-expression and its outside. The signal changes through time oscillating as a complex waveform between its amplitude peaks, which are identified as dance and doubt. Therefore the entanglement is produced because the centre or demarcation between dance and doubt is ambiguous and cannot be objectively defined.

The discussion will focus mainly on how the different notions and methods unearthed on the previous chapters—pertaining trap, dance and doubt—are integrated for the development of the work *Romper el Silencio* (*Break the silence*) and for the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk*. As the vibration that integrates the elements of vacilar is unfolded, the notions of rumours and the *horizon of silence* arise as clarifying aspects of the integral experience of vacilar. That is to say, rumours and the horizon of silence are implicated in the sensitivity of vacilar, yet they are not identifiable as pertaining to only one of its elements (doubt, trap or dance) but arising from the oscillation or vibration between them.

In order to unfold rumours and the horizon of silence, this chapter is structured as a description of the process of creation and realisation of the work *Romper el Silencio* at Phonos Foundation in Barcelona (February 23rd, 2017) and from the conclusion of this realisation, the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* arises as a work with a different methodology for the experience of vacilar and that, as I will explain, is more appealing for me as a creator.

*Romper el Silencio* is a work that is both an environment and a composition (see USB stick). It is both a space to be explored through listening and a performance in time and presents the final stage of the *songscape* project. As explored in Chapter One, the *songscape* is the technique of building sonic traps to entangle self-expression and its outside. As *songscape* project then, we can encompass all the developments of this practice based research up to this point.

Recapitulating, the *songscape* was initially conceived as a real-time interaction between song improvisation and real environments in Chile. From that experience it grew into a variety of works that I developed in London. With improvisations, studio compositions, poetry and video formats; different modes to trap the contradictory experience of self-expression and opening to its outside were explored. Weighting equally acoustic sounds and sonic agencies arising from memories, imagination, and all forms of perception and stimuli as possible—both from the outside world and internal experience (see Chapter One).

Building from the previous chapters, a short summary of what the project of the *songscape* is, encompassing all its stages from Chile's V region to its last stage as the work *Romper el Silencio* could be as follows: *Songscaping* is the experience of an ambiguity between listening to the outside and the performance of self-expression. Self-expression is schematically understood as what 'I' intend. It is what 'I' choose according to personal values and priorities, to my para-ontology. This 'I' constructs a trajectory, a narrative of itself. Regardless of what the content of this self-expression might be, if personified as sounds occurring in a space, it will always be adjoined by other sounds also occurring. These other sounds interrupt those of self-expression, limit them or interact with them in a variety of ways as foreign to self-expression. As such they open the consideration of sonic ontology.

The experience of self-expression and its outside is given by the interaction of multiple sonic agencies; different intentionalities that are in continuous generation, development, decay. This interaction is an intra-action—of a material/discursive, human/non-human continuum—through which self-expression and the outside comes to be perceivable as sonic contradiction (which is not to be confused with logic's contradiction as is explained in the previous chapter). Indeed, this sonic contradiction is responsible for the perception of the sonic as a flowing continuum and therefore sonic contradiction reveals flux to be only a metaphor and not ontological—this is explored in relationship to the menace of the earthquake in Chapter Three.

## **4.2. Description of Work: From the Acoustic to the Sonic**

*Romper el Silencio* consists of a sound environment of multiple speakers, three video projections, and two live stations: the 'piano-ear' and the vocal-rig. With these elements a listening-performance is enacted in which—amongst others—underwater recordings, conversations with fishermen, fragments of songs and autonomous computer processes create a space of rumours, resonance and uncertainty between a personal expression and a listening to an environment outside of it. It invites the audience/visitors to walk along the room, to listen from different positions, to seat on the floor and listen with eyes close, to listen looking at the performance, the videos, the place, etc. During the performance/exhibition visitors can enter or leave the room at any point.

As such the songscape is ambiguously a space to be discovered and an action that creates the space. It is a songscaping through which both the self-expressing 'I' and the environment are configured as a continuum that is mediated by inner, inevitable contradiction.

### 4.2.1. Rumours: Audio & Video Systems

Multiple agencies reside inside the actions of the songscape: of recording on a beach I've been going to all my life, of improvising melodies on a sunny sandbank after carrying the weight of multiple equipment, of doing a music performance in London with these materials, etc. In *Romper el Silencio* these multiple agencies are encountered as rumours, as I will explain in this section. Like a vacilar that traps dance and doubt, rumours entangle true with false; they are both of the environment and of me. Indeed they are listened as part of the environment and simultaneously as self-listening as I have to construct what is real about the rumour: what part or parts of it I accept

as objective. Rumours propose a reversibility of the self since what I perceive as coming towards me from the outside is perhaps not so but a creation I am putting out there and vice versa (Iddon, 2016, cf. 55-72).

To achieve a construction of rumours, different sampled materials from the in situ interaction, from studio improvisations, compositions, live performances and from the *London Transport listening exercise* are combined to create general environments. These are played through a system of four large speakers in the hall—that in Phonos was 365 squared metres. These speakers are roughly placed in the four corners of the hall, yet they were arranged in different ways, such as on ground level, facing the wall, on stands, etc. The desired effect was to play with the acoustic properties of the space instead of producing a perfectly balanced surround system. Such systems work to represent an ideal acoustic space that is placed on top of the real space, in the detriment of its particular acoustic properties. As such, for a quadrophonic or other multichannel configuration there are better seats, there are 'sweet spots'. In *Romper el Silencio*, the speakers are positioned without following an ideal, preconceived acoustic space but with the idea to interact with the acoustic properties of the hall they are placed in. As such, any reflections, any unwanted sounds that might occur in the space become rumours in their own terms. Consequently, the acoustic environment fills the hall integrating any sonic agency present as part of it. To accentuate this, different positions for the speakers were explored—in fact their positions were changed throughout the exhibition/performance—in order to interact with the acoustic properties of the hall, the positions of the different visitors, the sounds that are brought along by them (such as coughing, mobile phones, chatting, etc.) and their predisposition to participate and listen. By not having speakers in a precise, measured shape, the speakers are audio sources in a space without a specific synchronicity or field design. This way they create a general ambient not by reproducing an engineered virtual space but by explicitly interacting with the acoustic materiality they are a part of.

Therefore this quadraphonic system is not so much a system but four distinct sources of sound in space. Similarly, a different stereo system of smaller speakers, function as two additional sources in the space—it is important to clarify that the difference between these two sound systems



is functional for the creation of the work but not necessarily relevant for the listener. In Chapter Two I mentioned that one of the outcomes of the *London Transport listening exercise*, was the need to develop a different, shushed voice. For *Romper el Silencio* I developed this voice through the writing of poetry and thoughts. I recorded a selection of these written texts and divided them into small fragments. This material was the main element of the environment for the stereo system of smaller speakers. These were placed in a diagonal line taking the centre of the hall as an axis. This 'poetry environment' was designed in Max/MSP with specific sample banks. The main bank consisted of the spoken word fragments. The other two banks had small fragments of V region sounds and were played at a lower level. However these V region recordings did not come from a specific in situ interaction. They came from an accidental recording in the garden of the house I was staying in. One day while developing the project, I was doing some tests in the garden. I started the recorder and when I finished the tests completely forgot about that the recorder was running. Out of this accidental garden recording I built two sample banks: the songs of birds forms one of them and the other bank is formed by sounds from a gardener that was working there that day. He was shovelling quite a bit, moving dead branches, and doing other sounds that were easily identifiable as laborious. Whereas the quadrophonic system is built so as to combine different sources and play continuously, this 'poetry environment' is programmed in a way that triggers the sounds with long lapses of silence in between and with very little manipulation of the sounds. Only my spoken word is sometimes affected by some intentional digital interferences and glitches. This is done so as to highlight the fact that it is a digital reproduction of a stored voice.

The important fact about this poetry environment is that is contrasted with the other environments. Whereas the environments of the quadrophonic system are programmed so as to entangle the different sources, this poetry environment highlights individual action. It emphasises personal activity: as voice, as working hands, as tools, animals, footsteps, etc. Hence my emphasis in thinking of it as a different sound system, even though this is only relevant for the construction of the work and not for the reception of it, as all sources become part of the same acoustic environment.

The work was premiered at a multifunctional hall in campus Poblenou, Pompeu Fabra University. Through one of the walls of the hall, water running could be heard whenever someone flushed the toilet upstairs. This stream of water was localised on one side of the room and as long as the sound inside the hall was not too loud, it was clearly distinctive. This stream of water was welcomed as another audio source. Just as the different speakers function as different audio sources that interact with the space as acoustic elements of it, so did this water stream.

What I wanted to achieve was that the sound systems in conjunction with any other sounds present in the hall—like the water stream through the wall—allowed the listener to experience sonic intentionalities as rumours that entangled acoustic presence with fantasy. I wanted to create an environment of rumours in which each listener could identify, imagine, and construct different sources and trajectories for the sounds. There was no clear narrative or no preponderant element to anchor the listening act in order to make sense of what was going on. Therefore each listener would be acting on their own; reacting and performing their own listening in whatever way they saw fit.

In this context, I worked the 'poetry environment' in the stereo system as testimony of my own listening experience. Indeed, the sources of this environment highlight the active nature of songscaping: they provide me with an anchor as a listener. The poetical fragments will trigger thoughts, establish themes, and evoke images. The gardener's activity and the birds produce sounds whose 'real' sources are easily identifiable, so they separate from the other sounds of the space, just as the spoken word fragments do. Indeed, they highlight how action estranges the flow and enforce the intentions of an 'I'. An 'I' that in turn is broken through silence, fragmentation and digital glitches into doubt, to remain in the environment only as rumours.

Besides the audio systems, there were three video projectors in the hall: one in each sidewall and the third in the front of the room (the back was the entrance to the hall). The idea with the videos was similar to that of the quadrophonic system. Indeed, the sources of the videos came from the different stages of the songscape project and digital manipulations in Jitter that creates a flow and entanglement of intentionalities. The videos are placed on the walls interacting with the

architectural features of the space. Indeed, by not using projection screens, the proportions of the video projections are warped by curved walls, corners and other features of the space.

#### 4.2.2. Max/MSP: The In-between.

The general ambience that is played through the quadraphonic system consists of different 'environments' designed in Max/MSP. These environments propose multiple ways of combining the sampled materials using the Max/MSP/Jitter Songscape Toolbox I have developed through out the project (included in the USB stick). The materials are combined through reverbs, delays, filters, and buffer processes that layer them in continuity with their distinct sources mixed and merged. The boundaries between sources is confused and a general effect of the different materials being the rumours of each other is accomplished. In general, these environments are played at a level that allows for the natural resonances of the room and the occasional conversations, movements and footsteps from the people in the room to remain audible. Consequently, when listening inside *Romper el Silencio*, there is uncertainty as to the source of sounds. From my personal experience of it, I have perceived some sounds as being done in the space by someone else and not as coming from a speaker even when this was not the case.

The Max/MSP environments are designed to behave autonomously. The computer itself will combine the sources and modulate the different elements by way of time-passed related decisions and by listening to attacks and other properties of the audio signals that are building the environment. The patches therefore control most of their parameters autonomously. There is very little control over what the computer is doing, there is no control over the sound design during the performance and only the general volume can be changed. The duality of both constructing the programs and at the same time allowing them to develop independently, provides a structural in-between to performing and listening as a sonic trap (see chapter One)—a disorientation that enables the sonic space of *Romper el Silencio* as that of the rumours of multiple agencies that flow ambiguously between acoustic and internal experience.

Using the Songscape Toolbox, I created different 'environment' patches. Each had its own behaviour and had access to different subsets of sample banks. Depending on these subsets, different environment patches corresponded to different V region in situ interactions and/or

*songscape improvisations*. A different master patch would load and execute the different environment patches, according either to a time guideline I scripted, or autonomously assigning random durations to the different environments.

The computer used for the audio processing was not being able to handle all the information properly in realtime. Therefore for the premier of the work, I rendered to disk multiple iterations of the different environments. Consequently during the concert the Max/MSP environments were not being built in realtime. Only the master patch was active, selecting different multi-channel files and crossfading between them as some sort of automatic DJ.

The fact that the computer processes were not in realtime would have been a problem during the first stage of the *songscape* project described in Chapter One. During that stage the realtime element was fundamental for the notion of sonic trap I was working with at the time. However for *Romper el Silencio*, this was not the case anymore. In the first stages of the *songscape*, the Max/MSP environments were fundamental for the entanglement between self-expression and its outside. It was in them where the different sources and intentionalities would meet and interact as a sonic trap of permutation, fragmentation, conciliation and superposition–processes that are detailed in Chapter One. However, as I moved from the perspective of the musical performer and into other sonic considerations to fulfil the vacilar sensitivity beyond musical works (Chapters Two and Three), the relevance of the Max/MSP environments for the sonic trap became secondary.

During the development of the *V Region Songscape*, the Max/MSP program was at the core of the sonic trap, making the in-between of sonic agencies palpable: making it evidently present and unavoidable. However for *Romper el Silencio*, the in-betweenness is experienced more dynamically. In contrast with the previous *songscape* projects, in *Romper el Silencio*, my role is not exclusively that of a live performer. As other visitors, I might sit in one spot or walk around. I might even leave the space at some point. At some other moments I might move speakers around or perform. The lack of a logical or unifying narrative between these actions, the overall lack of directionality of the work and the freedom of the visitors or audience is effectively creating a sense of ambiguity, an in-betweenness of self-expression and its outside that is all encompassing–

beyond the limits of the mechanisms of the Max/MSP program. In fact, the ambiguity in my role as performer-visitor emphasises the all-encompassing entanglement of self-expression and its outside, for it confuses the understanding of the work as installation or concert. Indeed, the ambiguity in my role is part of the vibration of a complex waveform with an ambiguous centre; it is the vibration that integrates trap, dance and doubt into the integral vacilar experience.

Although the Max/MSP program was still fundamental for the manipulation of materials, the songscape is not about the manipulation of materials per se. As the final stage of the songscape project, in *Romper el Silencio* the songscape is a songscaping. It is an action of ambiguity, of the sensitivity to reversibility that both demand openness to the outside and an indulgence into self-expression. It is a songscaping of the inevitable vibration of opposing elements as they sprung from each other in sonic contradiction and dissolve into each other as rumours.

#### 4.2.3. The Piano as Echolocation & the Walking Voice

In *Romper el Silencio* there are two elements that are designed for me to perform with. 1) A 'piano-ear' that consists of a grand piano with a speaker inside and digital effects and 2) a portable vocal rig with a microphone, portable speaker and some effect pedals. In this section I will describe both performance elements and their relevance for the vibration of trap, dance and doubt in the vacilar experience.

The piano-ear was developed partly by plan and partly by chance. Throughout the songscape, keyboards have played a substantial role as the main musical instrument. During the realtime in situ interaction and some live performances I played with a digital piano but the preferred instrument was the acoustic piano. I am particularly interested in the piano from the notion of vacilar, for it allows the shushed to take action in listening. I will explain this below by first giving my understanding of the piano.

The piano is usually the most relevant instrument in music schools. Regardless of what your major might be, such as music composition or some instrument, in a musical standard curriculum you probably need to get acquainted with the piano, as it is considered one of the best tools for the understanding and practicing of musical theory. I believe this condition of the piano to be sustained by two elements. Firstly, harmonies, different scales, transpositions are easily

understood by the keyboard layout. Whereas in other instruments sounds and tones are arranged in order to make them more playable, it is in the keyboard instruments where tones are organised following a logical sequence from low to high pitch distributed in an easy to follow pattern. Secondly, and I believe this is what makes the piano more relevant than any other keyboard instrument, the tone of the piano itself is responsible for its theoretical hegemony. The tone of the piano is highly flexible in terms of its musicality, supporting a wide variety of dynamics and articulations. Most importantly, it is a tone that lacks almost any disturbance from its mechanical production. It is perhaps the closest we can get to 'pure' tones by acoustic means. Furthermore, the technique of sound production itself puts a distance between the player and the instrument. The piano is usually only touched by the tip of the fingers giving the impression of a disembodied music practice. This is considered to be one of the main reasons the piano was the instrument of choice for young ladies of high society in the nineteenth century, as it lacked the more direct—and therefore sensuous and improper—relationship with the body other instruments require (Leppert, 1993).

In this sense I draw a parallel between the importance of the pureness of the piano for music and Kim-Cohen's description of the importance of the sine wave for the sound arts. He states:

(S)ound art loves sine waves. There seems to be a belief that, by using electronically produced sine waves (sometimes called "pure tones") one avoids the annoying complications of other kinds of signals. The sine wave, so the thinking apparently goes, is unencumbered by historical reference, timbre, instrumental voice, expression, connotation, or previous use. (Kim-Cohen, 2016, p. 55)

I believe the piano has played a similar role in music, of access to the pure and abstract musical language by itself—Or at least to get as close to it as it is acoustically possible. The multiple examples of renditions of a classical composition in both a solo piano and orchestral format seem to corroborate this. In fact, the piano versions seem to represent the purity of the musical ideas whereas the orchestral versions, with multiple timbres and universe of techniques, would represent the material version of the composition. Regardless of the value judgement one might pass over this search for a pure, disembodied tone, I believe there is an interesting angle to it if experienced from a sensitivity of vacilar and its listening-performing. That is to say, when the purity is not

explored as the purity of the tone anymore but as an accent, as self-awareness of the act of listening-performing, both being part of my self-expression and of the outside (see Chapter Two).

Through vacilar both the listener and the listened are configured. The listener creates the listened and vice-versa as the intra-action of sonic agencies that conform a sonic trap (see Chapter One). The purity of the piano's tone then, instead of symbolising a transcendental realm of disembodiment, becomes an extension of listening, making the piano a canvas in which to explore our own way of listening. The piano's tone zooms in to the interpretative nature of the listener; how listening is also a performance. Artefacts such as a telescope or a microscope are extensions of the eye, allowing it to explore beyond its naked scope, similarly a microphone extends the reach of the voice. These artefacts become part of the body by means of technological embodiment. Therefore 'instruments are the "body" that extends and transforms the perceptions of the users of the instruments' (Ihde, 2007, p.5). The technological enhancements then allow for the body to explore itself, its own constitution, further. In this sense my take on the piano is as an artefact that extends the action of listening to allow what the 'naked scope' of listening leaves behind: the shushed (see Chapter Two).

Acoustically, one of the main components of listening is the perception of frequencies. Put simply, every sound corresponds to a different combination of frequencies in intensity or loudness. The number of frequencies available varies from listener to listener but it is usually mentioned to go somewhere between 20 Hz to 20 kHz. The piano range is much smaller than that. Its lowest pitch available is usually an A frequency of 27.5 Hz (which is very close to the standard of the lowest end of hearing) but on the higher end it is usually a C note at only 4186 Hz.

Although by acoustic measurement the piano range is much smaller than the human hearing range, I believe the instrument can be understood as a rendition of human hearing nonetheless. Mathematics aside, at the level of perception the piano covers a wide spectrum of the hearing range. Therefore to sit in front of the piano is to seat in front of your ears. It allows you to recognise, explore and discover the dimensions of your own listening: how listening is an activity that opens you up to the uncontrollable, to the unexpected, to the noise that surrounds you, to the overheard. It simultaneously moves beyond listening to embrace the shushed and acknowledge

that listening is effectively your activity and therefore not opening you up: it is your performance, your measurement, and your creation.

In this sense, my take on the piano for *Romper el Silencio*, is that of a piano-ear, that is not necessarily the traditional use of the piano. I do believe there could be a history of this idea of the piano-ear; that it is a use of the piano present in the work of other musicians. However that escapes the scope of this text and perhaps could be the topic of another research. Sufficient for the current purpose is to describe some aspects of the work of Erik Satie's notion of furniture music that I find to be one of the most exemplary uses of the piano as a proto piano-ear and that therefore is illustrative to describe some key aspects of how I use it.

Even though Satie explicitly labels only a few of his pieces as *Musique d'Ameublement*, the concept can be applied more broadly to his music as a general guideline. What interests me of the notion of furniture music, from the perspective of the piano-ear, is the idea that by becoming part of the furniture, music is one among other sounding elements and can only be valued in relationship to them. Therefore music would not be a close or absolute realm, but an element that is part of a bigger sonic context. Music is both influenced and influencing that bigger sonic context. I find a very interesting approach to this to be found throughout Satie's piano work in the kind of comments for expressive interpretation he left in his scores. For example in the piece *Regrets des Enfermés* (1913) he adds comments such as 'They are seated in the shade' or 'Come out' (Satie, 1989, p. 159). In *Pieces Froides* (1897) he has comments like 'become fixed' 'don't torment yourself' (Satie, 1989, p. 47), etc.

I understand of these comments as a dislocation of the music in relation to other sonic elements. To my understanding they are indications of a link between the music and an outside of it. Indeed the musical interpretation of these indications is ambiguous to say the least, rendering them useless as indications of musical expression. Therefore these piano pieces are not closed self-referential systems but ways to negotiate a relationship with other sounds in space and internal experience. Thus Satie's piano music is a way of shaping and being shaped by other elements that are beyond the 'purely' musical. According to my interpretation, this brings Satie's music close to the notion of the piano-ear as an artefact that, through a technological medium,



expands the reach of the human body. Also, it locates the piano as an acoustic presence, an acoustic space that fills a room more than an acoustic narrative so to speak—which would be the traditional use of the piano in music. As such, the piano is a location. It is an acoustic space to visit. The piano-ear is a location configured by a vacilar that entangles doubt and dance. In this sense it is perhaps comparable with echolocation. Echolocation is a way of navigation that animals such as bats have, in which they make sense of the space around them by sending acoustic signals and determining the configuration of space according to the echoes they receive back. The piano is somehow both these audio signals and the echoes. It is an extension of the ear that is both the listener and the listened.

In order to work with this notion of the piano-ear in *Romper el Silencio*, I placed a grand piano roughly in the centre of the room and I stuck the sustain pedal with a plastic door stop so the strings would resonate freely as the damping mechanism was lifted. I then placed a speaker inside the grand piano facing the lid. The idea was that the acoustic energy released by the speaker would excite the strings. The plan with this was to have the piano resonating with other acoustic elements, perhaps in sympathy with the dominating frequencies of the acoustic space.

This happened but to a very low level that was surpassed by the audio from the speaker and the general environment in which the piano was placed. So I started playing with a looper pedal that I had for the voice and accidentally came across a similar process to that developed by Alvin Lucier in *I am sitting in a room* (1969). I placed the microphone inside the piano and recorded to the looper in overdub mode. Once the looper was set, I played some notes on the piano leaving ample space for resonance. This was then played back through the speaker inside the piano, which in turn was picked up by the microphone in the piano in a constant loop. The microphone I was using was a Shure SM58 dynamic microphone, which would only capture close-range audio signals. As the microphone was not facing the speaker directly, this helped the microphone capture the resonance of the strings it was facing, in a good balance with the much louder speaker signal.

The looper has a loop size of about 40 seconds. I would let it record to its full capacity and go into overdub recording before playing the piano. I would then play chords and fragments of music ideas that come from the improvisations and compositions I did during the development of

the V Region Songscape. Without having a precise control over the looper length, start, and stop points, the loop would not have a perfect synchronisation between the musical tempo and the buffer's size, providing another angle of fragmentation of the musical ideas.

Slowly the natural timbre of the piano would start to modulate by the resonating frequencies of the piano itself and the sympathetic resonance of the strings as they were recorded in the overdubbing loop. Instead of dissolving into a sort of spatial murmur, as is the case with Lucier's experiment, there would be a growing number of feedback frequencies. This feedback was not coming from the amplification of the speaker directly but by the amplification of the speaker *through* the resonance of the piano strings. I left the feedback to grow for a long time since the volume was not growing fast and there was a fascinating, constantly shifting, modulation of feedback frequencies. Through this piano-speaker system not only do the resonant frequencies emerge but there is also a slowly growing process of feedback, as the frequencies inside the piano and the speaker start to merge. The process is then not only akin to *I am sitting in a room* but also to Alvin Lucier's *Bird and Person Dying* (1975). This piece consists on the sound of an electric chirping bird and a performer with in-ear binaural microphones creating a feedback with a stereo system. As the performer moves around the space or moves his head, the frequency of the feedback changes, reacting to how the different frequencies are received by the performer's ears.

During the installation and concert of *Romper el Silencio*, the piano-ear was one of the forms I had of actively being involved with the sound production as listener-performer. The other way was with a portable vocal rig. This consisted of a microphone going through a Korg mini Kaoss pad connected to a battery-operated speaker on wheels. Throughout the hall I had some small instruments, such as a recorder flute, a charango, and shakers, placed in different spots. I would move around the space with the vocal rig and would add some layers of quiet singing or talking. I would pick up the instruments and do small improvisations locally amplified by the vocal rig. These uses of the vocal rig were the ones I intended. A third use I gave it was to capture sounds that were happening in the space, process them and move them through the space as I walked with the speaker. The Korg mini Kaoss pad has a small looper capability that is able to loop for about two

seconds. I would therefore hold two seconds or less of some sound and then walked around the room with the speaker moving that 'frozen' sound around.

Walking becomes an important element here, in tune with many listening practices to which soundwalks play an important role such as in the work of Hildegard Westerkamp. In the other stages of the songscape, walking was somehow neglected. However, walking appeared as an element early on when I started to question the validity of the notions of locality and realtime that guided the first stage of the songscape project. Indeed, walking to the places I was to place the songscape sonic traps and do the interactions, provided a crucial experience of the environment, how I interpreted and reacted to it musically: the exhaustion of carrying the equipment, the experience of scouting for the right spot to unload the equipment, etc. (see Chapter One). Indeed, walking can be identified as playing a fundamental role both physically and emotionally for the experience of immersion in an environment (Ingold, 2015, 2007). As I moved beyond a static notion of the songscape and into the notion of it as songscaping—a trajectory—then this idea of walking became fundamental. Walking is perhaps the most basic mechanism through which to establish a trajectory between self-expression and its outside: a mechanism that works for both the performer and the audience.

### **4.3 Songscapings: Personal Trajectories in *Romper el Silencio***

The vacilar vibration is a dialogue between self-expression and its outside that is not the encounter of two separate autonomous entities, but they arise to be distinguished from one another *in* the dialogue itself—as sonic entanglement of a multiplicity of agencies. It is a dialogue experienced through a listening-performing that poses self-expression and its outside as action, as verb. This proposes a sensitivity to existence that could be compared to Ingold's understanding of the human as a verb in the grammatical form of the gerund (Ingold, 2015, cf.116-118) or of man as radical anti-humanism that Badiou builds in relation to Nietzsche's man as program in opposition to man as a given (Badiou, 2007, cf. 169-170).

In fact, as a verb in the grammatical form or man as anti-humanism, it is action what takes precedence and not the fix form entities might take. In the entanglement between self-expression and its outside as an action, the songscape is both an estrangement of the self—as it is an opening

up to the multiplicity of other possibilities—and a taking action that articulates the pleasing of the self regardless of that otherness. Under this entanglement the human is not a separate entity opposed to other objects. There is a multiplicity of agencies flowing in a diversity of trajectories while at the same time there is my story: the narrative that allows me to construct my expression as a defined line of action with its own history. This also allows me to *make sense* of all other lines as outside of mine.

*Romper el Silencio* is the trajectory of an environment-action. This trajectory is an intra-trajectory as the environment and the action are not two separate entities that are put into interaction through the trajectory but are configured through it. The piano-ear enacts this intra-trajectory as both the environment and the action. Likewise, the environment-action is the performance of the trajectory through the vocal rig. The trajectory is nothing more than this performativity and that performativity configures the environment-action by establishing a *horizon of silence*, which will be explained below. The environment can only be experienced as what is outside of the action and vice versa the action as what lies outside the environment, yet they cannot be taken apart. In relationship to the overarching concept of vibration, trajectory could be considered the ambiguous centre of a vibration that oscillates between environment and action. As such, the trajectory is a songscaping trap between dance and doubt.

I am doing my own trajectory in *Romper el Silencio* as I activate the piano-ear, walk around with the vocal rig or simply leave the environment to develop. Yet all members of the audience will have this experience as they walk or sit inside *Romper el Silencio*. As would happen when perceiving any work of art, simply by being aware of it everyone has to rule out their commitment to the work—That is to say, everyone is inevitably forced to decide upon what they perceive from the work, even if the decision is not to engage with the work at all. In the case of *Romper el Silencio*, as a work that vibrates in a complex way that is ambiguously centred, any value judgement, conclusion, feeling or any form of engagement any visitor might have with it is necessarily the trajectory of an environment-action.

For the first stage of the *V Region Songscape* we saw how the techniques of fragmentation, permutation, conciliation and superposition were the strategies for the musical combination of

multiple intentionalities. In a sense, as a listener/visitor, a similar process is undertaken. There is no logic as to when the piano-ear or the vocal-rig will be used, the speaker systems are running autonomously, the different videos projected on the walls give certain references as to how the sounds were captured and to the locations of the in situ interaction, yet they are not in sync with any particular audio element. A continuous fragmentation, superposition, conciliation, permutation of intentionalities is perceived by visiting *Romper el Silencio*.

Effectively, any listener of *Romper el Silencio* performs its listening. This allows constructing the characteristics of the ideal listener of the vacilar vibration. This is a listener that will have to decide what the hierarchies between the sounds are, what is happening in the space, and inside themselves. Through vacilar, this is a process that disorients the limits between the real and the imaginary through traps that entangle dancing and doubting.

By vacilar then, the ideal listener is confronted with ambiguity, with the experience of confusing the limits between being something and not being it. There is no solid essence or root to hang on to. As a songscaping, the listener is created in the trajectory, without having the possibility to rigidly identify with any particular intention. In fact, the listener is confronted with the in-between, with the configuration of multiple and even contradictory sonic intentionalities.

As such the trajectory allocates self-expression and its outside and stays in the ambiguous sonic contradiction in-between, as a sonic Criollo facing the menace of the earthquake (see Chapter Three). The ideal listener inevitably pursues its own intentions as it dances, creates hierarchies between sounds and yet is confronted by the constant multiplicity of the outside. It is therefore inevitably also breaking away from his or her values and logic. It is aware that they are arbitrary processes, that there is always cheating involved. That both self-expression and its outside are part of an inevitable horizon of silence, as will be explained in detail in the next section.

If vacilar is inevitable, then it provides an ontological certainty. Simultaneously, if vacilar is only possible through a personal trajectory—that ambiguously establishes self-expression and its outside as rumours—then it is the enforcement of a particular para-ontology. Consequently the experience of vacilar by both being inevitable and only possible in sonic contradiction, it is a vibration that reconciles the ontological and the para-ontological.

The dancing 'I', the menace of the earthquake, and sonic contradiction they have all been described in the previous chapter as elements that from the para-ontological open the ontological. The reversible route of an ontological certainty that is absorbed para-ontologically is opened for vacilar by the inevitable. In fact, the ontological certainty of vacilar arises in its inevitability, which in turn is unveiled as a horizon of silence—this will be the subject of the next section. In the last account of *Romper el Silencio*, I believe it is this horizon of silence what stays unbroken, what survives speculatively yet inevitably. It is the horizon that configures the sonic trap of each personal trajectory, of each songscaping as both self-expressive, discriminatory, and at the same time estranged with the self and open to its outside. That is to say, the horizon of silence is what provides an ontological certainty that is positioned para-ontologically.

#### **4.4. The Horizon of Silence**

My notion of the horizon considers it as an opening to sonic contradiction. Therefore it is not to be confused by the horizon of Gadamer's hermeneutics. In hermeneutics the fusion of horizons, is the notion through which an understanding between different persons might be achieved (Gadamer, 2004). This hermeneutic notion of the horizon builds from a phenomenological tradition that Ihde (2007) identifies in two stages. In a first phenomenology, the meaning of the horizon is that of limit by 'a set of relative relations between focal and fringe phenomena' (Ihde, 2007, p.106). A second stage would be 'more expansive than the focus-fringe ratio' (Ihde, 2007, p.106). This second stage would contrast presence and absence as the 'horizon that shades off into the region of invisibility' (Ihde, 2007, p.106). From this understanding of horizons, Ihde develops his notion of silence as 'a *dimension* of the horizon' and that there is 'a sense in which silence is "given in absence," and its withdrawing horizontal absence may be detected in the most mundane of experiences with things.' (Ihde, 2007, p.109). In this sense Ihde's notion of the horizon embraces the silence of the tradition of the poetics of silence discussed in Chapter Two. Silence is then a 'dimension' of the becoming of presence and absence. To my understanding this notion does not capture what the experience of the horizon is, as it tries to make sense of it logically—the philosophical implications of this are similar to those discussed as the deconstruction of silence in Chapter Two. By this logical lens that makes logical sense of the

horizon, I believe the experience of it becomes determined a priori. If no precedence is given to logic over experience, then the horizon cannot be unequivocally defined—not even as the fading of presence into absence. In fact, I believe the horizon is not experienced at all as ‘withdrawing’ or ‘shade’.

The idea of the horizon I’m interested in arises from the experience of looking at the horizon over the Pacific Ocean in its vast dimension. For me this is an experience that is simultaneously seeing the horizon as a line and yet, when focusing on the line, it is the experience of it as the sonic contradiction between the sky and the ocean. Let us recall here that the notion of sonic contradiction is to be distinguished from logical contradiction. Whereas logical contradiction states that a statement cannot be A and B simultaneously, if the definition of A is ‘not B’ and that of B is ‘not A’. Sonic contradiction on the other hand arises as the disorientation and the ambiguity of not knowing if a statement is A or B. Whereas logical contradiction is a form of weak contradiction as it is established inside a coherent system that clearly demarcates A and B, sonic contradiction is a strong contradiction as it is a-systemic and does not allow clear demarcation. As explored in Chapter Three, this strong sonic contradiction is evident in the experience of earthquakes.

When looking at the horizon over the Pacific Ocean, I see the sky and I see the ocean. If I focus on the ocean I cannot determine where it finishes. The same is true if I focus on the sky. The horizon is an imaginary line that appears as the sonic contradiction between them, it appears as the impossibility to demarcate the opposing agencies of the sky and the ocean. If I focus on the horizon it disappears and I see the sky and the ocean, yet if I do not focus on it I am able to see it.

The experience of seeing the horizon is therefore not the withdrawing of presence into absence but of presence into a different presence through my action. This visual experience is for me a sonic experience through the eyes, as it allows having through the eyes an experience that displaces representationalism and the understanding of the viewer as distanced from the viewed. By seeing the horizon I am seeing the actions, the becoming of the ocean and the sky through sonic contradiction and not an entity or a fixed object that is distanced from me. I cannot focus on the horizon in itself for it is not there as a thing. Moreover, the horizon is my own creation. It is my

production; it is a line I draw outside of myself in order to make sense of what I am looking at.

Ahmed describes a similar comprehension of the horizon:

The horizon is not an object that I apprehend: I do not see it. The horizon is what gives objects their contours, and it even allows such objects to be reached. (...) The bodily horizon shows what bodies can reach toward by establishing a line beyond which they cannot reach; the horizon marks the edge of what can be reached by the body. (...) (Yet) what “comes into” view, or what is within our horizon, is not a matter simply of what we find here or there, or even where we find ourselves as we move here or there. What is reachable is determined precisely by orientations that we have already taken. (Ahmed, 2006, p.55)

The emphasis I would add is that the horizon does not only mark the edges, the horizon is not only containing what is reachable. Just as importantly, it makes the reachable necessarily a trap in the sense I have described it earlier—as an element that disorients (see Chapter One). The horizon is therefore both emphasising what I can reach but also positions me estranged with myself. By being able to see the horizon—which is not there but that is established by me as an environment-action—I am able to appreciate the in-betweenness. It emphasises an inevitable vacilar between what I can reach and what I cannot. The only measure for my horizon is myself. Yet, at the same time, the only way of interacting with others—be it humans, objects or any possible continuum—is inside that horizon. Therefore by my own horizon, which is established by my self-expression, I am inevitably stepping outside of my self-expression as well. In fact, it is through the horizon that self-expression builds, that I am capable of knowing of things outside my self-expression.

This ambiguous vibration of the horizon is similar to the problem between the listening tradition of the poetics of silence and the shushed they cannot acknowledge (explored in Chapter Two). The listening experience of the poetics of silence is practiced by different methods of silencing the 'I', yet this listening can only be through the action of the 'I'. However, if the poetics of silence would acknowledge this, then their practices and common aim of access to the ontological would be jeopardize. Thus this action of the 'I' survives as what cannot be listened or as the shushed. If, on the other hand, the shushed is acknowledged, then the horizon of silence is unveiled. By it, the ontological access the poetics of silence pursues is revealed unattainable, yet a



new ontological certainty arises as that of the inevitable. That is to say, in sonic experience it is certain that there are inevitable conditions.

The vibration of the horizon of silence could also be understood in relationship with the dancing element of *vacilar* (which was explored in Chapter Three). As a dancing 'I', as self-expressing my cultural-subjective traits I am inclined to make songs with certain rhythms and melodic turns that resonate with my South American heritage: a need to enforce my own identity and forget or set aside an opening to its outside. However as a dancing 'I' this inclination is confronted by the static formations—a specific song, a specific recording—that are left behind as traces of the dancing 'I'. Yet the dancing 'I' is not present in that trace anymore, the dancing 'I' is like an earthquake. That is to say, it is an energy that flourishes in the friction between other elements to leave them formed in their current state. Yet the energy of the dancing 'I' is not present in that state, it is present as the menace of a new rearticulation. Whereas the dancing 'I' is an element of *vacilar* that arises from my para-ontological stance—from my unavoidable cultural conditions that mediate my access to the sonic—the horizon of silence arises in the vibration of *vacilar* taken as a whole. It is not part of the dance element, but the horizon of silence is a concept that unifies dance, doubt and trap. As such, it does not pertain to any particular sound or sonic agency. It is what opens any particular experience to confusion and ambiguity and therefore allows personal trajectories to continue as the entanglement of self-expression and its outside. In *Romper el Silencio* it is the horizon of silence what eventually marks the work as a success-failure, a concept I will expand on later.

What I emphasise about the horizon is that it does not only provide a closure. It is not just the edge or the contour of presence as in Ahmed's definition. Importantly, it is sonic contradiction. It is only in the contradiction of intentionalities that a horizon arises. It makes palpable a beyond to what you can reach. However, this beyond is not articulated as going from presence into absence, as in Ihde's definition, but is articulated through the reversibility of presences. I carry my horizon with me, as it does not belong to the sky or the ocean. The horizon is a testament to my own situatedness, to how my surroundings are configured in intra-action with my personal stance. As such the horizon is both a material reality that I encounter and a personal appropriation. With this

emphasis the horizon of silence opens up doubt by acknowledging the arbitrariness of my environment-action. The horizon both limits my reality and invites me to hesitate and consider that other possibilities might be possible.

It is therefore both what I can reach as a particular orientation, as a body, as a self-expression and it is simultaneously an openness to its outside. It is the inevitable vacilar between the two. As this is not experienced as the play of presence and absence but of different presences, it forces a consideration of reversibility and ambiguity by asking questions such as, is the horizon inside or outside of me? Or, if the outside to self-expression is only known inside my horizon—that in turn is inside self-expression—then where is the outside? By looking at the horizon, the eye is gazing at its own limits, its own fabrication. The horizon is there to contradict me and make me reconsider my self-expression: the horizon of silence is both para-ontological and ontological.

I believe my notion of the horizon of silence does not opposes Ahmed's understanding of the horizon, but extends it by way of making sense of the horizon sonically. Visually the horizon might appear as the contours of the reachable, yet the experience of the horizon is for me not reducible to visual representations. The contour is a property of the object and the horizon is not a property of the object. It is an in-between of opposing layers that is homologous to the sonic menace of the earthquake (see Chapter Three). The understanding of the experience of the horizon as sonic is for me fundamental. Even if no sounds are present for the experience of it, I believe the experience of the horizon is a form of non-cochlear sonic experience. Be it by the eyes, ears or any other medium, the horizon is a sonic experience as it is built through the same paradox that opens up sound into the sonic beyond the acoustic, as a material-discursive practice—that is, as a psycho-physical experience with ambiguous and reversible boundaries between the two (see Chapter One). As a sonic experience, the horizon of silence encompasses the oscillation, the swinging back and forth of the sensitivity of vacilar as it vibrates between doubt and dance through sonic traps.

The horizon cannot be grasped through a visual representation since it is not exhausted in a fixed location; it is not in a position. It is both outside of me as something that I can see yet it is created in me. More importantly, the experience of the horizon I am describing refers to the horizon

as something I *can* see, yet that I do not always see. Regardless of what I am doing, of whatever relation I am having with my surroundings, the horizon is always encircling me, even when I cannot see it, similarly as to how the earthquake is present as a menace even when it is not present. It is always questioning the solid ground I can establish.

However, since the horizon is not menacing as the earthquake, it could easily fall into oblivion. The menace of the earthquake is given in action, it is an energy that can destroy, regenerate, reconfigure. As an element of the vacilar sensitivity it is identified as part of the dance. In contrast, the horizon as a sonic experience that both closes and opens my environment-action, takes into consideration the whole of the sensitivity of vacilar. As such it provides the frame to understand the sensitivity of vacilar as being an inevitable outcome of sonic contradiction—therefore providing an ontological certainty—and at the same time enforcing a para-ontological stance—by the horizon addressing the inevitability of personal mediation. Even though this is the case, it is easy to forget the horizon as something else than a 'visual' line.

*Ordinarily one* ignores the horizon, and even when one turns to the question of the field itself this question may remain latent and implicit (...) Yet if the horizon is that which situates the very field of experience itself as the field situates its center, then to ignore it is to risk at the least the peril of incompleteness in relation to exploring the limits of experiential phenomena (Ihde, 2007, p.107)

The horizon then, opens up my self-expression, as that which I determine, into what lies outside of it. As such, the opening of the horizon is the opening of visual certainty into the sonic. Instead of establishing the contours of materiality as a given outside of me, the horizon is a testimony of how materiality is part of an apparatus composed of my material-discursive intra-action with the environment (see Chapter One). As reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological, the horizon is a physical, undeniable presence that nonetheless states that my reality is speculative.

In *Romper el Silencio* the horizon of silence is experienced in the in-between of different sound sources as providing a closure—a fixed and final format for the work—while simultaneously doubting the validity of that fixed form. This experience is listener dependant and can be produced by the in-between of multiple elements such as between a video sequence and a collection of sounds, or imaginary and acoustic sounds, the limits between concert and installation, etc.

Therefore, as both an undeniable presence and speculative reality, in *Romper el Silencio* the horizon appears as a reaction to the in-between. That is to say, the horizon is what establishes silence. Silence as the horizon—as opposed to the silence of the poetics of silence analysed in Chapter Two—is not a thing in itself but a boundary between sonic agencies I want and those I do not want, or between self-expression and its outside. Silence acknowledges that by expressing the sounds that I want I encounter those I do not want in a process of ambiguity that constantly estranges the certainty of my expression and its outside. In short, sonic agencies are disorientated in the contradiction of the horizon of silence. Therefore, the horizon of silence is what allows me to configure the trajectory of the environment-action as the contradiction between agencies I enforce and those that open me to something else.

Silence as the horizon, is the testimony to the trajectory of songscaping, to the action of establishing my personal balance between what I want and what lies outside of what I want. It is always present as the inevitable contradiction between the two. It cannot be surpassed or fixed into one particular position. Silence is then not identifiable either with the absence of sounds or with the sounds I do not intend. Silence is identified here as the overarching horizon that is established in songscaping as a vacilar that configures the listener-listened of an environment-action. I must emphasise here again that this definition of silence is different to the one described as the leading feature of the poetics of silence in Chapter Two, which is a silence that is sustained by way of silencing the 'I'.

Silence, understood as the horizon of silence, does not appear as the absence that is contrasted to presence or what I can hear from what I cannot. Silence is the inevitable contradiction between different presences: just as the earthquake is (see Chapter Three). Therefore silence for songscaping, in contrast to the silence described in Chapter Two, is not certain sounds or sonic agencies and neither it is the outside of self-expression: it is the horizon as the contradiction between different sonic agencies as established by listening-performing.

It is relevant for me to highlight the active nature of silence that the horizon implies. In fact, I believe this notion reconciles the opposing understandings of listening described in Chapter Two. As it was described then, silence can be understood as the overarching concept that weaves

together a wide range of generations of artists and thinkers from backgrounds in music, sound arts and philosophy identified as the poetics of silence—in authors such as Cage, Oliveros, LaBelle and Voegelin among others. Silence for these poetics encompasses listening to the outside of self-expression. Of becoming a membrane that resonates with the outside: a membrane that is enacted by keeping shushed. By silencing the urges of the ego, by renouncing pleasure and giving room to dislikes. By listening to noise, silence is a powerful experience of sensitivity to others, both out there in the world and inside of me. Silence allows an immersion that weighs equally fantasy, memory, hallucination, acoustic emissions and all sonic stimuli. It listens to the rational and the irrational as interchangeable. It gives no priority to logic, as silence cannot listen if it validates a priori hierarchies. In short, silence is understood as the paradigm of what I receive, both inside of me and out in the world as opposed to what I want, what I do and what I reject. In contrast to this take on silence as non-discriminatory acceptance or as opening to noise, we found other authors—such as Kahn and Kim-Cohen— that question the mechanism through which such a silence is built. For them, silence is oblique to its own silencing and is therefore following an agenda. From a Derridean understanding, silence is never in itself but it is always mediated, it is always relational and therefore it is never simply present per se. These critiques I group as the shushed. The shushed is what the poetics of silence cannot listen to in order to fulfil their listening to the outside. The positive description of silence of the poetics of silence and the concomitant critique of the shushed are in opposition. The horizon of silence appears as an experience of reconciliation of them.

Silence as the horizon, is both my creation and outside of me. It therefore provides an understanding of silence that is also my self-expression. Even though I might be directed towards the positive consideration of silence of the poetics of silence, the horizon of silence considers the action of silence through the shushed and not in opposition to it. The horizon of silence is not something I can listen to. Silence is not sounds and it is not even the way I listen to certain sounds. It is the contradiction between different sonic intentionalities. It is an inevitable presence that arises in the contradiction between self-expression and its outside. I cannot decide where the horizon lies; I cannot consider it as a location or as a property of an object. Yet I cannot escape the horizon. It is

inevitably encircling me; it is a testimony to the contradictory forces that make up my reality as speculative material-discursive intra-action between self-expression and its outside. By the inevitability of the horizon of silence, the shushed—what listening to the outside cannot listen to in order to carry its listening—and silence—as the quest of listening to the outside—are reconciled.

In *Romper el Silencio*, the active nature of the horizon of silence is constantly at play. As a work, it is an environment-action in which a multiplicity of elements are happening simultaneously or without a common logic. Sometimes fragments of music dominate the sound system, sometimes calm, ambient sounds; other times there might be dissonant, saturating electronic processes. The piano-ear might morph from a harmonious minimalist piano progression into a noise composition of feedbacks. Sometimes, as I walk, I am performing and sometimes I am silent. You make sense of these diverse stimuli as your own songscaping, which in a vacilar negotiates the sonic intentionalities of self-expression and its outside. The fact that it does not matter where you are in the room, how long you stay in it, or that you can walk or be seated, is all sustained by the fact that the horizon of silence is inevitably established. It does not require any particular intentionality; it is simply an inevitable outcome.

I like to think of the articulation of the horizon of silence in *Romper el Silencio*, in terms of Vicente Huidobro's *Creacionismo* (Huidobro, 1976). According to this creationist poetics, the poet walks through both the worlds of nature and those of his own creation, without hierarchies between them as all worlds are equally accessible to the poet (More about Huidobro's *Creacionismo* is provided in the appendix). In *Romper el Silencio* each songscaping trajectory encounters its horizon of silence as it makes sense of the different sonic intentionalities. These intentionalities are grouped in opposition as those of self-expression and its outside. This opposition is built as a creationist walk through opposing worlds: as an entanglement of both personal worlds and the possible outside of them.

#### **4.5 The fragility of the horizon**

This practice based research started from the intuition that the experience of sound, as both my personal expression and an outside to it, was something familiar to me. Even though this immediately strikes as an impossible, contradictory experience, the intuition was there. This

intuition is identified as the vacilar sensitivity and is framed in the search of reconciliation between sonic ontology and para-ontologies. In the introduction of this dissertation, these two groups are identified as dividing the field of sonic arts between practices that propose the experience of sonic ontology—an experience that would be prior to cultural appropriation and hence neutral, universal and natural—and on the other side, practices that emphasise mediation—that we always remain in the para-ontological, as culture or subjective traits cannot be suspended. The vacilar sensitivity arises as the experience of reconciliation between these two groups. In Chapter Three I venture a consideration of this vacilar intuition and its ontological frame in relationship to a conceptual understanding of America not as a continent, but as the inauguration of the problem of America<sup>5</sup>. This problem is understood as what has brought challenges to cultural and individual identity, to social and ecological relationships in what has lately become known as the Anthropocene. The problem of America provides an overarching concept to make sense of sonic ontology, para-ontologies, and vacilar, as it is a problem that denounces the urgent need to reconcile universal understanding with the acceptance that difference cannot be overcome.

The intuition of an experience that is both self-expression and an opening to the outside of it is then an experience that is both para-ontological and ontological. In Chapter Three I identify the sonic Criollo as the bearer of this intuition. In Chapter Three I described the sonic Criollo as the dancing 'I' that identifies with the vacilar sensitivity and described how this sensitivity is not sustained by freewill but is enforced by the menace of the earthquake. This menace is perhaps at the heart of the intuition that started this research project. Importantly then, the sonic Criollo is conditioned to experience vacilar as the menace of the earthquake is an imminent threat. As described in the previous section of this chapter, the sonic Criollo arises as a particular para-ontology and a tradition of that para-ontology is proposed in the appendix.

In relationship with the horizon of silence, it is a sensitivity that cannot ignore the horizon. However, I venture to say that there is a fragility of the horizon of silence for those who do not have the experience of the menace of the earthquake. As Ihde states, '*ordinarily one ignores the horizon*' (Ihde, 2007, p.107) and therefore it is left in the periphery. As such it is reduced or left to

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<sup>5</sup> It might be relevant to highlight here, that this and other concepts are described in a glossary.

oblivion and its potential for the experience of vacilar does not unfold. Therefore, the horizon of silence is fragile and can easily be omitted. By contrast, the menace of the earthquake is what makes the sensitivity of reversibility urgent: it makes the horizon of silence impossible to ignore.

The horizon of silence is a testimony to reversibility, to the inevitable vacilar between self-expression and its outside. *Romper el Silencio* is an environment-action in which each participant is confronted with their own horizon of silence, as they are inevitably songscaping. This forces a consideration of self-expression and its outside, however it also points to the inherent, perhaps even necessary, failure of *Romper el Silencio*.

*Romper el Silencio* provides the experience of the horizon of silence in terms of the ambiguity of success and failure. By failing it succeeds and vice versa. If the environment-action would unequivocally succeed then it would not allow for reversibility. It would be negligent as to the relevance of the horizon of silence. Failure is then not *my* failure as a creator, as a performer or even as a listener. It is not to be confused with the failure to produce or experience a piece of art as intended. Failure here is necessary, is inevitable and basic for the survival of the sensitivity to reversibility. Failure in *Romper el Silencio* is directly related to the fact that the vibration of vacilar it proposes puts constraints to the sonic Criollo as a way to privilege the horizon of silence. This came from the consideration that the horizon of silence, as inevitable and ontological, could be experienced without the need of unfolding the para-ontological sonic Criollo exhaustively. However, as will be evident when considering *The Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk*, this should not be the case, as the artistic experience of vacilar somehow demands an energetic dancing 'I'.

This privilege of the horizon of silence has fundamental pragmatic consequences for the reception of *Romper el Silencio*. It does not only leaves the work in an ambiguous terrain but also in a fragile state. I believe that any visitor to *Romper el Silencio* is confronted with the ambiguity, with the success-failure of different sonic intentionalities and what they make out of it will hopefully also be ambiguous. For me this ambiguity fulfils the desired sensitivity of reversibility. However I cannot help but wonder if the fragile state of it will somehow interfere with the ambiguity for some visitors to *Romper el Silencio*. Without the experience of the menace of the earthquake, the horizon of silence is fragile and might be ignored. Consequently, for a particular listener, the



ambiguity could be understood as a failure of the work. For another, perhaps resolving the ambiguity, the work is a success as something like an abstract immersive experience.

For me both are right and wrong, for there is no solution or there should not be one. In this sense *Romper el Silencio* must fail to succeed. *Romper el Silencio* opens up the impossibility of itself. It is both successful and an auto-boycott. As such its songscaping will always remain in the speculative domain. Otherwise the sensitivity to both self-expression and an opening to the outside will lose its reversibility. It will be inclined to either one or the other. The horizon of silence would therefore be ignored. Even though *Romper el Silencio* fulfils the experience of the sensitivity of vacilar, this state of fragility or this condition of it as success-failure makes it to me an important work as research, however not so much as a definite artwork. As will be described below, *The Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* allowed a vacilar vibration that is not only the integral vacilar experience but also does not limit the dancing 'I' into a fragile state.

#### **4.6 The inevitable breaking of Silence**

In Chapter Three I described the sonic Criollo as the sonically enacted in-between of other American standpoints identified as the Nameless America and the American Diasporas. A relevant difference mentioned between the Criollo and the other two, is that both the Nameless and the Diasporas can make sense of themselves by comparison to their pre-American conditions, whereas the Criollo only arises as the present of the problem of America.

In effect this means that the sonic Criollo does not exist as a fix entity or essence but only as in-between action. As we have already seen this condition of the sonic Criollo is akin to the horizon of silence and earthquakes. In fact, the horizon does not exist in itself but is enacted as a personal boundary between the ocean and the sky, and earthquakes are not the layers of earth through which we know them. Likewise, the sonic Criollo is not the real identities through which we know it: it is not identifiable as an ethnic group or as a race. It is an energy that looms in the friction between identities but never becomes fixed or essential as an identity. It only survives speculatively in constant evanescence as other identities are shaped. The fact that it never becomes solid is inherent to its constitution as a dancing 'I'. In the ambiguity of self-expression and its outside any other outcome would mean clearing the ambiguity. The sonic Criollo is only a

speculatively real 'I' that provides an opening, an outside to personal expression yet it cannot be identified with self-expression or with what lies outside of it.

As such the sonic Criollo allows for the pursuit of your personal expression by enforcing para-ontological mediation yet in its evanescence it is also open to the possibility of an ontologically universal realm. It allows for the determinism, the judgemental and arbitrariness of para-ontology and, in the sensitivity of reversibility, the sonic Criollo disorients the para-ontological in ambiguity. It is open to be estranged and to consider other possibilities. As such, the 'I' is entangled with its outside and self-expression only unfolds as the intra-action with its outside. This sensitivity is then particularly conscious of the horizon of silence, as the sensorial experience of contradiction—of both your action and the limits imposed to it, or of both your opening to the world and your closure to it.

The horizon of silence is an inevitable testimony of the ambiguity between self-expression and an opening to the outside. It is articulated by my action and also it will always remain as an outside to it, as encompassing the possibilities of my actions. It boycott's my understanding of things, my way of making sense and therefore allows an ambiguity between what they are and what they are not. Hence, it provides an ontological certainty from which certain speculative universals might be built.

In relationship to the overarching idea of silence with both its defenders and detractors—discussed in Chapter Two—the horizon of silence reconciles silence as the state of openness and acceptance pursued by its advocates while at the same time empowering the shushed intentionalities—that are repressed to allow such a silence to emerge.

Silence as the opening to the outside, is the promise of balance, of flexible hierarchies, of bending fixed and static determinisms. It promises neutrality, a non-judgemental listening as the ground for infinite tolerance and acceptance. Indeed, silence is the promise that no sound, no voice, shall go unlisten. Silence then is the promise of embracing all possibilities. Yet silence is going to be broken. Silence is going to be interrupted. Silence is under constant threat. It is always waiting to be lifted, as silence requires that you keep silent, that you are constrained. In fact, silence is only possible as a waiting for it to be broken.

As explored in Chapter Two, if silence is waiting then the renunciation of the 'I'—the silencing of a particular point of view and the prejudices of its tastes, notions and rationalism—is only a metaphor. Indeed, silence is never silent but it takes action and expresses a desire. It expresses the desire to balance, to neutralise and of doing justice. Silence in order to be silent needs to establish its non-judgemental listening and in doing so it is breaking silence to start with. Even if silence and its promise are desirable, the listening it proposes is impossible as it betrays itself in order to exist.

This betrayal at the inauguration of listening is the same mechanism of the auto-boycott of *Romper el Silencio*. However *Romper el Silencio* proposes a poetics of the inevitable through a sensitivity of vacilar. It is precisely this betrayal, this inevitable failure-success that constitutes it. For the silencing of the poetics of silence this is not the case. Silencing shushes its auto-boycott and tries to minimise it. Therefore, it is not able to confront the inevitability of both listening to the outside and enacting self-expression.

That listening, as an unbounded opening to the outside, is impossible is the starting point of listening for vacilar. Working through that impossibility silencing only survives as the metaphoric enactment of itself: as a theatrical stage in which listening is performed but is not phenomenological or ontological. Listening to silence cannot be phenomenological. The different varieties of *epochés*, of bracketings that provide the basis from which any phenomenology grounds its priority of perception—its access to the ontological realm—is already establishing a linear direction; an anterior intentionality that surpasses the bracketing. If so, listening can only be after the fact of admitting that it is actually impossible or that it is only a metaphor. Consequently, listening can only be practiced as a waiting for non-listening action to resume.

For the sonic Criollo the inevitable cannot be ignored. The inevitable is a horizon of silence that is constantly being reminded by the menace of the earthquake. This is a menace that does not allow the Criollo to materialise as an identity. The inevitable vacilar makes the sonic Criollo to remain speculative, walking the creationist path through both the real and the imaginary as Vicente Huidobro's *Creacionismo* (Huidobro, 1976); claiming the need of total renovation for which nor monarchy nor democracy is prepared as Simón Rodríguez's understanding of South American

politics (Rodríguez, 1990); portraying its folk without regards to their ethnic or cultural roots as Violeta Parra's songs, etc. (See the appendix for more on these authors and others).

The inevitable vacilar between self-expression and its outside will perhaps always remain in the speculative realm. It will always be inevitably a story of success-failure. Indeed, every self-expression inevitably functions through some notion of neutrality and of universal validity; every self-expression presupposes universal values. Likewise and reversely, any pretension of universality and neutrality will never be final; every pretension of universality is a personal expression. Moreover, by universalising I am inevitably discriminating no matter how desirable my universal axioms might be. Regardless of what can be considered to be the most rightful balance between self-expression and its outside; the ambiguity, the reversibility, will always remain. In other words, the ontological and the para-ontological are always entangled in the inevitable vibration of vacilar.

I believe that the fact that this is inevitable makes it also obvious and perennial. As such it has been obviated. The inevitable is circumvented, as its inevitability seems to make it redundant, irrelevant. However, the menace of the earthquake forces the sonic Criollo not to obviate the obvious, not to ignore the inevitable. The obvious and inevitable become a sensitivity that the Criollo is unable to circumvent, not because it wants to but because of the menace of the earthquake.

In *Romper el Silencio* I developed an environment-action with the hope of presenting and experiencing the horizon of silence as the inevitable menace of the earthquake. Yet as the horizon of silence is fragile, there is a risk that the horizon will be ignored. Even though this might seem constitutive of vacilar as the inevitable failure-success of a vibration between self-expression and its outside, I wanted to test other possibilities that would make the artwork less fragile.

#### **4.7. The Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk**

As mentioned earlier, the element of failure-success is inherent to the reversibility of sonic agencies. It is a necessary condition for the sensitivity of vacilar as it allows the swinging back and forth of dance into doubt and vice versa. Sonic traps, as what allows the entanglement of self-expression and its outside by disorientating intentionalities, is then a mechanism of failure-success.

As this element is developed in *Romper el Silencio*, my conclusion is that the work effectively allows the experience of vacilar as it opens all elements (max/msp environments, walking, videos, performance, etc.) to an evanescent in-between: to a sonic energy that is only experienced through the elements yet is not captured by any. That is to say, it is the experience of an energy that subsists through the elements as the menace of the earthquake. Therefore *Romper el Silencio* is effectively a conclusion of this research reached through practice.

Even though this is the case, the failure-success mechanism of *Romper el Silencio* left me with a sensation of inscrutability. The concert-installation succeeds in providing the experience of the sensitivity of vacilar, yet I believe the methods by which the inevitable condition of failure-success is treated, makes the work relevant and conclusive for this research but not entirely satisfactory as an artwork. Somehow the failure-success of *Romper el Silencio* left me in a perplexed state that I do not identify as part of the sensitivity of vacilar. It seems to me as if the vacilar sensitivity was folded hermetically inside an aura of indeterminacy. As a creator trying to develop works in the sensitivity of vacilar, the dancing 'I' of the sonic Criollo should be active and enforcing its para-ontology. The failure-success of *Romper el Silencio* seems debilitating to a point where I, as a creator, was perhaps not giving enough room to the dancing 'I'. If we recall the conclusions of the musical stages of the songscape project (see Chapter One), I drop the music performer stance because through it the vacilar experience was only clear for those engaged as performers and not as audience. However, as a performer and creator, the music performer stance did provide me with a personal satisfaction and drive that allowed an extensive unfolding of the dancing 'I'.

It was important to drop the music performer stance to develop all the nuances of the vacilar sensitivity and test the integral vibration of it, as is accomplished in *Romper el Silencio*. However, I felt the need to try at least one last experiment to create a work that could hopefully bring back the excitement of the musical stages to the vacilar vibration.

With this idea in mind, I had the opportunity to do a small project while in Morelia, Mexico for the Visiones Sonoras festival in October 2017. After the festival I was invited to do a small presentation in Mexico City. I did not have with me much musical equipment so I decided to test a

new approach. This consisted in what could be labelled as a *songscaping walk*. I walked from where I was staying to Morelia's Bosque de Cuauhtemoc Park, I took my recorder turned on in my hand, yet I made no preparations or took no actions as to monitor or control the recording. This way, sounds from the place, my own sounds—such as breathing and footsteps—and mechanical sounds from the recorder are all present. While in the park I kept recording and if I found anything that was of interest to me, I would interact with it. For example there was a path that had exercise machines in it. In every machine there were quotations to motivate the users. I walked around this path reciting and improvising with those quotations. At one point you could hear music coming from the radio of a food kiosk nearby, so I tried to sing the quotations following the music. At another point a bird started to sing loudly so I tried to perform the quotations interacting with it. I did about nine recordings some involving interactions and others walking.

Between these recordings I would sit down to take notes. I would write a combination of conversations, music I heard, my own thoughts or even loose words that came to me. Alongside this writing I would draw shapes and nonsensical words to represent my sonic experience, to document it or to excite it. I therefore understood of the note taking as a listening-performing and recording process. If with the recorder I could capture certain elements of the acoustic experience, it was through the notebook that I could capture the sonic experience beyond acoustic sounds and even into theory.

For the presentation in Mexico City, I had the recordings in my laptop and I could skip through them, add some delays or reverbs. I had a microphone with a delay pedal and I downloaded a small looper for my phone. The performance consisted in reading and improvising following what was in the notebook and listening to the recordings. At some points I would just listen to the recordings, at others I would only read or perform following the notebook, or try combinations and mixing of the elements with delays, reverbs, an electronic drum and sample manipulations. At some points, I would record into the phone looper and walk around the room with the phone playing that recording while the main P.A. remained silent.

Importantly, this *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* is both a soundwalk that is site-specific and also, as songscaping, it is not exclusively concerned with the site but with my stance as a

music performer. In fact, the improvisations I did following the notebook, do not arise from the site but relate to my personal expression. Likewise, the electronic manipulations of the field recordings were not used to emphasise the experience of the site but as part of a sonic trap that disorients the limits between self-expression and its outside.<sup>6</sup> During the performance of this songscaping walk, at times the improvisation moves far away from the walk through Morelia. Indeed, during the performance my attention and actions reinforce the sonic experience I am having and not necessarily an interpretation of the walk or site.

All these elements allow an understanding of how the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* is not just a site-specific work. Just as the musical stages of the songscape project, described in Chapter One, it has a site-specific element but this is used as part of a larger sonic trap strategy. The reason of this trap is to create an entanglement of self-expression and its outside, an entanglement that necessarily surpasses the consideration of the work as site-specific. Indeed, the entanglement is the experience of reconciliation between personal or para-ontological attributes and openness to an impossible ontological realm that would be untouched by para-ontology. Therefore, the work is not centred in one unambiguous element, such as being site-specific, but moves ambiguously between listening to and interacting with a site and personal expression that is not concerned with the site.

With this little experiment I was able to create a new approach to songscaping in which the limits of listening to the outside and self-expression are entangled without the loss of my personal drive as a dancing 'I'. By allowing this dancing 'I' to expand, the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* recovers the music performer stance that was softened in *Romper el Silencio*, and invites my personal theories and speculation to become a part of the experience itself. This was only a small experiment for which I did not have many resources, yet I believe it opens up an interesting angle to keep developing in my practice. Through this songscaping walk method I was able to integrate further the theory and the practice of the sensitivity of vacilar. Indeed, the horizon of silence appears in the interstices between environment, walking, writing, listening, performing,

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<sup>6</sup> A contrast between this type of sonic trap manipulation and electronic manipulation to emphasise the experience of the site is illustrated in Chapter One in relation to some of Luc Ferrari's compositions

manipulating, etc. None of these elements can be adequately positioned as part of only one component of *vacilar* (dance, doubt or trap) yet all of them vibrate between dance and doubt, all of them provide instances of sonic traps by way of constructing my environment-action. Through the interstices of the different elements the sonic Criollo dances, it enforces a self-expression and yet is not fixed to any final form. There is an active failure-success in the process yet this does not encircle the songscaping walk into a fragile and hermetic aura. On the contrary, it reassures the possibility of a creationist-speculative reality in which subjective traits are enforced—as unbreakable mediation or para-ontological—and yet an ontological, inevitable and universal certainty is acknowledged and listened to.



## Conclusion

The realisation of this project was fuelled by an intuition, a sensitivity that somehow affirmed the possibility of a contradictory sonic experience of both self-expression and its outside. From this intuition the project developed through different stages—involving music making, listening and critical considerations of the sonic—to unfold the intuition and explore its implications as extensively as possible. This intuition, which I identify as *vacilar*, is simultaneously enforcing sonically a personal position and standing outside of it to listen to other possibilities. As such the project is framed as a contribution to solve the fissure in sound studies and sonic arts identified at the introduction of this text. This is a fissure between 1) the position that claims an access to sonic ontology—as a realm of reality that is universal, neutral, and natural—is possible and 2) the opposite positions that claim that culture or subjective traits always mediate access to the ontological, thus that we are always bound to para-ontological realms.

This fissure has many different nuances over all the field of sound studies, from anthropology, philosophy, and cultural studies to music and sonic arts in general. This project attempts to reconcile the fissure for the sonic arts by an exploration of the sensitivity of *vacilar* as a sonic art practice, and contrast it to poetics of silence—as arts practices that attempt an access to the ontological—and to poetics of mediation—as those that stress mediation. The contribution of this project is then the unfolding of the sensitivity of *vacilar* as an experience that reconciles the para-ontological and the ontological for the sonic arts.

The attempt to access the ontological in the sonic arts is identified by this research in Chapter Two as poetics of silence. This comprises a tradition of experimental music, sound art and sonic thinking. This poetic's main method for attempting an experience of the ontological has been by way of silencing the 'I'—of bracketing it in one way or other—in order to open up a field of other possibilities; of liberation from preconceived hierarchies, notions and tastes. For the poetics of silence, as explored in Chapter Two, the main mechanism to silence the 'I' are listening practices.

As a contrast to this poetics of silence, this project identifies as poetics of mediation art practices that stress the impossibility to transcend mediation and that therefore emphasise that the ontological is never accessible per se, as it is always negotiated para-ontologically. Mediation is

described in arts practices that deal with an estrangement of the body, cultural roots or homeland. Importantly, this project is not about poetics of mediation and these examples are used for illustrative purposes only as a contrast to the poetics of silence.

In Chapter Three, this text describes the problem of America as an overarching concept to make sense of the opposing poetics of silence and of mediation, and of the vacilar sensitivity as their reconciliation. The problem of America is conceptualised as the current problem of co-existence between different cultures and between humans and non-humans, encompassing themes of the Anthropocene Era and a globalised world. Succinctly, the problem of America puts urgency to both the ontological agenda of finding universal grounds of understanding and the para-ontological agenda of recognising irreducible difference.

This project is therefore about the ontological stances implicated in sonic arts. Its contribution is about providing experiences of vacilar as a reconciliation of the ontological and the para-ontological through a sonic arts practice. As such, this project is engaged more deeply with the poetics of silence and its contribution is directly related to the quest of access to the ontological. The contribution of this project is achieved by a double consideration of the poetics of silence. On the one hand, the idea of renunciation of the 'I' is celebrated as a desirable promise of neutrality, of a non-judgemental state that is able to listen to other possibilities and not impose on them a personal agenda. On the other hand, the possibility of bracketing the 'I' is called into question and denounced as an impossible pursuit.

The poetics of silence explores sonic experiences that require a shushing of the impulses of the 'I'. For example, to listen to what you do not like or to appreciate what is sonically happening to you regardless of your preconceived ideals and intentions are among the most evident methods of shushing. The poetics of silence therefore opens up the promise of a universal realm; it is the promise of communication, of acceptance of all possibilities by way of setting aside the discriminations and arbitrary tendencies of personal expression. Thus the poetics of silence foster experiences that confront fanatic or extremist positions that arbitrarily empower or exclude some of us. I identify this promise in the context of the problem of America. The poetics of silence is an endeavour to provide an artistic experience of a world that is multicultural, somehow unified, and

that through technological advances and global economy, has unleashed the Anthropocene era. A consideration of the sensitivities the problem of America opens up, allows an understanding not only of the poetics of silence, but of the poetics of mediation as well and of the vacilar sensitivity (see Chapter Three).

I have identified the poetics of silence as the artistic strategy of a Nameless America to participate in the New World. In short, the poetics of silence of the Nameless America is what provides access to the Western mind into the New World. The poetics of silence of the Nameless America is for me desirable, yet it cannot be taken as a closed system in itself. Its experience of America, of the New World or Anthropocene, is sustained by a phenomenological bracketing of the 'I' that creates an illusion of a plenary access to the phenomenon. In the last account, this functions as an oblique defence of a Western mind that remains transcendental, untouched, by the American condition it tries to understand (see Chapter Three).

Therefore my second consideration of this tradition is a critique of it. This is developed by precisely focusing on the bracketing of the 'I' as an impossible task. The irreducibility of self-expression is explored by problematising the notion of listening developed by the poetics of silence. As the paradigm through which the poetics of silence achieves an opening to the outside, listening would provide an experiential bracketing of the 'I'. However this bracketing can only be experienced as a waiting for the 'I' to resume (see Chapter Two). This irreducibility of self-expression is linked with a different point of access to the New World that is not that of the Western mind but the experience of those who have arrived to the New World from less advantageous points, and that I identify as the American Diasporas. For the Diasporas to renounce to the 'I' is a painful, violent and ultimately impossible task. Therefore, from that perspective the experience of self-expression is unveiled as overarching and unavoidable (see Chapter Three).

The contribution of this project resides in trying to conjugate the promise of the poetics of silence while affirming self-expression instead of suspending it. This is a contradictory task that is perhaps regarded elsewhere as impossible. The dilemma between sonic experience as reinforcement of personal values or as an opening beyond personal values is perhaps a perennial dilemma that cannot be resolved. It is impossible to be on both sides simultaneously. However it is

precisely in experiencing this contradiction, in embracing the irreducibility of this perennial juncture, where the contribution of this project resides.

In relationship to the poetics of silence and mediation, this text has shown how the contradiction of self-expression and openness to its outside has always been relegated. Perhaps as a perennial problem, it has never been emphasised and the poetics of silence and of mediation are constructed by way of not facing it directly. Indeed, their ontological stances are sustained precisely by setting aside this contradiction through specific mechanisms. In Chapter Two the relegation of the contradiction is identified for the poetics of silence as the mechanism of shushing and for poetics of mediation as the mechanism that Rorty (1991) identifies as the betrayal of deconstruction.

The sensitivity of vacilar does not have a mechanism to relegate the contradiction of self-expression and openness to its outside. Moreover, it is precisely the attempt to experience the contradiction what marks its contribution. As such, vacilar is experienced as reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological through the experience of sonic contradiction. Importantly, this is a reconciliation that does not resolve the contradiction logically but as experience. That is to say, the vacilar sensitivity unfolds the experience of ambiguity and reversible sonic agencies by vibrating between dance and doubt, by being entangled between self-expression and its outside in sonic traps.

What the sensitivity of vacilar addresses, is that this reconciliation through experience is inevitable, even though it is a perennial problem that has been relegated elsewhere. If instead of relegating inevitable contradiction, we make it fundamental to our sonic experience, then an experience that is both self-expression and openness to its outside is enacted. Therefore the vacilar sensitivity proposes its poetics as the inevitability of the experience of sonic contradiction. In Chapter Three the sonic Criollo was identified as who cannot relegate the perennial dilemma. The Criollo is therefore described as a dancing 'I' that is the enactment of the menace of the earthquake and in Chapter Four the inevitability of the experience is identified as the experience of the horizon of silence.

The vacilar sensitivity arises from 1) an inevitable experience and 2) the incapacity to relegate sonic contradiction. The fact that the experience is inevitable allows establishing the vacilar sensitivity as an ontological certainty, yet the incapacity to relegate sonic contradiction is identified para-ontologically in the figure of the sonic Criollo. The problem of America is identified in Chapter Three as a unifying concept that ties together the poetics of silence and its hope for universal understanding through access to the ontological, the poetics of mediation and the para-ontological refusal of unmediated access to the ontological, and the sonic Criollo as a dancing 'I' in-between the other two as the menace of the earthquake.

We have already identified above the contribution of this project from the side of ontological certainty, by identifying how the sensitivity of vacilar dialogues with the tradition of the poetics of silence. The contribution from the para-ontological side—that is as sonic Criollo—can be understood by furthering down the conclusions of the menace of the earthquake. The menace of the earthquake is an important contribution of this research as it 1) establishes a comprehension of the sonic which develops beyond the notion of the sonic as flux into sonic contradiction and 2) it proposes a certain South American sensitivity as able to lead in providing the experience of reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological in the sonic arts globally. Therefore opening up a field that surpasses its South American frame.

In relation to developing a new conceptualisation of the sonic, the menace of the earthquake, as described in Chapter Three, provides an understanding of the sonic that differs from the portrayal of the sonic as becoming, as fluidity or as a continuum between listener and listened. In fact, what is made evident by the experience of earthquakes—which is the strongest, most immersive sonic experience—is that the sonic cannot be perceived as a smooth or uninterrupted flow. Flow is only perceivable by the interruptions, the difference between an instance and the next, just as the different pages in a flipbook or the sequencing of still images to create the illusion of movement in cinema. The grain of perception is discrete and not continuous, otherwise there would be no way of recognising movement. The experience of the earthquake makes this evident and, as sonic experience, demands a conceptualisation of the sonic beyond the idea of the flux.

The earthquake involves becoming and flow, but only as a metaphor shaped in the contradiction between different layers, between different rocks. The earthquake as flow is unperceivable; indeed, the earthquake is experienced only as effect and manifestation in other materials. Therefore the experience of the earthquake is the experience of its menace; it is the constant reminder that whatever you do, whatever you feel, or whatever you understand, or wherever you stand, is under a latent threat and will eventually collapse (see Chapter Four).

The menace of the earthquake is what makes it impossible to set aside the contradiction in the manner of both the poetics of silence or of mediation, and to be inevitably in the ambiguity, in the reversibility between self-expression and its outside as a vacilar vibration. In this text, the menace of the earthquake is developed from the real sonic experience of the earthquake to also encompass other elements of my Chilean background that can be interpreted from it. Importantly, instead of emphasising cultural roots, origins or values as the Diasporas or the Nameless do, the menace of the earthquake is only brought into existence by the friction of elements that are per se foreign to it (see Chapter Three).

The earthquake is not the essential property of any element but the sonic contradiction between them. The menace of the earthquake is then the constant threat of the sonic as being able to destabilise, confuse, destroy, rearrange, what we take to be our solid ground. In effect, the menace of the earthquake is what sustains the vacilar sensitivity. As such, the menace of the earthquake involves a reconfiguration of the silence identified as the substratum of the poetics of silence. Silence is reconfigured for vacilar by absorbing the notion of silence of the poetics of silence—as a silencing of the 'I' that allows an outside to personal expression—and placing it inside the limits of personal experience. That is to say, the experience of silence is conceptualised as the experience of the horizon. I propose the horizon of silence then as a personal line that appears in the contradiction between different elements: it cannot be identified with any of them, but only with the inevitable contradiction of experience (see Chapter Four).

With the menace of the earthquake, this research provides a new conceptualisation of the sonic and develops the concept of sonic contradiction. Whereas logical contradiction works inside a system with clear boundaries, sonic contradiction confuses boundaries and opens up vacilar.

The horizon of silence works similarly to the menace of the earthquake yet it lacks the urgency the menace of the earthquake has. So whereas even though everyone has the ability to recognise sonic contradiction in the experience of the horizon of silence, this sonic contradiction can be easily ignored. The menace of the earthquake on the other hand cannot be ignored, and forces a consideration of the sonic beyond the flow as strong contradiction between other layers. Nevertheless, this strong contradiction is not ontological as not everyone is under the menace of the earthquake. In fact, it is built by a specific geo-cultural experience. The menace of the earthquake is a particular mediation or para-ontology to access the experience of the sonic. Contradictorily, this para-ontology is always under threat and open to abandon itself towards an outside.

The menace of the earthquake is an experience of reconciliation between para-ontology and ontology that provides a new understanding of the sonic. As such, it provides an important contribution of this research by defining the sonic as a strong contradiction that surpasses the definition of the sonic as flux.

The second major contribution of this research as menace of the earthquake is to propose certain Latin American sensitivity as able to lead in providing the experience of reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological in the sonic arts. Therefore, through the Latin American para-ontology of the sonic Criollo, the ontological is accessed beyond the Latin American frame. The sonic Criollo is not an essential identity but a dancing 'I'—that is, an oscillation that is only graspable as the friction between other defined elements or identities in a way that is akin to the earthquake—as an energy that is only recognisable as the shaking of rocks, buildings, etc. Therefore, the notion of the sonic Criollo is not to be confused with a portrayal of profound characteristics of a Latin American essence, it is not the portrayal of a race or ethnic group. Even though I do arrive to it by way of a consideration of the intuition that puts this research project into motion in relation to my personal experience—as a Chilean and with examples of artists, geographical and historical conditions of Chile and Latin America (see Appendix)—it is far from a characterisation of a Latin American Being, as would be the enterprise of other authors such as Rodolfo Kusch in *América Profunda* (Kusch, 1999). I must emphatically insist that the sonic Criollo

as a dancing 'I' is not bound to a particular history, essence or geography; it is not the defence of the particularities of a group of people. As was seen before, the poetics of silence is an artistic experience that is the point of access for a Western mind into the problem of America. In effect, it is the contribution of a sensitivity that arises in the U.S.A. and that now spans the whole of the West (see Chapter Three). In short, this sensitivity allows for the identification of an American infused West with certain ideals that—under one of its more dramatic interpretations—makes them the holders of the future as bearers of freedom, multiculturalism and universal understanding (Massey, 2007), a model that I would say is currently under crisis.

Just as the poetics of silence arises from the context of the Nameless America envisioned in the U.S.A. but is not bound only to the people of the United States, the sonic Criollo is not bound only to the people of Latin America. The dancing 'I' of the sonic Criollo is a sensitivity that contributes to an experience of the problem of America beyond the limits of the Diasporas or the Nameless. As points of access to the New World, we could understand of the Diasporas as the point of access from the past. They arise from the impossibility to forget the past as it is dragged into the present. On the other side, the Nameless could be understood as a point of access from the future, from the promise of universal harmony and coexistence, of pulling the present towards this ideal. The sonic Criollo is not unequivocally bound to the past or the future of the problem of America, but it vibrates between the two ambiguously, as it is effectively situated in the present of the problem as the inevitable experience of contradiction between self-expression and openness to its outsides, or in other words, as *vacilar*.

Perhaps just as the poetics of silence is opened from the United States, I would speculate that South America is prone to the sensitivity of the inevitable *vacilar*, and opens it up for consideration from a wider perspective. The South American might not be the only case of such an inclination, but it is the one I can speak from with the certitude of the menace of the earthquake. The sensitivity of *vacilar* is effectively a way to conjugate openness to the outside while reinforcing self-expression, that is to say, my Latin American self-expression. In this way, if the Diasporas and Nameless America provide points of access to the problem of America, I understand that the contribution of the sonic Criollo is to provide a sensitivity that more adequately deals with and



within it. Situated in the present of the problem, it both constructs the promise of the future as it nurtures the heritage of its past. It therefore cannot proclaim itself as the bearer of the future. It does not establish an American condition as a new stage of development to which the rest of the world will have to advance: it establishes the need of embracing sonic contradiction that is, and always has been, inevitably present. This sonic contradiction might have gone unnoticed or been ignored before, but the current urgency of the problem of America requires that this relegation be reevaluated.

The development of this project was organised methodologically according to the strategies and methods needed for the development of sonic traps. The first stages were through the development of songscape sonic traps as an entanglement of self-expression as music and its outside as sonic environments or soundscapes (see Chapter One). However the practice as considered within the limits of those methods was incapable of fully grasping the scope of what the intuition demanded. Indeed, there were elements that remained immune to the sonic traps. The project grew into wider considerations of the sonic and methods of experiencing it that do not involve a musical agenda as it dealt with the two other elements that through sonic traps make up the sensitivity of vacilar: doubt and dance (see Chapters Two and Three).

The Fourth chapter deals with the development of works that bring together most effectively the three elements of vacilar. The final work of this project was conceived as the concert-installation *Romper el Silencio*. According to my understanding, this work satisfactorily allows for the ambiguous and reversible interplay of self-expression and its outside. As the experience of the horizon of silence, this is a work that falters, that is never fully present as it contradicts itself. Thus it could be said that it includes as one of its multiple possibilities to be an auto-boycott (see Chapter Four). However what *Romper el Silencio* misses is the thrill, the excitement, the bodily engagement that the musical pieces had. The *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* is then proposed as a work that is able to provide the experience of vacilar and oscillate between the ontological and the para-ontological without losing the thrill of the musical pieces. It is the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* then what provides the most complete contribution of this research as practice based.

Importantly, as this is a project that deals with the ontological implications of sonic experience in arts practices, one important contribution of the *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* is how the ontological and para-ontological are a vacilar in the ambiguity between being site-specific, theory, song, soundwalk etc.

As a conclusion, this particular feature opens up a very interesting angle for me to follow up in further research practice. Whereas the ambiguity of sonic agendas opened up by the inevitable contradiction can be incisively remarked on this piece of theoretical writing, such a clear-cut, explicit enunciation is not possible as a sonic experience. This is inherent to the experience itself as discussed in Chapter Four. As a conclusion, what is interesting about this for me is how the theoretical and the practical aspects are both joined and distanced by this ambiguity. To theoretically elucidate the contradiction carries for me a form of closure, a satisfactory point of describing and understanding my intuition and speculate about its issues and possible reach. The practical work—that sustains this theoretical unfolding—is unable to reach the same unequivocal point. *Romper el Silencio* and the *Morelia sound poetry walk* are therefore *more ambiguous* than the theoretical writing on them. There is a wider level of contradiction that is ungraspable on paper with its lineal development and sequential words.

This piece of writing can serve as a gateway, yet the experience of sonic contradiction is only validated by the practice of it. Even more, perhaps the validity of the notions I have unearthed here are per se irrelevant. That is to say, the theoretical account is only valid as long as it helps understand the intuition that propelled this research and the practice it entailed. Its validity beyond the practice is therefore a matter that is not pertinent to it. In this sense, this work is indebted to the creationist agenda developed by Vicente Huidobro (1976) of creating its own reality as it walks both *natural* and *created* worlds, indistinctly and contradictorily (see Appendix for more on Huidobro). As such, the theoretical writing is perhaps revealed as inextricably linked to my personal expression; it is my own way of understanding as my horizon of silence is established. In other words, this text is part of the dancing 'I'.

The *Morelia sound poetry walk* then is an important contribution, as it closes the gap between theory and practice. In contrast, the work *Romper el Silencio* is far from providing a

closure; it is evanescent and remains uncertain. Whatever it materialises, whatever form it takes, it always remains under threat: it can never be established as a closed system. When compared to *Romper el Silencio*, the theoretical work can overcome this and be a closed system. The contribution of the *Morelia sound poetry walk* is entangling how both the practice and the theory are then complementary and also exclusionary. Because of this, I believe the text and the practice work together as a fundamental aspect of sonic contradiction. There is reversibility between them in that 1) there is a need of the theory in order to understand them and 2) theory somehow closes what the practice cannot close and must keep open. This level of contradiction is perhaps for me the most relevant to embrace as a conclusion to this project; it provides fertile ground to develop into future research.

This constant opening, this vacilar that makes me falter in my situatedness cannot be resolved theoretically. Yet without the text there could never be an articulation of it. In this way, in order to further develop this research it is my intention to continue along lines that will hopefully diffuse even more the boundaries between disciplines; between personal inclination and theoretical frames. The purpose remains the same of developing ways of sonically conjugating self-expression and its outsides, yet adding a new layer of self-expression by way of making the ideas that purports the sonic conjugation to also materialise in the practice.

Preliminary, I understand that this approach could be accomplished by way of developing further the concept of the menace of the earthquake in relation to the temporal emphasis that can be ascribed to the two points of access to the problem America. As noted earlier, the Nameless America would be a point of access from the future, from a promise of universal understanding; and the American Diasporas are a point of access from the undeniability of the past, from the suffering and struggles the past brings to the present. The sonic Criollo is inescapably in the present of the problem of America. From this perspective, it is interesting for me to continue my research by developing the concept of present as a sentiment between resentment and presentiment. Therefore understanding resentment as a presentiment and vice versa. In other words, a vacilar between resentment and presentiment continues the themes developed in this research and could allow for an entanglement of theory and practice.

I have not started any formal research in this line, yet I believe there are angles to approach it. Resentment is a word commonly used in Chile to denigrate artists that are or have been combatant. If feeling is considered as an intimate form of listening (see Chapter Two) then I would like to entertain the notion that resentment could be understood as a form of feedback. It is a feeling that cannot escape the person who feels it. That person is the only pair of ears that is open to listen to it or, more to the point, to listen itself. In this sense, a resentful person would be resented because it cannot stop listening to something no one else wants to listen. As such resentment would be entangled with presentiment. If resentment is the inability to stop listening to something already past, presentiment is the ability to listen to something that is not already present. I would venture say that many of the artists such as Violeta Parra and Vicente Huidobro that I mention in the appendix, could be understood from the perspective of an entanglement of resentment and presentiment. In future research, it would be interesting to develop this idea of resentment/presentiment as a way of unfolding the menace of the earthquake. Indeed, the unfolding of the menace of the earthquake as a present vacilar between resentment and presentiment would perhaps require that narratives, poetic and philosophical concepts, and other possible textual elements be integrated into the experience of the vacilar between self-expression and its outsides.

This research project allowed me to develop the concepts of an intuition and—as I put it into practice—identify it as a sensitivity that reconciles ontology and para-ontology. The *Morelia Songscaping Soundwalk* satisfactorily develops this reconciliation as experience of the contradiction between self-expression and its multiple outsides. As such it is an unresolved work of which its solid, fixed configuration is always being negotiated, denied or transformed. The menace of the earthquake remains irreducible. It is an inevitable vacilar that cannot conciliate the contradiction but can embrace it through attentiveness to the emergence of the horizon of silence. The horizon of silence is not a property of any element and is not present in the perception of any element. It arises as the sonic contradiction between elements that a listener establishes—in turn the listener is established as sonic identity by the same horizon. Thus the horizon of silence

dictates the embracing of contradiction as an experience in which sonic agencies are reversible as the listener and the listened dance, doubt, falter and oscillate ambiguously. In fact, they are a vacilar vibration in which the different elements and possibilities are forged by an inevitable contradiction. Interestingly, what this contradiction involves is not the opposition to coherence per se but the faltering of any coherence, the ambiguity and the menace over what is taken to be solid ground.

As such, this vacilar sensitivity offers an experience of both self-expression and its multiple outsides. It allows for the indulgence in your own musical feeling, in your tastes, in your humanity while remaining vigilant, open and aware of other possibilities; it trims the utopian dream of universal understanding as established by the access to a neutral, nameless realm from which to establish all possibilities, all possible names. Likewise, the danger that could be ascribed to self expression as empowering extremism, fanaticism or any other form of establishing arbitrary, dogmatic or otherwise discriminatory doctrines is subverted. If perhaps the fear of such doctrines and the need to overcome them is what sets into motion the poetics of silence, I believe this poetics of the inevitable vacilar provides a way to continue the promise of silence while overcoming its having to rely in a shushing of personal names and instead to accept and call them.

## Appendix: towards a tradition of the sonic Criollo

The sonic Criollo arises as the menace of the earthquake, which is detailed in Chapter Three. It is enacted between other static or fixed elements and things as a dancing 'I'. This enactment is about a particular sensitivity that I feel connected to and that I try to articulate in my practice energetically, as it touches on my experience, perception, and understanding of my personal life and geo-cultural upbringing. In this appendix I will compare the notion of the sonic Criollo to other more traditional understandings of the term and present some historic events, geo-cultural conditions and draw similarities from my practice to that of other artists. These are artists that have helped me shape the notion of the sonic Criollo, as I understand their works to propose a similar sensitivity and that therefore allow me to speculate about a possible tradition of the sonic Criollo.

The understanding of the sonic Criollo that this research develops comes from an interpretation of the term *criollo* that differs from its traditional use. Focusing on Chile, the term *criollo* has been used to construct the essential characteristics of the national identity in the figure of the Huaso. In fact, as musicologist Juan Pablo González (1997) states in his study about the interplay between Same and Otherness in Chilean identity through popular music, it is the Huaso who is identifiable as the Same.

In Chilean popular music, alterity or the condition of being an Other has been defined in great measure from a Same that is born out of the *criollo* culture of the central valley of the country, where the Huaso reigns. This horseman of the Chilean countryside is an individualist and conservative *criollo*. Critical of innovation and tied to the fertile lands of the central valley, where he forged his homeland and where his country states lie. (González, 1997, own translation)

The Huaso is a countryside figure that is still deeply relevant for the construction of Chilean identity. In fact, the ballroom cueca that the Huaso played in patronal houses is still taught at large in schools throughout Chile and is promoted by the state. This is enforced by a law from 1979 passed by dictator Augusto Pinochet that declares cueca to constitute 'the most genuine expression of the Chilean soul through music and dance' and that the State must play a fundamental role promoting it through its cultural institutions and education (Decreto 23, 1979).

This first construction of the *criollo* is charged with traditional and aristocratic values that nowadays appeal only to a minority. A second stage of the *criollo* identity is later developed that

replaces the figure of the Huaso with that of the Guachaca. This second form of the criollo is sustained to this day by the social organisation of the Guachacas. Guachaca was originally a term used by the Chilean elite to refer to people they saw as vulgar, unsophisticated and drunk. The Guachaca is a type of urban criollo that instead of dancing to the ballroom cueca of the Huaso, dances to the cueca brava of lowlife bars and cabarets. Some of its most well known musicians are Roberto Parra and Los Chileneros.

In both these stages the criollo is built as a national identity that negotiates elements such as European and Native American heritages to shape an essentialist view of what being Chilean means. Shaping it as intrinsically different from what other similar populations around the globe are and particularly as different from the populations of neighbouring countries. Independent of value judgements of these articulations of the criollo, I believe they fall apart easily. For example, the cueca dance, that is quintessential to the definition of the identity in both stages, is also popular in Bolivia, Peru and parts of Argentina.

In my interpretation, the criollo is not identifiable with any specific group of the American society. The criollo is somewhere in between the coloniser and the colonised, not entirely one or the other. Even more, the criollo does not precede the relation between the two but it is the result of their interaction. As mediation between the coloniser and the colonised, the criollo does not occupy a position in itself but is enacted as the dancing 'I' of the menace of the earthquake (see Chapter Three).

I find connections between my work and that of many other artists, musicians and poets with whom I share a common heritage. I believe there is a silent—or perhaps shushed—tradition of South American artists that could be grouped as going in the direction of the sonic Criollo. Artists that, in one way or another, conjugate both being a determined 'I'—having a name and expressing it—and simultaneously for that name to be meaningless to them; these are artists that open up fields of otherness, of welcoming an outside to their 'I'. Therefore their art practices propose experiences that could be group as going towards that of the sonic Criollo.

For me, there is a clear development towards the sonic Criollo in the work of certain thinkers, poets and musicians such as Vicente Huidobro, Juan Luis Martínez, Violeta Parra, Los

Jaivas, Charly García and Roberto Falabella as will be described in what follows. Beyond the arts and humanities, I see the presidency of Salvador Allende from 1971 to 1973 to have been compelled from a similar sensitivity. In short, Allende was a Marxist president elected democratically, which was a situation without precedence for the world (Fontaine-Aldunate, 1999). Allende's government was a shift of paradigm that escaped the logic of the Cold War of the period; as such it turned international attention to Chile and was misunderstood by both the coalitions of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. as Allende's ideology ambiguously conjugated contradictory mechanisms and intentions.

Instead of framing it in the Cold War, Allende's political agenda could perhaps be better understood in light of Simón Rodríguez's political theory. Rodríguez was a Venezuelan thinker from the nineteenth century that was one of the mentors of Simón Bolívar—one of the leaders of South America's independence. Written in fragments, superposition of columns and other highly experimental literary resources, Rodríguez's *Sociedades Americanas*, first published in 1828, proposes South America as able to conduct radical social changes that have no precedence in the world. Politically, he believed that both monarchy or democracy were unable to make sense of South America's social paradigm, that was just starting to unfold as a new possibility for the world.

In order to make sense of South America's new paradigm, he drew parallels between governments and languages, highlighting the flexibility of South American languages in contrast to the norms of those languages as dictated by the *Old World* (Rodríguez, 1990, cf.53-56). The ability of words in South American Spanish of having flexible meanings—of which *vacilar* is a clear example—is not the same as in European Spanish, a condition that Rodríguez believed should be homologous to the new South American governments to come. This flexibility was for him already socially evident when comparing the treatment to slaves between South America on one side and the U.S.A (or what he identifies as Anglo-America) and Europe on the other. For Rodríguez, the treatment of slaves in Anglo-America and Europe shared the same paradigms that had slaves and masters clearly differentiated. In South America on the contrary, he states that slaves were not treated as such, masters and slaves could be confused in a more flexible and ambiguous society (Rodríguez, 1990, cf.129-133).



Going back to art practices; in what follows I will close this speculation about the possible tradition of the sonic Criollo by describing the work of certain poets and musicians. These are all authors that have been very influential in my own practice. I believe a description of their works, in relation to the menace of the earthquake, can provide a clearer sense of how my sensitivity can be situated and where it comes from. Therefore, their practices illustrate different instances of what could be understood as the tradition of the sonic Criollo.

### **Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948)**

What interests me of Huidobro in the context of the sonic Criollo is his ability to walk through an impossible path. To be both open to the unknown and undefined and at the same time to have a tectonic energy. His ability to be open to a global society, participating in international artistic and political circles, yet at the same to be reluctant to be identified with them—to completely disorientate the boundaries between an objective, shared reality (i.e. an ontological realm) and personal fictions and inclinations (i.e. the para-ontological).

He was politically active in Chile, both highly regarding the country while at the same time being in complete opposition to it. In fact, he went as far as to propose the abolition of the country and the birth of a new country by the fusion of the Chilean territory and that of other South American countries; an idea he published in the magazine *Europa* in Barcelona, 1933 (Cornejo, n.d.). During the year 1925, he had an active engagement with Chilean politics, even running as a presidential candidate. That same year he founded in Santiago the newspaper *Acción. Diario de Purificación Nacional*. This newspaper was deeply critical of Chilean society and after Huidobro denounced fraudulent actions by political authorities in it, he was badly beaten and the newspaper closed short after.

He was also active politically in Europe. In Spain he fought in the Civil War for the republicans. In the fictional letter *Finnis Britannia*—written through the voice of an Irish revolutionary in the context of India's emancipation—he called for the end of the British Empire. He claimed it to be the world's natural enemy as it has declared war against all countries (Huidobro, 1976). This fictional letter led to the unverified story of him being kidnap by the British intelligence for a few

days, as he later claimed in Paris and was reported by Alberto Rojas-Giménez in 1924 (Rojas-Giménez, n.d.).

Throughout his life he kept a close relationship with vanguard circles in Europe. His portrayed was painted by Picasso; he exchange correspondence with Erik Satie; collaborated in publications with Francis Picabia, Guillaume Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara and Jean Cocteau among others. However his agenda was far from becoming a follower of European trends or a member of an international scene. He conceived his own *Creacionismo* movement as a pioneer of the avant-garde and claimed that he had done his first calligrams—or visual poems with words in the shape of things—while still in Chile and ahead of Apollinaire's calligrams, that are internationally recognised as the first ones.

In fact, for Montersat Nicolás (2008), Huidobro was not only proposing completely radical new things both politically and poetically, but that he even started with Surrealism and Dadaism before they were even proposed in Europe (Nicolás, 2008). The truth of this statement is for me irrelevant, even more, I believe Huidobro's stance is more about an intuition of difference, a sensitivity that he tried to carry in his poetry and politics. In fact, Huidobro was pursuing a poetical sensitivity beyond the boundaries of objective truth. This is for me of the utmost importance to understand his work in the context of the sonic Criollo.

Both in his poetry and his politics, he was trying to articulate a something that is not. His literary movement of *Creacionismo* (Creationism) seeks the creation of poetry as a completely new thing, entirely free from the ties of given meaning or fixed, presupposed notions. He proposed a poetry that in no way was indebted to the real world, a world he saw as limited and fixed into a presupposed objectivity. Ultimately for him, the real world could not be taken to encompass reality in all its multiple dimensions. In his manifest *Non Serviam* from 1914 (Huidobro, 1976) he criticises the notion that reality is a given. He says farewell to Mother Nature and that he shall walk indistinctly through both her worlds and his own worlds. In relationship to the frame of this research, that could be understood as proposing an indistinct walk between ontology and para-ontology.

His poem *Altazor*, published in 1931, considered his creationist magnum opus, consists in a parachute descent. This descent is simultaneously a metaphor for life as a fall from birth to death and also a descent of language, losing its clear meaning and dissolving into nothing more than its materiality. The poem is divided into seven cantos or songs and moves progressively into the dissolution of language, with the last song being just phonemes. What interests me is the fact that the poem is articulated as a parachute descent. As such, once the jump has started, there is no escaping it. The fall is imminent and most importantly, inevitable. The parachute jumper is Altazor or the poet, yet there is nothing concrete, nothing unifying the songs together beyond the fact of his falling. The cantos are not unified thematically, their lengths are disparate and they have no structural bond.

Language gets to be dissolved in the end, which could be the death of the poet, however this dissolution is only sustain by Altazor jumping. Therefore the dissolution of the poet is both his death and the inevitable result of his actions. Furthermore, if his creationist poetry is to dwell in its own worlds, perhaps the descent is finally the fulfilment of it. Death would then be the success of his creationist agenda. The dissolution of language would therefore be far from erasing the poet, but a way through which he survives, a testimony to his acting. Indeed, the dissolution of language, generally understood as erasing the 'I' or the poetic persona, in *Altazor's* case would be the contrary. It is a way to safeguard its individual world and not surrender it to one imposed worldview.

The search of Huidobro is both to go beyond a sensorial reality, towards something that is further away, ungraspable and non objectifiable. At the same time as it is a drive to go beyond it is also about getting closer to our individual selves than what 'reality' allows. If sensorial reality loses its hegemony and is unable to dictate what the world is, then we are free to unfold our own inner worlds and validate them side by side with any other possible worlds. This creationist poetry of multiple worlds would permeate both into his political and poetical activities and writings, which would be indivisible. This links for me Huidobro's creationism to listening poetics like that of Pauline Oliveros or Salomé Voegelin (see Chapter Two) while at the same time it is also a call for action and energetic reinforcement of his own hierarchies. Even though he is able to break the

hierarchies of one reality, he nonetheless tries to impose his own reality. As such I see a vacilar sensitivity shaping up in his work—as both an openness to a sphere of multiple and open possibilities, while at the same time inevitably pursuing his own ‘I’. The fact that these two contradictory forces are nonetheless bound together is the inevitability of Altazor’s fall and works similarly to the inevitable characteristics of vacilar that provide its basis as an ontological certainty.

**Juan Lu s Mart nez (1942-1993)**

Juan Luis Mart nez’s poetry is a conceptual practice that deals with the disappearance of the author. Throughout his work there is a distancing himself from the poetic text he produces to allow an otherness to inhabit the work. In this sense his poetry relates to a tradition that spans a good part of the twentieth century and that could be traced back to Mallarm ’s *Un Coup de D s*. Undoubtedly this interpretation of his work is valid and has been well documented elsewhere (Fernandez and Rioseco, 2016).

I want to pursue an understanding of some of his work that positions his work towards the sonic Criollo next to Huidobro’s work, as both erasing the ‘I’ and yet inevitably safeguarding it. What interests me is how Mart nez is able to maintain this death of the author in line with Western literary practices and at the same time do it in such a way that keeps him ironically present—In a manner that ultimately is not dissimilar to Huidobro.

Commenting Mart nez’s best-known work *La Nueva Novela*, the poet Ra l Zurita highlights the complex interplay of Others through which the author dissolves. Zurita also mentions the ‘joke about identities’ present in the work yet he only attributes a secondary importance to it (Zurita, 2016). For me, this hierarchy can be reverted. The comic or ironic layer of Mart nez work is essential to my interpretation of his work and the interplay of Others could be understood as a secondary attribute of the irony.

The comic layer of Mart nez work has been brought most clearly into surface by the discoveries of Scott Weintraub regarding Mart nez posthumous publication from 2003 *Poemas del Otro* or *The Other’s poems* (Weintraub, 2016). For a reader familiar with Mart nez work, this collection of poems immediately seems odd. Mart nez poetry usually utilises symbolic visual images, abstract compositions and collage. In *Poemas del Otro* there is no use of any of these

resources, or of any other experimental approach to poetry writing. Beginning in 2013 and after some brilliant detectivesque work, Weintraub discovered that these poems are actually not written by Juan Luís Martínez but by a Swiss-Catalan writer of the same name. The Chilean Martínez translated them from French and published them without any mention to the Swiss-Catalan Martinez.

*Poemas del Otro* is then precisely that, the poems of another author. The unveiling of this provides a powerful insight into the irony at work in the poetry of Martínez. This work is both a masterful expression of the disappearance of the author while also providing the basis for its subsistence. Indeed, to make the joke evident, the Chilean Juan Luís Martínez survives in the text as an author non-author. Through irony, the text becomes a circular experience of the author becoming the non-author, who in his turn becomes the author in an infinite chain. Thus the joke is experienced as both a creation and destruction of authorship. It creates the author by destroying it. Martinez is the creator of a work that is not his. By never clarifying this, it keeps him ambiguously as the author and not the author at the same time. Thus, the circular experience is always going round, the author is always becoming the non-author and vice versa.

The irony, the comic element of Martínez poetry has to do then with the inevitable and is therefore a clear link to the vacilar sensitivity. Just as *Altazor* is inevitably falling, in this case the author is inevitably there. It is inevitably constructed. Try as you can to erase it, it will reappear somewhere. The erasure of the author is, ironically, only possible through authorship. Authorship is then not bound to a specific expression. It is the inevitable survival of the 'I' beyond it being shushed, or erased in the interest of securing access to an outside, to the Other or to silence (see Chapter Two).

I believe Martinez's approach allows for a freedom of movement through different elements, without being fixed to any of them. As an energy flowing through them, the common bond between the different elements is never a concrete something in itself but the interaction between the elements. As such, it is a dancing 'I', a sonic Criollo that appears in the in-between.

Martínez poetry is that of the death of the author and also of the inevitable survival of it. The author both is and is not at the same time. The erasure of the 'I' is here only possible by ironically

maintaining the 'I'. It is a matter of reversible, ambiguous orientations or, in other words, of the vacilar vibration.

**Roberto Falabella (1926-1958)**

Roberto Falabella suffered from cerebral palsy from a young age. This disease had him on a wheelchair throughout his life and eventually took his life in 1958 when he was only 33 years old. In spite of this, he was able to create an ample body of works—most of which remains archived without ever being performed or analysed—and also theorise about what the practice of a Latin American composer should comprise (Falabella, 1958).

His orchestral work from 1957 *Estudios Emocionales* (Emotional Studies) is one of the few of his pieces that have been performed in more than one occasion. This is an orchestral piece with a preponderance of percussion and only a moderate use of strings. It is organised in VII studies to be played continuously as one piece. It is composed through an eclectic mix of resources and the overarching presence of silence.

Throughout its seven studies you can hear diverse elements such as musical fragments from the carnivals of the north of Chile; a minimalism of modal harmonies; wind orchestration, irregular metrics and fragmented melodies reminiscent of Stravinsky; serialist techniques following Anton Webern's style; and finally, a protagonist use of silence. In fact, Study N°3 finishes in a long silence. This silence is located at the centre of the *Estudios Emocionales* and as I will explain is essential to an understanding of the composition.

On an article from 1958, Falabella gives a clear insight onto his agenda as a musician. He declares, that 'no longer does the American man resign himself to be a passive element on which all European cultural streams go to die, and aspires to offer his peculiar contribution.' (Falabella, 1958, p.80). Talking about serialist techniques in particular, he states 'Dodecaphony is not the last stage of musical evolution, or not even the highest so as to, in a purist eagerness, exclude all other.' (Falabella, 1958, pg.91, translation is my own)

Therefore, it is from this non-vertical view of musical resources that he creates his own particular contribution to music as an American composer. On this article he doesn't mention the use of silence as a resource of his compositional techniques. In my view, it is the use of silence

what allows in *Emotional Studies* the juxtaposition of contradictory materials. As was mentioned above, silence occupies a central position in the piece. At the end of Study N°3 there is a long written silence that sits exactly in the centre of the composition. Aside this long silence, there are shorter ones throughout the piece.

The different materials that make up this composition are never unified into a coherent one. They lack a congruence to be considered as unified into one essential principle. It is more the case of a synchronous being together than a structural composition in which the presence of every element is justified. Even more, some of the elements could be considered as in direct opposition to each other—such as simple modal melody and Webern's serialism. The ability to propose such a heterogeneous synchronicity is achieved by allowing silence to exercise a certain sonic dominance over the musical discourse.

On the score, silence is nothingness. It is a void, an emptiness measured in bars. As such, silence frames the outside of music. It gives room to what lies outside the music discourse. If Fusco talked about the body as a decorative layer that conceals a non-identity (see Chapter Three), perhaps here we could speak about music as a decorative layer that conceals silence. There is no unified or essential music characteristic, only musical styles sustained through silence. None of the elements have a priority over the other and none is essential. There is neither hierarchical order nor a progress from old styles into new styles. Serialism, perhaps considered just as a form of European folk, is treated at the same level as South American folk.

Silence is both pacifying the heterogeneity of elements but at the same time it is obstructing the development of a unified musical logic. In fact, for the 1960 interpretation of the *Estudios Emocionales* by the Orquesta Sinfónica de Chile, the director Georg Ludwig Jochum in an attempt to give more unity to it omitted the long silence and shorten the others (Falabella, 1960). This interpretation was the only available recording of the studies until recently. By cutting the silence, perhaps the German director succeeded in giving more unity to the piece in regards to the European tradition of music composition. However it completely destroys its main feature and puts in evidence how Falabella's compositional use of silence disrupts the expectations of musical form.

Also from 1957 is his piano piece *Retratos*. On this piece there is a similar composition technique of combining heterogeneous musical styles with a preponderance of silence. There is no South American folk in this one but I hear in it a diversity of historical and contemporary styles that go from classical to serialism and experimental approaches to the piano—like banging it on the sides and the lid. Just as in *Estudios Emocionales*, different fragments are presented, freely combined and interleaved by sections of silence.

Through the use of silence, diverse materials are built into a whole that lacks unity and yet is unified by their simultaneity. The void of silence functions as an empty chamber on which the different musical styles become superficial echoes of this fundamental nothingness. Different materials resonate with one another and provide different possible paths of musicality, yet they are inevitably bound to silence.

In the context of the sonic Criollo, we can identify in Falabella's work a listening to multicultural experience that, through the overarching presence of silence, validates the multiplicity of these musical languages, of these echoes. As described by Mark Smith 'an echo is nothing if not historical. To varying degrees, it is a faded facsimile of an original sound, a reflection of time passed.' (Smith, 2015, p.55). Therefore, echoes by themselves cannot claim access to a fundamental essence. The space of the fundamental sound in Falabella is occupied by silence, that is to say the void and fissure between musical styles.

To my understanding this fissure is the same sensitivity that I identify in this research as the menace of the earthquake. Each musical style that occurs in the composition, each configuration that we are able to hear, is only so as long as the earthquake allows it. None of them can claim access to an essential property, to a root or point in the direction of one clear future. They are only in the configuration that earthquakes allow.

### **Violeta Parra (1917-1967)**

In short, Violeta Parra is a folk artist that is not a folk artist. The menace of the earthquake is in her work inherent to her singing, to the styles she chooses and the way she positions it through her lyrics and lifestyle. She started her career as a folk singer together with her sister.



Besides her songs she also did visual arts and in 1964 became the first Latin American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts of the Louvre.

Parallels could be drawn between her work and that of Laurie Anderson. A song like *O Superman* from 1982 subverts the masculine criteria of musical climax replacing it by a constant giving-receiving, a static tension-resolution (McClary, 1991). This ultimately questions hierarchies of high and low culture, of man-woman, of pop and not pop. A song like Parra's *Gracias a la Vida* from 1966 could be listened to in a similar way. This song strikes me as a harmonic carousel. It is in a minor tonality and the opening melody is ambiguously dissonant—it is a tritone—yet reassuring—as it is placed on the tonic centre. It is both unsettling yet it is at home. This initial tritone sets the song in motion and yet makes the tonal movement irrelevant, estranged. The song doesn't develop but goes round and round for about five minutes, static and evanescent in a rarefied sonic environment of folk and not folk.

At a young age and after breaking her artistic association with her sister, Violeta Parra moved away from being a traditional folklorist singer and unleashed her creative energy. However she remained throughout her career performing the role of a folk singer. Her songs are hardly enrooted in any traditional musical style nor are they constrained by the expectations of a folk audience. She used melodies, harmonies, rhythms and instruments unknown to Chilean folk and her lyrics were heartfelt romantic misadventures or rants and sharp critiques of Chilean bourgeois society and the Catholic Church. None of these were characteristics to be found in traditional folk music. In fact, she effectively embodied an Otherness to what was considered Chilean in her times (González, 1997).

In this regard, her album *Composiciones para guitarra* recorded between 1957 and 1960 offers some of the most clear examples of this combination of her unrooted creative freedom and at the same time of her insistence in a (fictional) locally rooted 'I'. Of this album the long song *Gavilán* is the most radical example. The album version lasts over 9 minutes and is almost a progressive punk rock track for a singer songwriter. It progresses through different sections and ends up in a strong strumming over a dissonant chord with Parra screaming.

There are elements of the song that are reminiscent of the cueca dance (mentioned in the first section of this appendix), however this is not a dance song and the harmony is far from that of cueca. Just as in the *anticuecas* (a collection of compositions for solo guitar) of the same album, the harmony she uses sounds to me closer to works by Oliver Messiaen such as *Turangalila Symphonie* than to any traditional music from Chile. Perhaps she had the opportunity to listen to Messiaen in one of her long stays in Paris, perhaps not.

Her song *El Pueblo* recorded in 1960 while in Paris and included in the second edition of her *Canciones Reencontradas en París* album is for me also an intriguing short song. I have always listened to this song as if it was a lost song from The Beatles' White Album. Although written years before that album, the combination of pop-folk elements and a certain obscurity are for me akin to the psychedelic sounds of the late sixties, particularly to The Beatles songs such as *Long, long, long* or *Mother Nature's Son*. The folk melodies and guitar arpeggio of *El Pueblo* are not found in Chilean folk and sounds to me more like North American or Irish influences.

Her latest album and magnum opus *Ultimas Composiciones* was released in 1966 a few months before her tragic suicide. Throughout, this is an album that is both Chilean folk and not it. Her insistence in highlighting her 'I' is clearly sustained while at the same time this is not sustained in any essential feature of the music. The song *Gracias a la Vida* mentioned earlier is the opening track of this album.

In this album she utilises stringed instruments and percussions from other areas of America that are not found in Chilean folk. Interestingly one of the few 'proper' cuecas in the album *Pastelero a tus Pasteles* has a percussion accompaniment not traditional to the style and the lyrics opens saying 'I am leaving to Bolivia'. It is as if she was laughing in front of the claims to make cueca an emblem of Chilean national identity.

For me these are clear hints of her sonic Criollo sensitivity. Both acting forward, bringing her own name, affirming her position and being outside of it. As denounced by some new politicians, today the valorisation of Violeta Parra has been sadly absorbed by the status quo. Instead of an appreciation of her almost anti-folk stance, she is now considered to be at the heart, to be the mother of what a Chilean essential identity would be (Boric, 2017). Violeta Parra's

rebellious and restless spirit is about articulating in sound a radical and inexistent 'I' and claim it as existent. A Chileanness, an Americanness that is never present in itself but always flowing through something else: it is always mediated in what it is not. Just as Laurie Anderson, she is creating disorientation in the categories of popular/non-popular music to subvert them. Yet, while in Anderson's case this bounds her to a Nameless America (see Chapter Three), as her subversion comes from playing with the musical industry, with the commercial music strategies that are designed to appeal to a vast, nameless majority. In Parra's case it is about claiming her own space and acting in the name of it.

### **Charly García (1951)**

Charly Garcia is probably one of the biggest rock names in in the Spanish language. He certainly is one of the fathers of Argentinian rock. His career spans from the folk duo Sui Generis, through progressive bands and launching his solo career in the eighties. With the Falkland war, local rock stars in Argentina occupied the space of international acts and García raised to complete stardom (Hernández, 2012).

In 1996 García releases the album *Say No More* that for me marks the beginning of his most interesting period from the perspective of the sonic Criollo. In this album he starts to develop what he calls *constant concept* (Marchi, 1998, cf.219-225). Bored with the cleanness of studio recordings and the work with producers, constant concept arises as a sound experience through which songs travel in a constant flow of samples and layers, in an entropic mix that makes the songs almost unintelligible at some points. The myth says García released this album without the approval of his producers and is considered his most experimental and conceptual work.

Constant concept is both the recording of songs and their submersion into something else as it problematises the relationship between performance and fixed media. For the video of the song *Influencia* of the album of the same name released in 2002, García takes his constant concept to video format. He performs with the song in playback but the sounds from the camera are left on. You can hear him drop the microphone or the bangs of a plastic toy gun. At some point he even drops the song and partly sings partly comments what is supposed to happen in the song

in that moment. At the end of the video he says 'la vanguardia es así' or 'this is the way of the avant-garde'.

Charly García freely uses English with a strong Argentinian accent in some songs; his music is influenced by rock and roll, Stevie Wonder and The Beatles; he is an accomplished piano player with absolute pitch and classical training; he is a pop singer, a rock star and an Argentinian demi-God (Marchi, 1998). He has made covers of Violeta Parra and will continuously make references to the Tango culture in his songs. As a proud Argentinian/South American, he despises the international music scene that gives him only a secondary position at best. In the song *Chipi Chipi* he sings that he has never been to New York or Paris, even though he has recorded albums in Spain and regularly in New York.

I find all of this to be meshed into his constant concept, which is for me a sonic Criollo sensitivity. Both being a clear stance, a clear 'this is me', yet being in constant openness to reinterpretation and to the presence of other sounds. I listen to the album *Rock'n'roll (yo)* from 2003 as his most accomplished *constant concept* album. It combines samples from Kubrick's *Lolita* with samples of other films and other materials. More or less midway through the album is the song *V.S.D* that is a standard rock and roll song that sounds a bit like Led Zeppelin. After this song comes a tango song, simply labelled *Tango*. The contrast is immense. Whereas *V.S.D.* has a huge sound, *Tango* is just Charly on the piano. *Tango* is recorded in a way that you can hear his fingers over the keys and his breathing. Charly and some backup singers sing *V.S.D.* whereas *Tango* is an intimate song. *V.S.D.* is an energetic upbeat song and *Tango* is nostalgic and low key. However, the two songs share the same lyrics. The lyrics are about a character—that is physically described as him—but that he refers to in the songs as Gardel—the main figure of Argentinian Tango.

The fact that both songs share the same lyrics but different melodies and styles take the constant concept to new heights. There is a repetition of a something that is at the same time not repeating but always changing, always in a flow. Lastly, the album starts with a collage of samples and finishes in the exact same way. As if at the end of the album it could start again. There is no

escaping the constant concept. There is only a negotiation, a performance between the outside and being an 'I': of fixing yourself and yet being erased by that fixed media.

**Los Jaivas** (formed in 1963)

Los Jaivas is a band formed in Chile's V Region in 1963. Surviving the death of certain key members and the retirement of others, it is still active to this day. They are considered the most prominent band of Andean rock. A style that, succinctly put, combines rock and South American influences, especially from the Andes region.

In Los Jaivas this is not achieved as the encounter of two separate traditions that are combined as two differentiated sources—as if taking elements of one fixed essence and combining them with those of another. What I hear in Los Jaivas is a powerful pulse that drives and shapes different sounds; an energy that overflows into rock or South American music—without them being two clearly delimited or autonomous plates. I listen in Los Jaivas an energy that somehow articulates these two plates. Just as an earthquake that shakes the tectonic plates, making them evident and articulating the landscape. It is only through the earthquake that these tectonic plates are then configured.

Los Jaivas are part of a cosmopolitan musical scene and yet they are also sounding local elements. The boundaries are not drawn in black and white; elements that at first might seem belonging to the rock world are actually from an American folk origin and vice versa. Furthermore, as it is more about a sensitivity that is able to traverse these multiple territories, 'rock' or 'folk' are already mediated. They are already part of a fictional construction. This fictional construction takes into account all sonic agencies that are present in their society and setting, mediated by their own interpretation and inner experience of it all.

Los Jaivas at an early stage of development moved into doing free improvisation in long sessions for Chile's incipient hippie audience. A collection of CDs from this period was released under the name *La Vorágine* in 2003. The improvisations use multiple instruments with a preponderance of percussion and wind instruments. They are mainly intense, energetic, psychedelic/experimental pieces. For me they are close to the poetics of ethnopoetry as the tendency to associate avant-garde explorations and techniques to the music, sounds or

performances of non-Western societies in shamanistic rituals and other settings. However there is also a rhythmic insistence and loudness to their sound that for me gets them close to the notion of sonic bodies described by Henriques in relation to the Jamaican Sound Systems (see Chapter Three). This link gets reinforced when the social, communal appeal of Los Jaivas' music making is taken into account. Their improvisations are not about the freedom of individual instruments, of individual lines stating their own independent voices, as would perhaps be the common case in most free improvisation ensembles.

With a heavy reliance on percussion and percussive use of other instruments, their improvisation is more like an experimental take on the *batucada*. The *batucada* is a percussion ensemble in which each member contributes to the general sound with a short and repetitive percussion motive. The *batucada* originated in Brazil and its music is intensely rhythmical and repetitive.

The album *Volantín* from 1971 marks the transition from the free improvisation period of Los Jaivas and into their popular Andean rock style. A style that would be masterfully defined in the following album *La Ventana* from 1973. *Volantín* is for me a particularly interesting album as I listen in it the raw energy of Los Jaivas. It combines the dream for a certain mysterious, surrealist America, an experimental drive in the use of techniques such as the prepared piano and the rudimentary nature of the recording process, modern instruments like a Moog synth and electric guitars, and at the same time proposes melodies of a beautiful, almost naive nature such as in *Foto de Primera Comunion*.

What sets apart this album from the previous period is that all the improvisation is framed in songs—or vice versa. There is now the presence of melodies that have repetitive lyrics and interact in the improvisation as another sound more: they enter the experimental *batucada* as another percussion element. With repetitive lyrics and melodic turns over a fixed harmony, the melodies are an enrichment of the rhythmic texture and do not turn the music into a harmonically controlled structure.

The lyrics reflect upon lost innocence (*Foto de Primera Comunion*), Chilean identity (or the lack of it) in songs like *Que o la Tumba Serás*, *La Vaquita* or *Por Veinticinco Empaná* and the

opening song *Cacha* is an angry lament about the arrival of the Spanish into the continent. Gato (who would become the lead singer) repetitively sings in Spanish along the lines 'Why can't it be like I want it to be?'

In 1977 they release the album *Canción del Sur* that I hear as their most accomplished album in relation to the vacilar sensitivity. Starting with about thirty seconds of silence the album slowly starts to build up. The album travels through a variety of South American rhythms and instruments in conjunction with electronic instruments and rock riffs.

In this album is where I hear most clearly that their music is not the combination of two blocks—South American and Rock—but that their music is a particular sensitivity that is able to traverse through multiple blocks, disorientating and confusing where one block begins and the other ends. It is an energy that not only creates the blocks but also destroys them as it goes shaping them and erasing them simultaneously. The music of *Los Jaivas* takes the communal energy of the batucada to allow not only the percussion instruments of the traditional style. Through repetition, static harmony and the dominance of rhythm, it opens batucada up to accept a multiplicity of styles, of a sonic imagination of pre-European America, of rock and roll, of a unified America that is able to both be open to all, be accepting new names and yet does not forget its own.

The account of poets and musicians I have done here, has to do with works that have impacted and allowed me to speculate about a possible tradition of the sonic Criollo. Many of these musicians and poets have accompanied me throughout the years and have given me a sense of orientation both for the development of my own work and for the understanding of other people's work. My practice of the vacilar sensitivity as that of expressing an 'I' while listening to an outside, of a reversibility between what I am and what I am not, is in an important way shaped by them. Encompassing their practices into one notion, for me the common link, the common factor that articulates the sensitivity of the sonic Criollo, is the inevitability of reversibility that the menace of the earthquake makes evident. Reversibility is not something you choose. The ambiguity between

giving and receiving, the inevitability of both being an 'I' and that 'I' being erased by an outside is not part of your free will.

The emphasis in this inevitability is something I have not noticed with that strength or consistency in my experience of artistic practices elsewhere. The inevitability the menace of the earthquake addresses, is what supports listening as doubting, is what allows for the conjugation of the hopes and optimism of the Nameless America and the struggles and suffering of the American Diasporas (see Chapter Three). In this sense, the sonic Criollo is sensitivity to the earthquake. A sensitivity to a something that is not present in the plates or the different stances, but in their friction, their coexistence. A something that is only perceivable as the contradiction of the plates. It therefore allows saying 'I am', 'I have a name', 'I can identify with a plate', yet being simultaneously outside of it.



# Glossary of Terminology

## American Diasporas

The American Diasporas, together with the *Nameless America* (see entry) are the two points of entry to *the problem of America* (see entry). It is the point of access to America for African, native Americans and other groups who access the problem of America from disadvantageous positions of violence, geographical and/or bodily estrangement. The American Diasporas emphasise that access to the ontological is impossible as we always remain in the para-ontological.

The *American Diasporas* are a point of access to *the problem of America* from a pre-American condition. As such, the fact that they cannot liberate themselves of mediation can only be measured by contrast to a non-mediated state. This non-mediated state is understood as their condition before the problem of America.

The *American Diasporas* then are a point of access to *the problem of America* that emphasises a past before it to make sense of it. The *American Diasporas* therefore deal with *the problem of America* as something that can be concluded by focusing on the past. The mechanisms for this arises as reclaim, decolonisation and healing from the memory of the past, from the open scars of not having access to your home, origin or essence.

## Criollo/Sonic Criollo

The notion of the *sonic Criollo* is the dancing 'I' that holds the vacilar sensitivity as part of the dance element (see *dance* entry). It is fundamentally an action, a dance, occurring in-between other elements as the menace of the earthquake (see *earthquake* entry).

As a dancing 'I', it is an affirmation of a subjective, personal stance and yet as the dance will stop, it is unable to proclaim transcendence to its position. It can reinforce itself only as long as the dancing is on. Also as dancing is both an action of the will and a sonic dominance over the will, the dancing 'I' cannot be appropriated by any particular group. It has no essential ties to any particular gender, race or ethnic group.

In the context of *the problem of America*, the *sonic Criollo* is contrasted to the *American Diasporas* and the *Nameless America* (see entries). By contrast to both of them, the *Criollo* is not a point of access to America but arises as the present of the problem of America. It does not have a pre-American position and it is not inclined towards the future or the past. It is the present in-between. It is not fixed to a particular position but is the *sonic contradiction* (see entry) between them.

As the experience of *sonic contradiction*, the *sonic Criollo* proposes the reconciliation between the ontological and the para-ontological.

### **Dance**

Together with *sonic traps* (see *trap* entry) and *doubt* (see *doubt* entry), *dance* is a mechanism of the *vacilar* sensitivity. *Dance* is proposed as the mechanism that allows the sonic experience of reinforcing a subjective and biased 'I' while simultaneously opening up to what that 'I' is not.

Through dancing I take action willingly: I join the rhythm, I accept organised sound and move in accord. At the same time it is sounds themselves that impose dominance over me.

Dancing makes the 'I' an action that is both voluntary and involuntary. Yet importantly for *vacilar*, the dance will stop. The sonic dominance over the body will cease or the body will face fatigue and become immune to it. To recognise the end of the dance as an integral part of dancing, is a key mechanism of the sensitivity of *vacilar* to open para-ontology to the possibility of ontology.

*Dance* is the *vacilar* element that from the para-ontology of the *sonic Criollo* (see *Criollo* entry) entangles the ontological with the para-ontological.

### **dancing 'I'**

see *Criollo/Sonic Criollo*.

### **Doubt**

Together with *sonic traps* (see *trap* entry) and *dance* (see *dance* entry), *doubt* is a mechanism of the vacilar sensitivity.

The element of doubt is what listens to possibilities beyond my self-expression and is therefore open to accept what my self-expression would rather not listen to. It cracks my position and glances at other positions, perhaps opening the possibility of reaching a sonic ontology. However, as doubting is an action of the will, it also recognises that sonic ontology is never reached but enacted para-ontologically.

### ***Earthquake, The Menace Of The Earthquake***

The *menace of the earthquake* is a concept that is born from the real experience of earthquakes and developed as a Latin American para-ontology (see Appendix for more on this para-ontology) from which the *sensitivity of vacilar* arises.

This menace is proposed as the threat of a *sonic contradiction* that cannot be ignored, of unravelling an ambiguity through which solid, identifiable or determined elements are shaped, constructed and destroyed.

The earthquake is not the buildings and solid elements it shakes. However we can only know of it through those elements. The earthquake in itself is unperceivable, yet it shapes the solid. In the land of earthquakes, whatever solid formations exist, they exist that way because of the action of the earthquake. In that sense, the present shape of the solid is only that way between the earthquake past and the earthquake to come. The solid is in the constant menace of the earthquake.

The *horizon of silence* (see entry) shares similarities to the *menace of the earthquake*, yet it does not arise from the dancing element and is therefore not identified with a specific Latin American para-ontology.

### **Horizon Of Silence**

The *horizon of silence* is in stretch relationship with *the menace of the earthquake* (see entry). However, *the horizon of silence* is not built from the particular experience of an earthquake,

but it is an inevitable condition of perception. Whereas *the menace of the earthquake* cannot be ignored, the horizon of silence is easily relegated.

The horizon is a personal line that exists in the non-cochlear sonic contradiction (see entry) between the ocean and the sky. Just as this line is not perceivable in itself, silence is not perceivable in itself but it is experienced as *the horizon of silence* that ambiguously both 'establishes me' and is 'established by me'.

Therefore, *the horizon of silence* brings forth both the eradication of self-expression and the corresponding openness to its outside while at the same time—as personal as the horizon is—it is far from eradicating the 'I'. *The horizon of silence* is a powerful way for the 'I' to survive and reaffirm its central position and to do it in ambiguous sonic contradiction.

### **Intuition / Sensitivity**

*Intuition* and interchangeably *sensitivity* are used in this research to address the drive for the experience of *vacilar*. They intertwine personal properties with an awareness of what surrounds oneself, implying voluntary and involuntary action. They point towards the inseparability of personal stance and of being situated as one action. They originate from a personal configuration and are immediate responses to external influences. *Intuition* and *sensitivity* do not arise voluntarily yet they are either embraced or not by the will.

This research is about unfolding the experience of the *vacilar* sensitivity.

### **Nameless America**

Together with the *American Diasporas* (see entry), the *Nameless America* is one of the points of access to deal with *the problem of America* (see entry). The *Nameless America* is the point of access to the New World from a Western para-ontology. In fact, it is the essence of the concept of America that the U.S.A has built. The Nameless America is enrooted in Western ideals of individualism, freedom and an understanding of the New World as a terra nullius. That is to say a nameless, unbiased, non-specific canvas in which an individual, essentially free from any fixed

determination, can access all possibilities. Hence, the *Nameless America* provides the ground from which believe in the access to sonic ontology as unmediated, universal and natural is sustained.

The *Nameless America* believes *the problem of America* can be controlled or concluded. For the *Nameless* this solution arises from the hope of the future, from the promise of universal understanding. Therefore, if the *American Diasporas* are identified as a point of access that emphasises the past of *the problem of America*, then the *Nameless America* emphasises the future.

Sonic art practices that in one way or another propose the experience of sonic ontological per se, are then unveiled as part of this *Nameless America*. Their tradition and artistic methods are explored as those of the *poetics of silence* (see entry).

### **Poetics Of Mediation**

The *poetics of mediation* encompasses all artistic practices that emphasise the impossibility of pure access to any phenomenon. Therefore it is a poetics that identifies artistic practices that emphasise the para-ontological.

As mediated or unable to access a pure state, these are art practices of diasporic experience. This research illustrates this in relationship to art practices that could be understood as diasporic experiences from homeland, cultural and or geographical origin, and the constitution of the body.

The *poetics of mediation* deny the access to an ontological pure state as cultural, historical or subjective traits always mediate any access or conceptualisation of the ontological. Any effort to transcend this mediation would be imposing a certain cultural or subjective approach as pure, therefore imposing one form of mediation as universal and natural in the detriment of all other cultural or subjective approaches.

In regards to *the problem of America* (see entry), the *poetics of mediation* is identified as the *American Diasporas* (see entry)

### **Poetics Of Silence**

The *poetics of silence* groups together sonic arts practices that search for ways of accessing a sonic realm of fluidity and openness that would be natural and universal. A realm that for them is prior to the categorisations of subjectivity and culture: that is to say, a realm that can claim precedence over culture and subjectivity as sonic ontology.

The *poetics of silence* encompasses all sonic art practices in which an abandoning of this 'I' is crucial. It is a tradition that is alive today in circles of free improvisation, circuit bending, turntablism, deep listening, etc. Its main method is identified in this research as listening and its notions can be related to the American experimental tradition that has John Cage as one of its main figures.

This research identifies the *shushed* as the condition of listening that cannot be listened to. As such, the *shushed* reveals that listening is only metaphorically accessing sonic ontology.

### **Problem of America, The / America / New World**

For this research, *the problem of America* is the unifying concept from which the opposing sonic ontology and para-ontological stances can be understood, as that of the *Nameless America* (see entry) and the *American Diasporas* (see entry), and the *sonic Criollo* (see entry) can be understood as the reconciliation of these opposing stances.

With the arrival of Columbus to the American continent, humanity discovers the New World not as a geographical location but as a concept to deal with the urgent need of universal understanding and at the same time of learning to respect and accept incommensurable difference.

Therefore, for this research, America is understood not as a continent but the inauguration of the New World. America as New World closes the world as one unified globe. In the natural sciences, there is ample evidence to suggest that the arrival of Europeans to the American continent is the starting point of the Anthropocene era (Leswin & Maslin, 2015).

The problem of America then is the urgent necessity of on one side having to find universal (i.e. ontological) understanding and on the other side recognising limits and incommensurable difference (i.e. para-ontological mediation).

## **Ontology/Para-Ontology**

The general frame for the development of this research is the fissure in sound studies between the opposing stances of *sonic ontology* and *para-ontology*. For the sonic ontology stance, an experience of sound that is universally valid is possible. For the para-ontological side that experience is possible as it is always mediated by something else.

In order to provide the experience of reconciliation of these opposed stances as an arts practice, this research starts by conceptualising the *para-ontological* as *self-expression* and the ontological as its *outside*.

## **Oscillation**

see *Vibration*.

## **Outside, the**

See Ontology/Para-Ontology.

## **Self-Expression**

See Ontology/Para-Ontology.

## **Shushed**

See *poetics of silence*.

## **Songscape/Songscaping**

The *songscape* is the mechanism to allow an entanglement of both self-expression and its outside. It is built following the logic of a *trap* (see entry). Its first version as *songscape* is as a fixed construction (mainly as Max/MSP patches for realtime interaction). Its final version is as a *songscaping*: that is as an experience or personal trajectory that is centred in the action and not in an object.

### **Sonic Contradiction**

The concept of *sonic contradiction* proposes strong contradiction as opposed to weak contradiction that is logical contradiction. Logical contradiction works with the clear demarcation between being and not being. That is what allows logic to state that if A contradicts B then something cannot be A and B at the same time. However by having that clear demarcation, this contradiction only works inside a system that can clearly identify A and B. It is therefore a weak concept of contradiction as it only works inside a coherent system. Instead of this, a strong concept of contradiction is uncertain about the whole system. The clear demarcation is erased in ambiguity and the reversibility of orientations. It is unclear if A is not B and vice versa. This strong contradiction is then not about being or not being but it is about being uncertain if being or not being.

Therefore instead of depicting this strong contradiction by logical notions such as coherence or unity, it is through sonic notions that we can listen to its evasive presence as a propagation through a medium, and most importantly as earthquakes (see *earthquake* entry).

### **Sonic Intentionality**

*Sonic intentionality* defines the experience of sound beyond acoustic classifications and, consequently, questions the separation between the acoustical, out in the world experience, and the psychological or internal experience.

### **Trap/Sonic Trap**

Together with *doubt* (see *doubt* entry) and *dance* (see *dance* entry), *trap* is a mechanism of the *vacilar sensitivity*. A *trap* is a mechanism, a technology that disorients or reverses intentionalities (i.e. a fish hunting for food becomes the hunted by the food becoming bait).

A sonic trap is created to disorient the boundaries between cultural/subjective expression and openness to the objective or universal realm of sound (see *songscape* entry).



## **Vacilar**

*Vacilar* is the sensitivity (see *intuition* entry) that sustains this research.

In Spanish, *Vacilar* means 1) oscillation, vibration. 2) To dance, to have fun. 3) To doubt, to hesitate, to falter. 4) To trick, to deceive.

*Vacilar* proposes a contradictory experience as it simultaneously enacts my self-expression and its outside and at the same time arises as an inevitable experience. It is para-ontological since I understand that this intuition arises from my South American background<sup>7</sup> however, by the strength of it appearing as contradictory and inevitable, it implies an ontological certainty

*Vacilar* is a sensitivity experienced by an oscillation or vibration (see entry) that is triggered by a *trap* that disorients the limits of *dance* and *doubt*.

## **Vibration, oscillation**

The three elements of *vacilar trap*, *dance*, and *doubt* (see entries) are integrated through *vibration*. The *vacilar sensitivity* (see entries) occurs as the *vibration* that entangles self-expression and its outside. This is a *vibration* that is triggered by a sonic trap that disorients the limits of dance and doubt. This *vibration* is conceptualised as the *vibration* of a complex waveform as for physics, the measuring of the centre of a complex waveform is ambiguous.

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<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed account of how I understand this intuition as arising from my personal experience in Chile and the influence of other South American artists please see appendix 1.

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