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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

The Speakers and the Sensorium:  
Tracing “Sound Envelopes” in Film, Video Games and Media Cultures

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Ian Galbraith

September 2024

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Katherine Kinney, Chairperson

Dr. Steven G. Axelrod

Dr. Mark Minch-de Leon

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2024

The Dissertation of Ian Galbraith is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation has been the hardest work I have ever done, and I will always be grateful to everyone who did not give up on me as either a person or a scholar along the way. Even now I do not feel like a scholar, I just feel like a strange, dreaming, fool... but I am here, and you are here, and we have done it, I have the VODS (twitch.tv language for saved videos) and exhaustion to show for it. I also use terms that alienate my friends and neighbors so I must be at least a wizard if not a true academic. I felt that this dissertation came from a distillation of effort and thought and conversation from a vaster network than my own limited cognition and want to thank everyone for everything, and above all for patience. I think it was UCR event parking services that once said, regarding how well event parking went when helped by my partner's direction from TAPS where they labor in addition to their ongoing work in Art History: "no great deed is done alone".

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wise Eric and Zach Pamer for supporting me and my family through the madness of our times! Perhaps even more for listening to me. Thank you to my Grandma Barbara Nugent and Aunt Laura Nugent for helping me move into to High Grove, year one of the PhD. You two are my model spirituals and help me prove to the world that Catholics can be cool and can be kind and will protect trans lives. May the landlords and property managers of that place face hardship and loss of wealth however as I recall them to be repugnant and exploitative grifters! Conversely, thank you Karen Cheng, Patrick, and Justin Cheng for being such considerate stewards of the land and for being such compassionate property owners and managers. Thank you, Rowdy Herrington, for always reminding me (although not in these words) I wasn't a locomotive, that I was indeed, under all of this, a creative writer with a story to tell; I owe you many stories wise man. I keep hoping you and I will set some time aside and make a narrative project of some kind. Here's to making time. Thank you to all the following: Spencer Benda, Sophia Benda, Zack Palmer, Eric Palmer, Gabe Arnold a man for our times and for the times to come, Alex Lennert a Redlands trained and L.A. based poet of massive stature, stef Torralba who is patient and strong, Gabriella Almendarez who can do anything, David Siglos an amazing poet and scholar, Rusty Rust, Britney Carlson, Sang-Kuen Yoo, Preston Waltrip who is a wonderful friend and put up with my delusional phd ravings as a roommate, Jasmine Moore, Josh Prindle, Kristoffer Ekroll, Leslie Fernandez who has been a bold and stalwart defender of laborers and oppressed peoples around the world. Thank you to my comrade Anna Gomboeva who is a hero and a scholar but seems to think I am one too. Thank you to the Miller family one and all though our paths diverged.



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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Speakers and the Sensorium:  
Tracing “Sound Envelopes” in Film, Video Games and Media Cultures

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English  
University of California, Riverside, September 2024  
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This dissertation takes a sonic centric approach to intersections of cinema, poetry, and media/cultural studies more broadly through insights from a revision of Michel Chion’s contributions to criticism of film through sound and critiquing the limits of sound in discussions of cinema so far. Where the cinema meets reception in venue revolution of experience occurs which whisks away the audience’s tertiary retentions and encourages them in their willful suspension of disbelief. And so where the poetic is spoken, the speaker has an audience to whisk away, and the act of poetry is thus encapsulated in those cinematic events where poetry is shown not just through the visual invocation of the lines of the poem but indeed by the power of the voice over to bring the poem into the film, to inscribe that ethos into the audience and then to repeat this anew each time, a poetic speaker in the loudspeaker, always already prepped and ready to perform. In general, the “sound envelope” is a way of organizing time, so we can also say, a way or

stratifying temporality in the cinematic context. By this stratification and organizing of time “sound envelopes” are sonic demarcations of intentional duration which dictate the legibility and meaning of a given narrative in the phantasmagoric event of cinema. I assert the spatiality of the sound envelope while also arguing for its arrangement as a matter of temporality. Sonic spaces are perhaps related to temporality but also queer and distort time, especially in the sense of “queering time” or destabilizing the hetero normative construct of linear time. In the end I argue that by orienting the sensorium around sound, subjectivity is fostered in the space that sound creates and that this space remains poetic in quality, a kind of confessional of the self, to the self, and for the self as a poetic turn in sound that manifests the space denied in the visually governed logics.

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## Chapter One Introducing the Speakers and the Sensorium

In this dissertation I work to show the intersection of the three fields I have demonstrated in my portfolio and in my qualification exam II. As I have stated in my acknowledgements, I am grateful to my professors for their time and labor in the cause of my PhD, the research informing it, and the time in coursework spent with the seeds of the ideas exhibited in this work. These three research fields are defined as cinema through the Jonas Mekas, sixties, underground, narrative film, *Guns of the Trees*, critical approaches to Poetry in the United States informed by Beat and Confessional modes of poetics, and Video Game Studies inspired by decolonial critiques of media. My work is seeking to explore and explain intersections of space creation through sonic sense evocations across traditions of dialogic cultures and cultures that resist amalgamation. The sonic affective field shaping the viewer's sensorium is more than an abstraction from the cinema in my configuration, the sonic remains an indelible aspect of filmmaking that has always already been in play and yet which remains frequently overlooked. Sonic fields are fascinating here because they exist whether we perceive them in ways that remain palpable or not, and one cannot close their eyes to the phenomena, but instead are rendered like Kubrick's "Smart Alyx", trapped in the encounter with the cinematic as it pours deep into our core.

There are vast and unexplored intersections via sound studies approaches to the sensorium, a cinematic term relating to the field of affect/sense experience shaping events that occur to enhance the phantasmagoric event of cinema. By moving through the sensorium, the arrangement of sense experiences via technical means in a cinematic

event, in a phantasmagoric event of cinema, for the express intent of creating sensations and embodied relations sonically and poetically, this dissertation therefore participates in larger categories of criticism, activism, and knowledge production/protection/creation. The sensorium is the site of the narrative but also the privileging of the self and even still, the home of poesies both in reception, intention, creation, and transmission. Normatively and speaking in general the sensorium will always communicate an intentional arrangement of sense experiences through technical “triggers” that evoke moments, create events, and shape senses towards an intentional and phantasmagoric experience. Sound is very much also one of these forces and it’s important to consider the intensely embodied cinematic event created with sound in greater detail, especially in relation to narrative. While narrative has a place in the sensorium centric takes on the cinematic instances available across the sources in this project, the narrative as such is decentered while the quotidian person, their embodied moments is privileged.

Along the way the work I conduct moves through a wide variety of examples as this work traces the sonic qualities of space in cinematic moments across various cultures and media such as Beat cinema, Video Game Studies, Cinema Studies, and the nuances of identity and representation that arise from the always already entangled fields of sense experiences, commoditized, or more accurately, commercialized markets, and soundscapes. These artifacts or examples are important and varied instances of the sensorium as it is shaped by sonic cultures, moves, events, and traditions. Beat cinema has often been rendered a kind of singular or even “freak” phenomena of the 1960’s counterculture and its collision with underground film making methods such as those

espoused by Jonas Mekas, Lithuanian immigrant, and proponent of the New American Cinema Group/collective. However, through the examples of work by Jonas Mekas such as *Guns of the Trees* I demonstrate the extent to which a sound studies take on the Beat Cinema's sensorium reveals a profound, poetic spatiality both resilient, and uniquely subjective—to the point of embodiment in the self, within the body, beyond the purview of power structures per se.

I am particularly interested in the peculiar qualities of the sonic aspects of what this essay defines as the sensorium; the sensorium here is just the pre-arranged affect fields set into place with the intention of eliciting specific sense responses, when we go to the movies, the screen and the loudspeakers alter our senses and create in our field of experience, more and more of the sense “symptoms” of an event. In the case of commercialized cinema, the sensorium may aspire towards the “real” but in fact must accomplish numerous impossible sense experiences to maintain such a diegesis yet in the underground cinema, in the Avant Garde, the focus can be to highlight the tension in sensation, narration, temporality, poetics, and filmmaking revealed by the limitations of time, space, technics, and bodies. Avant Garde here refers less to the contemporary notion of the genre of art and style etc. but more to the sixties context which would allow the Beats and others to move in and out of the genre. I think it's safe to call Mekas a form of this on his own, but that his moniker would best be that of the underground filmmaker.

From my sound studies informed approaches to cinema I forged a theoretical term I dub “sound envelopes” which are sonic cues of segmentation which are intentional and bear the burden of narrative across temporality, across diegesis, and directly into a space

that is created for the audience by the sound which happens as an event. “Sound envelopes” are intentional and sonic demarcations of duration in each cinematic context where cinema provides the larger “logic” of the event, however poetic it may be, and sound asserts the governing “logic” for the transmission of meaning in during the course and in the wake of that phantasmagoric event. The events of and in sound that occur during the phantasmagoric event of cinema serve as cues and shape the limits of the sonic space in the audience’s imagining.

In the event of sound as a series, the sequences of the overheard events or the various sound events created in cinema the persistence of memory is reinforced at the internal site via the hardwired sense of nostalgia apparently inherent to the cognizing of audiences of a certain level of maturity. Sound in a series here refers to my conception of sound as having the capacity of some filmic, phantasmagoric quality akin to the visual field’s privileged aspect, the montage. But if a cut, could exist in the affectual realms afforded by sonic events in cinema, what would that realm be like, and how would that cut exist? It remains a chief matter of debate which I will enjoy sorting through over the course of my ongoing research, but the chief tension lies in the logic of the cut itself, which is, and many argue, must be, a solely visual logic. The montage many might argue, is such that it is about separations and connections; then the same camp might say of the sonic, it is that which sustains or continues during the sharp absence rendered by cuts. Yet is this the case?

My work privileges the sonic and I will acknowledge that comes from a form of audiophilia that began as I grew up beneath LAX, listening to the might of industrial



titans lifting into the sky and roaring back to landing again. I suppose this makes sense because as I grew up, I discovered how in *Wayne's World* the protagonists enjoy watching plays take off over them, near the runway. There's something there that we all feel, at least I think so. I remember how the subjectivities of the passengers entered my perception in that moment, as if via a cut, like a montage, but it didn't come from a visual cue, the visual rendering of that memory come documentary would essentially look like a young boy in green grass, by a fence, with a toy soldier, staring at an airplane in the sky. But the conceptual realm, the space created and afforded by the sound of those planes instilled and me a notion of a vast world, connected by chaotic roaring industries and governed by the logics that came with those. The sound cut as I will later call for it to be termed is simply that moment where the consciousness can travel to a space created solely by sound, and where the visual exists in tandem or even in contrast, in objection to it, then so be it; but that space of sonic reality persists and haunts the cognition of the "witness".

In the context of the sonic that is utilized in the phantasmagoric event of cinema the sound event is designed to relate to the interiority of the audience to assert a kind of solidarity with them that transcends the limitations of screen separations by means of resonating through both embodiment and cognition through sheer force of sensation. Sound events in cinema are yet still seen as disruptions, but in fact sound always played a role in helping audiences to embrace the phantasmagoric event of cinema. While scholars such as Michel Chion who is quoted throughout this dissertation from such incredible and enduring texts as *Film, A Sound Art* and their *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* both of

which assert how long sound has been a part of filmmaking. Something omitted from criticism is the way that spatial sonic instantiations, or sound creating space, are major factors in the shaping of the sensorium and the sustaining of the filmic world, its diegesis.

The earlier a disparate, sense shattering sound occurs, the more it communicates some grander purpose, a meaningful memory struck not just into the filmic illusion but written directly into embodiment of the audience. I view “sound envelopes” as novel interventions into film criticism with radical potential for new ways of reading into poetics and media/cultural studies across borders and governances because they demonstrate the inherent stability of spoken traditions against the commercialized logics that render soundscapes monolithic. At the same time, because sound creates space, it imbues Speakers with poetic potentials more nuanced than that of the Modernist speaker, for whom the poet’s self was a mere persona; instead, these poetics of “sound envelopes” are a radical rupture in expectations forged by commercialized film and media cultures. If Sitney is right when they assert “Cinema has contributed to a discussion of poetry in film” (105) then it is the case that the quality of the poetic transmission receives critical attention and be configured according to the most logical and evidential, yet impactful of treatments.

To begin with, “Chapter 2 Jonas Mekas and the Spontaneous Sensorium in *Guns of the Trees*” serves to center my intellectual project in the films and criticism of Jonas Mekas and the New American Cinema collective operating in New York and in the sixties largely under the purview of Mekas and his colleagues. I look to the ways in which the particular form of counter cultural art and activism comes together in

something that the filmmakers of the sixties, new York underground and Avant Garde referred to as “spontaneous cinema” but which was perhaps more like a kind of “loosely improvised, highly scripted, and heavily edited cinema” but I love the moniker of the spontaneous because it speaks to the poetic traditions I argue are governing my theoretical constructs, the “sound envelope” theory of sonic montage and narrative arrangement theory by which events are governed by sound and then shaped into spaces of experience. To make these claims I further must clarify how I work with sense experiences, which I see as arranged according to the impact they have upon an audience’s arrangement of possible and occurring sense experiences.

The notions of sensorium help shape the treatment of the sonic and expand the potential available in *Guns of the Trees* to critics who seek to move beyond the established trends in scholarship on Mekas’ films and on underground cinema in the sixties. However, in this Chapter I turn to scholars who have opened new and generative paths into the fields of study relevant to Beat poetics as they intersect with aspects of sound studies. Among these are acclaimed researchers and critics like Paul Arthur and David James who’s works like *A Line of Sight* (Arthur) and *To Free the Cinema* (David James) demonstrate the ongoing relevance of the Beat cinematic projects that began in the sixties and arguably never truly stopped in either form or function across multiplicities of networks and traditions.

Important to the configuration the second Chapter brings to *Guns of the Trees* is the notion of a “spontaneous cinema” which I argue and follow other theorists’ claims into arguing holds a central place in status of a film as Beat or also as improvised. In this

sense an inherent link to improvisation in musical and poetic traditions is immediately established at the event foundational level. These events are as cinematic phantasmagoria and are evident in most examples of Beat, Underground, Avant Garde, and experimental cinema. For example, I work through brief treatments of analogous Beat films such as *Pull my Daisy* and *Shadows* such that I posit the narrative film: *Guns of the Trees* as the truly spontaneous film, with most of the Beat, lived quotidian imbued into its filmic world. I also work with knowledge of cinematic traditions ranging from Maya Deren, Stanley Brakhage, and Shirley Clarke which inform the way I treat examples which I privilege, such as *Guns of the Trees*.

While Mekas had seen *Shadows* as a triumphant moment in Beat film making, in underground cultures of film making, in poetic film making, and most importantly in spontaneous film making; the reality of the set and direction makes the frenetic sequences of Mekas' film the more likely candidate for poetic film of the lived quotidian. And the way Cassavetes had deployed the actors against each other wasn't quite the level of shockingly unhinged filmmaker that one reads in Norman Mailer but did amount to profound emotional abuse that would remain unacceptable in today's industries (so long as the culprit is caught and truly stopped). The significance is not so much that we set aside Cassavetes or Robert Frank & Alfred Leslie but rather that we examine correctly and to offer a more accurate criticism of *Guns of the Trees*, as a Beat film, as a spontaneous film, via the sonic aspects of the sensorium. Later in Chapter two I will treat the genre of the spontaneous film in greater detail where I invoke the term to describe *Guns of the Trees*. I am arguing that the spontaneous style of the film is exposed by sonic

events which occur with intention and guide the footage which would otherwise be better described via the documentary, than most conventional narrative films.

When *Guns of the Trees* is approached via the logics of the sonic, the way that the narrative captures quotidian realities and mingles them with fictive scenes and the invocation of poetic and literary traditions of the time such as Beats and confessional writers, the significance of the sonic bears the burden of the poetic and the loudspeaker is no longer merely techne but also or always already the poetic speaker. There are profound levels of meaning to the film that are most legible where the sounds occurring on screen, to use Chion's logic, gesture to an atemporal narrative that is more poetic than it is a linear narrative or conventional narrative film. The film takes on more or further nuanced dimensions and dimensionality as a result and shows the resiliency of the subjectivity of oppressed peoples via the enduring space presented in the filmmaking process evident in *Guns of the Trees*.

At the core of my sound centered explorations of *Guns of the Trees* in Chapter Two are the interactions between characters and the demonstrations of poetic potential in the mingling of soundscapes that the performances and edits to the footage make possible in final collating effect of the film. Where speech, montage, cut, jump cut, and voiceover move together and against each other in this film, the space sound creates bears intensely intentional coding as poetically organized space. *Guns of the Trees* is meant to be received as a Beat poetic project and utilizes voiceovers with Ginsberg instead of only relying on the actors in the film to read his work, which also occurs. The polyphonic quality of this process is a dialogic that builds space to speak against commercialized

cinematic trends which erased old abilities for the sake of new potentials such as synchronized sound with filming at the cost of space, set design, proximity to actor, portability and more.

My work in Chapter two helps establish the centrality of poetics in my work and the way that I view poetry as invocation of sound or as the inherently sonic grammatological process which then proves that which is always already true, that the grammatological is sonic in origin and praxis even where existing as visual and print based cultures on screens and pages and tablets or various constructions. This sequence of readings stays with the sonic capacities of narrative in *Guns of the Trees* directed by Jonas Mekas serves as a model of how my work with the theoretical construct: “the sound envelope” ought to function. The film’s frenetic and frenzied style often appears illegible but make a cohesive narrative through an atemporal narrative structure which the audience unpacks through their subjective relations to the film, via events in sound.

The use of poetry and voiceover, of poets in voiceovers, and of non-commercial sonic logics create a generative friction between the diegesis of cinema and the lived reality of the quotidian which, when combined with the underground cinema context provided by the New American Cinema Group makes a sensory field of knowledge production that is both cinema and poetry at once. But this is not to collapse the distinction but instead to argue for how the traditions and mechanics so to speak of poetics are alive in cinema today and, historically, and that above all else, according to my claims these are events that happen predominately through sonic means. Later in my work this finds even more potential as I begin to argue for the “post-Soviet”

configuration as an ongoing erasure of “indigenous Russians” and in specific the poetic traditions of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) ranging from the Oral traditions of their ancestral poets to the activists making youth culture and frenetic rock music an extension of Sakha (Yakutia) identity in the same way that they have kept their language alive and recorded it through the deployment of the same Cyrillic script the Kremlin centered governments of the U.S.S.R. legalistically imposed throughout the Soviet years.

While I retain the value and regard for the visual, I found that the sonic offers an atemporal solution to many of the problems that come with situations governed by cost and imposing strict limits on the art and imagination of film makers and performers in the underground, who’s work challenges the commercial and subverts normative narratives. For example, with sound events the viewers can move with the narrative, in and out of a specific scene which then become complicated and nuanced by the way that the sound events have enriched the scene with the vibrance of memory.

For many scholars in fields such as the Victorian Era and those focusing on Gothic traditions such as scholar and educator Kristofer Ekroll, the sense of memory communicates the power of nostalgia. I was fascinated by the insight’s nostalgia offered since it directly connects my three fields in surprising yet meaningful intersections in larger works, I will include Chapters that explore in detail the sonic capacities of nostalgia and the extent to which nostalgia operates across the sonic, how it relates to the sensorium, and what meaning can be made from that additional layer of nuanced memory. For example, the Kerouac method was a glorification of nostalgia carried out in prose and poetry. Noted and reputable historian of Kerouac, Ann Charters writes about

the complexity and the folly behind the performance of Kerouac's character/ persona which he remains somewhat deluded and ensnared by much to his own suffering.

The Charters text *Kerouac: A Biography* offers insights such as a window into his own need to offer confessional modes and yet again the opposing energy to imagine the past, especially his own in a more positive and "golden" aspect than it was as it transpired. "Jack's method was always to soften character and to smooth out edges so that a romantic nostalgia, rather than social realism flooded the page" (Charters 66). There remains significance to the style and poetics of the Beat's, especially here where we find nostalgia as a mode of regulating the spontaneity of the performance and thus also at work are the sensations of sincerity and passion, truth is less the operative aspect. I think that in a separate work I will investigate these further implications of the nostalgic mode of poesis in sound events in film because that theme would add even more layers of meaning to my concept of the "sound envelope". The atemporal and enduring quality of sound in a cinematic event creates a spatial residue of experience that applies a motif or thematic quality to the media's sensorium in general, making a kind of thing as such.

In my third Chapter I work through theories on modernisms in poetics that take into account the critical shift into confessional styles of poetics in the wake of Gertrude Stein's poetry in particular, with an eye into how intersections of identity implode the modernist speaker logic constructed by T.S. Eliot and open the potential for the Beat and confessional poetic projects to move the subjectivity of the poem's speaker from the distilled and dissociative logics of modernist and imagists, to the embodied self-speaker of Anne Sexton and Alin Ginsberg. Included in this treatment are historically American



poets preceding and following the modernist implosion I trace through Gertrude Stein's creative works. I am indebted to the seminar Modernisms taught to us by Dr. Axelrod for its profound and revolutionary presentation of the poetic traditions in the United States and the way that he offered such remarkable insights into reading Gertrude Stein. Thanks to this course I finally felt the work Stein did in its correct context, as an almost interdimensional poetics between, beyond, before and after Modernism.

These poets range somewhat widely from members of the Harlem Renaissance such as the well lauded Langston Hughes to the often overlooked but titanically important poetry of Bob Kaufman. I also work with poetry from more noted Beat writers like Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder as I sketch out a sense of the shift in the poetic traditions of speakers in poems. This shift changes the logics that govern the sensorium and therefore represents a larger shift in the way that sound events are treated, experienced, designed, and made to occur in cinema. I see Bob Kaufman, Gertrude Stein, and Jack Kerouac, Anne Sexton, Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, and Annie Waldman as leading the way I configure poetry and confessional themes, but often complicate these with examples from poets they were influenced by and associated with to provide a more robust context for my claims.

In the move to the subjectivity of the self and the dissolution of the distillation that came with a performed persona as a speaker, as was the case in early modernist traditions. Ever since interacting with the configurations of Christopher Grobe in terms of confessional poetry and P. Adams Sitney's *The Cinema of Poetry* I have been interested in what happens when one complicates the role of the loudspeaker in cinema according to

the way one treats or treated the Speaker in poetry. Sitney for example had an entire Chapter here that was devoted to the Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky, who plays a massive role in applying layers of additional poetry to his cinematic rendering of *A Roadside Picnic*, *Stalker*. In this case poetry “is capable of going beyond the limitations of coherent logic, and conveying the deep complexity and truth” (Sitney 69). Quoting Tarkovsky here Sitney shows how links of narrative happen via poetry in Tarkovsky’s films, in the end gesturing back to the American underground cinema and Avant Garde such as Stanley Brakhage and Maya Deren. “The poetry of cinema, for Tarkovsky as for Deren, depends on the ontological priority of the cinematic image as rendered ‘objectively’ by the photographic apparatus” (Sitney 71). I value Sitney’s connections here and although I am aware of the difference in our strategies and focus, I think that their interventions and assessments are continuing to open new dialogs into the way we assess poesis in cinematics or the way we see sound as poetry, and in Sitney’s case, the extent to which the arrangement of the visual follows an interminable flow according to a poetic “shape” rather than a commercial narrative structure.

Although the trajectory is neither immediate nor as obvious as the proverbial one for one comparative example paradigm, the work done to make poetry subjectively reflective of the poet and not a performance of a persona leads to popular culture’s mass acceptance and demand for documentarian style content including but not limited to the reality television of the early nineties such as *The Real World* tracked by Christopher Grobe in *The Art of Confession* and echoed in the Netflix quasi reality shows of our time such as their adaptation of *Squid Games* the dystopic narrative into *Squid Games*:

*Experience* the intense reality adaption of that originally dystopic and now somewhat actualized narrative. Although my work does not investigate the reality television poetics as far as Grobe does in *The Art of Confession* I still find that this shift informs the very structure of sensorium in cinema and thus merits further interrogation in the context of a sound studies approach.

All these connections from poetry modes to reception of films as poetry prove vital, moving through poetry and the American underground/ American Avant Garde to the context of experimental Russian Filmmaker Tarkovsky, especially in the seventies allow me to bridge a critical gap in the decolonial criticism thus far occurring, in the context of the Russian Federation.

I find it profoundly significant to locate Tarkovsky in the Zone centric media and to be operating in this way poetically. However, by limiting his work to the realm of the cinematic and continuously acknowledging that the poetry in his films is coming from other sources like friends, family, and literary canonical beasts he instantiated a further literary culture atop the existing *Roadside Picnic* narrative and dialogs. These connections show the dimensions and reach of the poetic in cinema and my work then intervenes by affording that this poetic cinema is in fact much more a sonic event than it is a strictly visual phenomenon. In my last field I work to offer a kind synthesis or synergized and interdisciplinary approach to the issues of decolonial critiques in the context of Settler Colonization. Examples from lands occupied and governed by the Russian Federation and the United States afford insights that prove how the poetic traditions of both states owe their robust and nuanced characteristics to ongoing work

from first nations, indigenous, native, self-identifying American Indian and even self-identifying ethnically Siberian peoples.

And to work backwards, the poetic approach to cinema also has roots in Stein's poetics, cementing my claims that her inversions of poetry according to the traditions I read Axelrod as defining by the term "modernisms", shifted the conceptual landscape of artistic thought even to the realm of the cinematic and beyond.

Absorbing the lesson of Stein's astounding sensitivity to language, the young Brakhage quickly made himself the most subtle and the most comprehensive master of cinematic rhythms. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, he demonstrated this mastery as he perfected the form of the crisis lyric; his rhythmic organization extend from his editing and camera movement to every aspect of his recording of the nuances of stillness and motion (Sitney 155).

The Shift from Pound to Stein was evident and critical in Brakhage and arguably influences Jonas Mekas, the star of Chapter two, both directly and by means of the networks he was in working alongside artists, activists, and filmmakers. But I would argue there's a trace of Pound here too in Brakhage and thus in the rest of this network especially considering the profound connections between Ginsberg and Pound's work, the way he salvaged Pound and visited him, post 45, in the institutions to which the arguably treasonous Pound had been confined after the defeat of Fascist powers in Europe and the ending of WW2. It's astounding and yet so fitting to imagine something like *DESISTFILM* as arriving to the cinematic realms with thanks to something like *Tender Buttons*. Here we see how the texture of reality gains greater and more detailed, nuanced, textures to the phantasmagoric event and these textures are openings into shared spaces and dialogs that alter the aesthetics and politics informing the context they operate within.

In the conclusion of Chapter four I offer arguments the congeal or solidify the connections between Chapters, I very much view the second Chapter as the judicial spirit or ethos governing the way I treat the sensorium because of the way I work to link sound events in cinema back to poetic traditions in literature. The intersections of cinema through sound and poetry through confession lead me to the radical praxis of scholars like Jodi Byrd and Tiffany Lethabo King who offer ruptures in settler colonial discourses and new configurations of being that to me expand on ideas and traditions in critical race theory, queer theory, decolonial critiques, and then media / culture studies as a staging ground. From these connections I follow activists from the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples who show new contextualities and nuances to decolonial critiques and praxis even where the state claims itself to be decolonial, while performing colonial invasions abroad and colonial, state preserving violence to solidify its own governance in occupied lands. As such I work with cinema, poetry, and video games in Chapter three with the hope of bringing the powerful and intersectional criticism of a variety of scholars and activists against the themes describing and indicting many aspects of commercialized cinema cultures as deleterious.

In my fourth Chapter I begin by establishing a methodology that is indebted to scholars of color and traditions of radical research which had as praxis, process, and result the liberation of the oppressed especially in the situations inflicted upon people of color by structures of systemic racism historically and in the present. I am equally indebted to the mothers of the world, to my mother, and to the feminisms that recognize intersectionality and resist the exclusion of people that are trans, non-binary, and beyond

categories of male, female, and intersex. Such folks have long been my heroes and guiding lights in a confusing mediascape of hypocritical thinkers who justify oppression with theology and worse. I am grateful to thinkers, writers, activists, and enduring original peoples around the world who continue to perform the ways of their ancestors.

As a grounding point, I turn to the ongoing tradition of Sakha resistance within and to the Russian Federation which is a new sight of dialog for scholars to expand upon as not enough has been published or researched in these traditions and compare that with the work Jodi Byrd and other intersections of critics have offered in media/cultural studies and Video Game Studies regarding franchises in the United States like *Bioshock* and *Fallout*. I offer a media/ culture approach to Sakha cinema that stays focused on sound and influenced by poetry in this Chapter such that my previous conclusions may also be brought to bear here in this last theoretical Chapter. The Sakha people living in the Sakha republic are called Yakutian and Yakutia by the Russian Federation who has the current claim to governance over the Sakha Republic in what the Slavic centric world view has labeled “Siberia” but which Sakha people usually term as North and Central Asia(n) depending on if they are speaking regarding “Buryatia”, or groups specifically in the Urals, or again the wider categories of Turkic peoples that extend from former Ottoman Empire lands like Turkey and Croatia to Kazakhstan and the distant, equally troubled example of the Uighurs.

The examples from “Eastern Europe” are relevant because of how the colonial projects of Spain and Russia were contemporaneous in origin, targeting similar lands with similar projects and paradigms. The parallel projects are a colonial discourse that

inform and shape the politics of land grabs, occupations, displacement, and genocide. Furthermore, the examples of Sakha (Yakutia) resistance to colonization exist in a “post-soviet” framework of people’s sorting through the ongoing “half-lives” of the Soviet System, the strange marks it has left on the world and the way that the literature and poetics and filmmaking provide a critical space for endurance and resistance. For example the persistence of governance from Moscow is a parallel to the persistence of governance from the District of Columbia, as each site has been erased of its histories and coopted into the historical, mythical, and narrative. They also help provide context to the decolonial status of Jonas Mekas who, after immigrating from Lithuania, was a stateless person and lived with friends and family in camps initially before being able to live and create films in New York City. Mekas is an interesting example here because he is a “post-Soviet” person in the sense of his departure from lands that fell under the governance of the USSR and because of how he works against nationalism in the totalizing context offered by various empires. Between the decolonial moves of the Sakha (Yakutia) cinemas and the examples of immigrant film making from Jonas Mekas, a sense of the sonic phantasmagoric emerges as more than a genre trend or a tendency of say, the Underground cinema of the United States in the 1960’s but rather as a modality of storytelling with a central place in how we craft narratives and builds space. Mekas’ work also sets a rigid stance against the politics of Cold War aggressions, where his soundscapes evoke the terror of atomic and later, nuclear powers and set their destructive potential directly against the vulnerability of quotidian, civilian bodies, both the youth, and the established generations’ cultures.

Beyond that the events between the USSR and the United States updated and intensified most colonial projects around the world not limited to Korea and Vietnam but also the peoples originally living on the lands these two empires occupied and struggled over. Then earlier in the colonial history of the United States, with the Anglo shift to settler colonial logics in the example of the United States from the 1890's onwards came the creation and closing of the west as a colonial paradigm via the concept of manifest destiny. Similar work occurs across Slavic centric settler colonial projects where vast lands stretching from the Urals to the Pacific are all equally rendered the same "Siberia" never mind that this exceeds the capacity and meaning of the original land term developed in the Slavic world view and reinforced, as Slavic studies shows, through literature like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Nabokov. However, I am more interested in what happens outside of these specifically Slavic informed perspectives, many of whom are overtly apologists for the Czars and the oppression of the "peasants".

For example, the solutions to the troubles of a killer in a Dostoevsky novel are nearly always equally "Siberia" or "the West", each bearing the same colonial rhetoric of "land waiting to be tamed by the Eurocentric body" and both lacking the desired nuance and alleged "culture" of the Eurocentric capital cities, these vast, "mortal engines" distorting and reshaping reality according to their own paradigms. In truth however the Slavic centric configuration of "Siberia" is itself a settler colonial "worlding" which renders the lands east of Moscow as the same "empty" or "uninhabited", "wilderness" waiting to be tamed. The truth of the land is the same in terms of parallels if not textures and nuances, to the process of settler colonization in the United States and demonstrates



how both governances are not working towards the interest of the land or behaving honestly with regards to history. Significantly these insights are gleaned via my research into “sound envelopes” and thus have stemmed from the mass culture of cinema and music, the old Friedrich Kittler “technics” so well outlined in their seminal work *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* a somewhat outdated but significant treatment of technology and networked sensations akin to the cinematic sensorium that is the focus of this dissertation.

In my work in Chapter four I establish the way that sound builds space not just in cinema but in the examples of video games such as those I outline as participating in the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition”. The “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition”. is a literary trend existing on the periphery of many known English language literature leviathans such as Ursula K. Leguin and features in later expressions of the novel via sonic cultures such as the audio book, the performances of acclaimed actor Robert Forester. This tradition receives extensive treatment in separate works which I hope to publish soon but I feature aspects of this argument and treatment in my fourth Chapter where I conduct decolonial critiques of the settler colonial sensorium. The tradition in question is an aspect of ongoing decolonial resistance, nation creation, activism, and identity performance in the present where the Russian Federation, a settler colonial state containing countless colonized populations, continues colonizing the “post-Soviet” nations both with and without consent. Perhaps if say, Belarussian governments are content to assist the Kremlin, then on the other hand the government of Ukraine, the government of Poland, and at times, the United States are committed to stopping Russian invasion. For the militaristic

intersections I have included my concept of the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” as an aspect of my methodology with sound and cinema, especially in the Sakha (Yakutia) context.

Sakha (Yakutia) peoples are not offered the same rights as the rest of the privileged elites in Urban and “Slavic” areas of the Federation, their conscription into the Russian Armed forces or the parallel event of forced Wagner Corporation contracts manifests a dual erasure of people in identity against the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples but at the same time doing this violence in the context of a settler colonial invasion of Ukraine. This of course echoes the erasures, dispossessions, and ongoing violences and occupations endured by subalternized peoples in the United States who are often utilized historically in many ongoing instances as mascots and as shock troops in the armed forces but not offered land or dignity. The synergy existing here is fascinating since it indicates a window into effecting changes in colonizing mindsets from both “theaters of war”.

This “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” refers intrinsically to the experiences of anarchial resistance and criticism in the soviet and then later “post-Soviet” paradigm beginning with Boris & Arkady Strugatsky, which defied and defeated even the might of the Soviet Censor systems both by existing despite being illegal and then later, years later, by being published despite censorship. These authors were regarded as imperfect voices in Soviet literature for their uncouth protagonists, language, alcoholism, and general criticism of nation states in general, a more complicated identity for them included their partially Jewish status which created secret and overt friction for them and their work in the USSR. While the USSR heroically ended countless concentration

camp, and thus saved countless Jewish lives during the Holocaust, the Strugatsky experience and the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” they foster indicated that the Slavic settler colonist was much like the Anglo settler colonist, all too ready to fall back upon racism and the tropes of ancient biases. As such the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” is a kind of myopic, stubborn, and yet hopeful addition to the treatment of sounds I offer since, over the years it has become a kind of sacred poesis of critical resistance with cultures and logics that have come to be housed more in the sonic than in the visual.

The other aspect of the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” is how it works as a corollary to the Anglo centric colonial landscapes of United States gaming cultures like *Bioshock* and *Fallout* which do so much to create worlds out of the sounds and visual fields of the game world but only to reaffirm the same dominant cultures of the present cultural tendencies. Between traditions, an intertextual and multimodal sketch of resistance and endurance crystallizes around the often-discursive communities and performed traditions practiced through sonic logics. I see the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” as a new way to unpack and confront the problematics that erode the self and alienate the worker, the issues that divide and separate the working classes from solidarity, which to me are most commonly defined as a refusal to read into the intersections of race, gender, class, and more which might well become a unifying zone, when framed in the logics of the “sound envelope” but which remain a divisive “Tower of Babel” when configured according to visually centric logics. I define the literary tradition of resistance to oppression in the Soviet and “post-Soviet” paradigms as the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” which stems largely from the Boris and Arkady Strugatsky 1972 novel: *Roadside Picnic*, which

centers on a young, rebellious man who breaks into restricted areas to steal alien artifacts from under the nose of international government, military industrial, “scientific” forces.<sup>1</sup> Additions to the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” owe secondary and tertiary homage to the Andrei Tarkovsky Film *Stalker* and then the GSC Game Worlds release: *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl*. Each adaptation of the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” has taken a level of the original concept, the deleterious Wish Granter that dooms the stalkers it promises to save and applied to a given socio-political/cultural and media context with specific intentions shaping the narrative of the adaptation and demonstrating its placement in the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition”.

The tradition here is literary, poetic, multi-modal, interdisciplinary, interactive, ever shifting, hyper realistic, fantasy, horror, and speculative fiction all at once. There are many iterations, and new imaginations of the tradition and it moves from early proto skepticism of world governments and of the USSR into direct and literal references to the horrors of the Chernobyl reactor meltdown. The “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” is an arguably sonic tradition which bears the dual role of linking literatures of Cyrillic alphabet cultures, Sakha peoples, and my more quotidian, poetic approaches to post-phenomenological research and criticism in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> More broadly Stalker Red hopes to make money on his own terms, to employ himself and define his own worth via his own praxis. His journeys through the zone are also returns to areas of his childhood, the wish granter that damns him in the end rests in the very factory where his father, now a reanimated corpse, used to work. In the end his goals are more odd and even more simple, he needs a miracle to save his daughter from becoming some kind of mutant of the zone because of his exposure to the zone, Red’s daughter bears the deleterious effects of the zone and becomes increasingly less human as the novel progresses.

Although the links are not immediately evident, I think that moving from Beat poetics and sixties cinema, with the potent and living cultures of resistance fostered by the New American Cinema collective, to poetics of confession and Beat modalities, and then to conclude with the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” and Sakha Cinema demonstrates the robust and limitless potential of the sound studies, cinema studies, and poetics research my work offers. I argue that the confessional style of the audio mechanics in the disparate sonic examples my sound studies approach to cinema, literature, and media/culture studies provides a common ground, like a contact zone where the layers and valences of these research categories demonstrate their intersections. Because my research revealed that language, and the spoken traditions codified grammatological systems bear within their potential and praxis, the links between the poetics of Beat cinema and the Sakha resistance to colonization are similar traditions of sonic resistance, of fostering self and subjectivity in the protective and publicly accessible spaces created by sound events such as my theory of “sound envelopes”.

The inherently liberatory aspects of sound are its natural cacophony and grandeur, the textures of reality and subjectivity coded into the spoken moment, in the carnivalesque revelry, marked by music and laughter; the power and shout of the workers strike, these are the spatial dimensions of the sonic which reverberate without having to be heard and which can be more powerful even as expressions of silence. Sound is mountainous and oceanic all at once, it is isolating and empowering and haunting. As much as visual cultures show us realities and must remain the most legible aspect of the

filmic process in shaping the sensorium in the phantasmagoric moment, sound is what makes the visual feel more rendered as the real for the audience (witness).

At a recent conference where I presented a species of this dissertation's treatment of the sonic, the poetic, the cinematic, and the sensorium; that term "witness" came into focus and I attribute it here to scholar, poet, writer and more, Meg Schoerke who so brilliantly pointed out how my configuration of audience was a poetic one and therefore made the audience members, "witnesses" to the poetic Speaker of the Loudspeakers. Schoerke had presented an embodied technoscientific poesis that related to Muriel Rukeyser's Exploratorium and was showing how poetry and science were more unified than either discipline had yet acknowledged. This in turn fostered new thoughts into my treatments of the audience who I now see as witnesses to an event Speakers beget but also require witnesses to relate beyond the self in most traditions. As such some slippage occurs between those terms, audience, and witness, in the project because I want to move with Schoerke's intervention, which was housed in their expertise with poetry and intersectional deployments of poetics across stem fields.

However, it bears consideration that in Christopher Grobe's treatment of poetry and confessional modes of poetry *The Art of Confession*, the residue of religious experiences from the Jewish tradition that Gertrude Stein inherited gave her access to a "quasi-mysticism" of selfhood which made her work, as was also the case with Alin Ginsberg, a kind of outcry to the heavens. In the residue of Jewish, mystic experience, especially in the examples Grobe interprets from Alin Ginsberg, there exists this capacity for "solipsisticly" speaking out loud as a mode of prayer, available in times of despair,

passion, and desperation. This tradition is nuanced and complex because it is not the Zionist move towards Israel nor is it strictly the secular experience of Jewish identity either. There remains so much liminality to the poet's treatment of self in the confessional mode as show in the examples and context of Jewish poets like Ginsberg that I in turn argue their work has shaped how society now conducts its own praxis of self and confession, and that this mode is in fact sonic because of these poetic traditions and their ongoing afterlives.

The reason behind my sonic approach to the sensorium is that sound interacts more unconsciously with the senses and pervasively. Sound is like water or wind flowing into the cracks of the mind, finding the places of least resistance towards the activation of present suspension of disbelief, making of memory via phantasmagoria, and at last feeling the phantasmagoria interact back at the self. Consider the sound event in the cinematic sensorium in the Karen Barad sense of quantum entanglement derived from their exhaustive text *Meeting the Universe Halfway* where the discursive reality described and sensed is always already acting back on the one experiencing it. Such discursivity begets the connectivity of networks of sensation and sense production implying larger potential and vaster implications to research into sound in the sensorium in both specified, elevated fields of research in addition to intersectional approaches. In the end sound is a sense experience that can mitigate the distance created by phantasmagoric events and in this dissertation, I demonstrate that sound is and always has been this force not just in cinema, but in poetry and in vaster, valences of media/ cultural studies.

## Chapter 2 Jonas Mekas and the Spontaneous Sensorium in *Guns of the Trees*

“Not all that’s happening at the Film-Makers’ Cinematheque this month is or can be called cinema. Some of it has no name of any kind. The First three programs of the New Cinema Festival... dissolved the edges of this art called cinema into a frontiersland mystery.”

-Jonas Mekas, *Film Journal*.

“You fools who look down on Westerns, who go only to ‘art’ films, preferably European— you don’t know what you are missing. You are missing half of the cinema, you are missing the purest poetry of action, poetry of motion, poetry of the techni-color landscape.”

-Jonas Mekas, *Film Journal*

In this sonic centric, critical treatment of the underground cinema and New American Cinema director as well as noted critic, Jonas Mekas a Lithuanian immigrant operating in post war New York notably in the sixties but truly up until his death in the 2000’s; my focus and inspiration throughout this dissertation will be the often overlooked and so-called narrative “feature film” *Guns of the Trees* directed by Jonas Mekas. Jonas Mekas had spent time in a displaced persons camp and had also experienced warfare ravaging his country, in the United States he worked to capture his own wonderment as he struggled to create a space for himself and others to express themselves as quotidian observers. *Guns of the Trees* falls into the broader category of narrative fiction but also works in between fiction and documentary, a generative space that transcends the limits of the fiction’s narrative structure and the limits imposed by the documentarian gaze more traditionally.

My argument moves to show the paths through another interpretation of *Guns of the Trees* via sonic centric frameworks that unpack new trajectories into the films narrative that transcend the so far limited readings of the film as kind of imitation of Beat



Cinema and instead as a participant in that “spontaneous” or allegedly created without conception and published without alteration or editing modes of those filmmakers. In Paul Arthur’s *A Line of Sight* The significance of this distinction where *Guns of the Trees* becomes categorized in “spontaneous” cinematic logics while maintaining its status as a “narrative film”, for Mekas, a “feature” length film and therefore begins to destabilize categories of documentarian and underground cinema. Insofar as Mekas had moved to establish himself in the poetic and quotidian traditions of the Beat Cinematic Sensorium he also showed the remarkable potential of sonic events in those same cinematic spaces evoked by the Beat Cinema’s sensorium.

As a reference this essay proceeds with a treatment of the sense experiences in media such as cinema via the way the sense experience is arranged and framed by the devices the late and truly beloved Bernard Stiegler so rightly referred to as “technics” which we can think of them as devices that help us to imagine a thing that is both design and art and yet function. The cinema is a wondrous example of the technical precisely because it must interact so subtly and yet so potently upon the sensorium, that arrangement of sense experiences is a matter that remains dubious, and the issue of fidelity is only the beginning when it comes to the sonic centric view. Because I follow scholars like Grant Palmer into “Post Phenomenological” thinking, I have more engagement with the affect fields the various technic are creating and the networked, recursive “affordances” that stem from the utilization of these technics in the cinematic process. As such this argument largely abstains from many of the larger questions that are

the purview of the true techno cultural scholars and instead stands on their shoulders and uses their insights in the cinematic interrogations through a sound studies approach.

Mekas described *Guns of the Trees* as a singular venture into the “feature film” category of reception, but I often question Mekas’ statements here because it truly seems like he wanted to make a space for filmmaking to occur and used *Guns of the Trees* as a demonstration of his desired ethos. In the epigraph Mekas demonstrates remarkable interest and empathy with certain aspects of the commercial film- namely the media object of the feature film, because of how it operates as a space for narrative in entertainment. He comes to this conclusion through experiences of immigration, diaspora, and displaced persons camps and reflects on cinema by those same logics of community and endurance. One might also think of it in terms of a commitment to subjectivity so radical that it cannot abide the insincerity of the mainstream commercial method, especially for all that ill in the world it “reifies”. “Time passes, week after week, and so it will keep on while I slave working in the factories, in machine shops, drinking copper dust, enveloped in loneliness” (Mekas 311). Mekas has interests in the mass capacity of the cinematic and yet remains most committed to a niche style of cinematic production that eventually crystallized into his own cinematic production force: The New American Cinema collective. That collective persists to the present and has ebbed and flowed with its numerous members as they came and went and returned and so we can imagine it as a contact zone for Beats, the Avant Garde, the Underground, various Musicians, Poets, Artists, and Activists.

The space Mekas fosters therefore is not totally determined nor limited by the decisions Mekas alone makes, the performance of actors on screen and through the speakers is in my configuration, Mekas as editor of poets in a poetic space. *Guns of the Trees* then communicates through the language of cinema, the energy, ethos, spatiality, the sense of identity and community present in the collation of a poetry collection. In the following J. Hoberman treatment of *Guns of the Trees*, “The Forest and the Trees” collated in the David James collection: *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas & the New York Underground* the centrality of sound events in the cinematic sensorium is both obvious and yet simultaneously overlooked in favor of a wider project. In this case Hoberman needs Mekas to operate dialectically but at the very least Hoberman is clear in his awareness of the “Ginsbergian” voiceovers that guide the audience’s sonic centric sensorium through the atemporal narrative in *Guns of the Trees*. “The whole project has a Hegelian flavor: Carruthers meets Allen Ginsberg who, although never seen on screen, declaims a poetic soundtrack as Kerouac had in *Pull my Daisy*” (James 109). There is thus a spatial poetics conducted through sound that plays the role of organizing sequences of shots in *Guns of the Trees* and therefore sound is in fact the governing force across the sensorium that grounds the audience in the experience of the phantasmagoric event of cinema.

In such a spatial poetics, one might consider a film like Alfred Leslie and Robert Frank’s *Pull my Daisy* as something like Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s *A Coney Island of the Mind* where one poet supplies their fantastic vision of the Beat poetics atop the bodies, they perceive in a bizarre but beautiful auto phenomenological ontology. To expand on

that and make clearer the sonic space discussed throughout the course of this dissertation and this essay in specific, the liveness of the event and its capacity to register as an affective phenomenon with consequences of memory and nostalgia make sound events one of the more fluid and limitless of cinematic events. For example, in Jack Sargeant's *Naked Lens: Beat Cinema*, Stephanie Watson's "Spontaneous Cinema? In The Shadows with John Cassavetes" argues that cinema has the advantage of both repetitions, fungibility built into that and that of motion, the repetition and copying being of that same motion. "Film has an advantage over other forms of representation (although it repeats its action when shown and can be repeatedly copied, shown and distorted), because it is a moving medium, like music" (Sargeant 60). Here Watson is thinking in terms of the cut and the montage and the way that editing and exposure can alter a medium specific situation that often isn't the focus of my work. Even so, *Guns of the Trees* was a product of medium specificities right down to the point of Mekas being accused of enshrining his own limits by his less charitable critics. At the same time, it's a fascinating rendering of the sonic as audio visual here, even outside of the Michel Chion framework we gain from their takes on sound in cinema. In this case sound is moving and has parallels in the visual logics, this is a crucial take for me because it begins to justify the logic of sonic cuts I hope to establish for my theory of "sound envelopes" as expressed and observed in *Guns of the Trees*.

Yet *Guns of the Trees* would read more like one of Ferlinghetti's collections of City Lights Poets where speakers ranging from Bob Kaufman to Annie Waldman all present dialogically together, each apart enough to demarcate their own visions. How can

this be the case and what would that mean for cinema and poetry in the Beat, Underground context as shown in the Mekas film? For one matter it means that these poems are collections of cinematic memories or externalizations of a mode of thought which the late and truly remarkable thinker, Bernard Stiegler formulated as “tertiary retentions” that occurred in the visual field.<sup>2</sup> While the techno cultural and cinema scholar/critic tradition involved in these concepts have regarded the external aspects of cinematic experiences, their configuration lacks an accounting for internality and very often essentializes experiences according to what accidentally becomes a Eurocentric framework.

Due to this project’s sonic centric focus, I am interested in what spaces are created by sounds and thus become more invested with our internal worlds, the spaces within us that sounds ushers forth like the magician’s conjuring in some book of spells. Sound in cinema creates the space of the cinema, as an internalized, subjective resonance with a reliable and repeatable phantasmagoric emission of the sonic. In adjacent works theorists have demonstrated the spatiality of the sonic, for example, Laura Rascaroli has offered unique takes that elaborate on the spatial potential of the “sonic interstices”, some kind of “vertigo of spacing”. “The carving of these interstices, while producing a ‘vertigo of spacing,’ is empowering for the spectator. The interstices are shaped by the speaking voice as spaces of thought, and thus as gaps that enable reflection” (Rascaroli 9).

Rascaroli is describing the potential of sound and voice over in their 2011 essay: “Sonic

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<sup>2</sup> Stiegler’s *Technics and Time* books are a three-part reflection into the externalization of memory via prosthesis, culminating in a critical treatment of “cinematic memory”.

Interstices: Essayistic Voiceover and Spectatorial Space in Robert Cambrinus' *Commentary* (2009)". Rascaroli moves through thinkers like Chion and their theories on the acousmatic in a way that echoes my use of Chion in the context of sixties, underground cinema. This space is segmented and generated by the sonic emissions of various intentional deployed segmentations of duration, but it is not linear in reception or production per se and resonates with atemporal modes for "enunciator" and audience alike.

I term these segmentations, "sound envelopes" and trace their work in their narrative space constructed by the various sound events that signal the opening and closing of those "sound envelopes". This process is accomplished through the layering of time and vision, not against or accompanied by sound, but indeed through the commingling of the vaster array of sound events in the film, as their net phantasmagoric impact shape's the possible sense perceptions available to the sensorium. The style of Mekas and his inspirations are largely the everyday people and the casual splendor one observes in the quotidian realm. Unsurprisingly much of Mekas' work is considered through the diary definition of cinema, where films demarcate an in between sense spatial zone where reality vividly informs fiction and fiction in turn tells the truer story of the perceived and experienced reality.

In Mekas' film *Guns of the Trees* the characters I will later introduce via performed identity and allegorical status navigate the suicide of a chief focal point in the narrative: Francis Stillman's character, the bifurcations of identity accessed via performance, poetry, and above all else memory which include the identity of Barbara,

that of her own name, Francis, and the identity synthesized from these interplaying roles which represents her dead sister Marcia. Argus Spear Juilliard's character is a similarly misleading instantiation of quasi reality, she plays the role based on her lived experiences, and imbues this character with her quotidian thoughts and actions, views on art, and society. She also leads the characters and limits the worst excesses the way a star figure might and thus it remains entirely the case that we are to look to Argus for leadership in the film's more conflicted times. What this also means is that we are to see women of color as our leaders in an era of segregation and that *Guns of the Trees* is indeed the product of counter cultural thinkers, artists, activists, all in dialog together in the phantasmagoric event of cinema.

Since we see that the actors have so much control over the filming process and bring so much of themselves into the event of cinema, the worlds shaped by narrative fictions and lived, quotidian realities become the contact zone the viewer as witness encounters. The space they are welcomed into shapes and informs the encounter via the logics of a species of nostalgia that acts on the conscious in a gentle tugging sensation, like a well-meaning but urgent message from a toddler, the phantasmagoria of *Guns of the Trees* as an event, is itself an infantile thing insofar as its sensation of living in wide eyed innocence rather than the potent mechanics of the Dasein, this is a kindly *Homo Ludens* as Johan Huizinga wrote and it is a playful event occurring through sound. Thus, the engagement I offer here is the playful treatment of the sound events that shape the cinematic sensorium and arrange experiences according to amalgamations of time, memory, reality, and fiction.

In such scenarios as Argus' performance in *Guns of the Trees* where characters are based in the lived experiences of actors the quotidian diegesis of a quasi-documentarian space reinforced and built by sound events. Think then how powerful the voiceover sound event becomes in the Mekas examples where actors are poets, and poets are actors, and then sometimes, neither line up perfectly such that an actor who is a poet reads another poet's work. Or to shift perspectives the film will line up a montage of walking figures with the poetry of say Francis when she writes about herself it's as if she gets to command the filmic memory by both performing her steps through some riparian and the reciting atop this her poetic reflections.

In terms of narrative Francis leans on the reproductive futurity and resilient eros of Argus Spear Juillard and Benny/ Ben Carruthers – but chiefly seeing inspiration in the way Argus treats themes of motherhood, and futurity. Argus is determined to make the world something beautiful by looking at the beauty she can perceive as symbolic of her motives in life, the sunflower is its own fruition so to speak and to echo Ginsberg, ought not measure itself by the metrics of the Locomotive. Argus and Benny must in turn navigate the child they will soon bring into the world and the friend they seem to be losing from it. Amidst this network also stands Gregory, who seems to be the embodiment of Jonas Mekas' brother Adolfas, or perhaps a projection of their mutual identities and last, the priestly figure of Luis, played by Louis Brigante. The fraught sense of a mad world indicated via an invocation of text cultures after the credits of the film demonstrate that the grief covered here through fiction remains unpacked and occurring outside of the film, in lived realities. *Guns of the Trees* operates in a bizarre conceptual



context, a framework of imagining that engages in multiplicities of moments, discourses, realities, and visions all tied to a series of striking sonic events.

Acknowledging an intersecting of multiplicities and intentional invocation of multiple subjectivities *Guns* opens by acknowledging print cultures and relies even on notes to establish its early plot. Next in the initial sequence a series of cuts move the audience to dramatically separate moments create an emphasis on the intersection and separate existence of so many identities. The camera is like a powerful printing press in the hands of Mekas because he allows the camera to capture the existing world, to play with actors on their terms, and to set his scenes in quotidian city areas, or as contrast, areas demonstrating the vulgar sides of the post-industrial age. At last, the film culminates in a strange and likely... jocular song which arguably demonstrates the “spontaneous” cinema style. I always enjoy the leniency that a “Spontaneous” cinema allows its directors. As if to say yes, this a sudden documentation alright, but of what, and to what extent we have muddled with it? That is for one to learn because in the end we find evidence that various directors such as Roy Cassavetes who directed *Shadows* or the Alfred Leslie & Robert Frank who created *Pull my Daisy* in the “spontaneous” mode all planned and edited in most scenarios. It’s clearly more a modality that is a kind of “impressionistic” take an artistic film making in Underground contexts rather than a true literal spontaneity enforced by any rigid standards or empirical methods. Often these are movies made with antiquated equipment and limited budgets, relatively unknown actors and music made by friends and colleagues.

The final moments of the film return to the early disjointed style and feature again the bizarre cuts between strange moaning figures in the fields that surround the narrative elements of the film, beginning middle and end. I note these sequences both in and out of order to demonstrate the kind of sonic subjectivity which are fostered by my term, the “sound envelope”. To be precise, the “sound envelope” refers to intentional segmentations of duration that are crafted with sonic events across the cinematic sensorium. In short, the “sound envelope” is the challenge to the senses to define and remember the imperceptible alongside the other sense. In the case of the “sound envelope” the profoundly sound centric techniques all comeingle into an enduring sensation that belongs to the viewer, in truth vibrating deep within them, and yet around them. These strikingly overt edits represent the larger structuring of my theoretical construct, the “sound envelope” and elicit massive shifts in the filmic sensorium. Where “sound envelopes” are demarcations of narrative via sonic events and edits to sound sensation shifts, sensorium communicates the experiential field of the audience, that inherent sense production unique to cinema where vision and sound are combined via the manipulation of duration and memory.

Yet again there are more subtle moments where sound edits have created sonic events in the narrative framework of *Guns* such as the interaction between the character Gregory and an old man in a junkyard who declares: “the Bronx is filthy... the sea, there I can still think” (Mekas). They sit juxtaposed against scrap parts and equipment in a vast area of industrial refuse that seems inherently myopic and worn down. These situations often happen briefly, like gestures and can even present an intrusion of the ongoing

world, into the narrative the director seeks to maintain. The oceanic here shows the nostalgia shared by the characters in the network and it indicts the commercialized forces that are industrial and appear filthy against the backdrop of the ocean. I often call this invocation of the oceanic through the nostalgic voiceover of this unnamed elder the junkyard scene or sequence because of how it takes places amidst so many urban forms of detritus. Further the scenes cuts take viewing from the dialog to a logical conclusion, the same kind of destroyed, crumbling industry.

The dialogue occurs through a voiceover and instead of a conversation between the characters, but it is still a species of dialogue, nevertheless. To be more accurate this conversation between characters exists in the sonic space and sonic logics of the voiceover sound event and not the visual logics of the montage. Instead, the sound event serves more to make this mysterious and prophetic figure the speaker of the scene, their poetry, the memories of their life, their reading the world of the film, their audience: an untold forever of pluralities. With the quotidian figures of the film, we are called to be speakers and witnesses in our own lives and to carry on relating with Francis as a living person, with Argus and her resilient, hope for a future and for a child to uplift. This praxis is to operate in the spontaneous with the Beat poetic forces of the sixties as ghosts in Ginsberg present past, like O'Hara's haunting of Annie Waldmen's Speaker in "Phonecall with Frank O'Hara" where the dead poet casually jests with the living; reminding Waldmen to stay in the joy of life, to find the beauty that does exist, despite the chaos, and cacophony. The urge towards splendor amidst our quotidian peril, one which appears exacerbated by the structures our various governances inform across time,

is a survivalism of the subalternized and extends in an intersectional move relevant to experiences of race, gender, class, and more. These sound events are significant and communicate the lived reality of “Everyday” life, the so called “Ordinary” but which is in fact unique and extraordinary.

Beyond that each spatial locality bears in addition a temporal locality in the greater web of sound events that make up the films’ series of “sound envelopes”. The old man scene helps to show the historical implications of the alienated self and the diminishment of space for the subalternized as industry proliferates in the wake of the industrial revolution. His memories are not visual, and the sea is absent from his moment of nostalgic recollection or perhaps it is truer as follows: his memories are audiovisual in quality and so too is his voiceover. Instead, the old man’s voice, imbued with its own ethos of age and wisdom, transmitted via gravely speech across a legibly louder voiceover than might be expected for such a marginal or fringe character in a film. This exchange is matched to the pair as they sit, but the edits to sound here demonstrate a desire to document lived episodes of experiences which insist themselves into each other sporadically. Michel Chion already established across multiple texts including but not limited to *Film, A Sound Art* and *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. In *Audio-Vision* Chion argues, “music can aid characters in crossing great distances and long stretches of time almost instantaneously. This use of music is frequent, ever since the beginning of sound” (82). Fascinatingly Chion is certain of how diegesis and spatiality implode at the sound event of music which they configure is alone, sovereign in the rupture of the moment paired to the upholding of the diegesis. For Chion only the sound event of music in

cinema establishes such a move, but I think there is more to the sound event than the musical interlude and the sound bridge style configurations afford. Spaces from Beat Cinema like *Guns of the Trees* do much with music in the way that Chion indicates, but they seem to break his limits because the voiceovers of the films carry so much potential and do so much work in and out of diegetic space, all without rupturing that diegesis. To speak with Chion here we might be framed as arguing for the musicality of the voiceover in the context of the poetic film, where the film is an instance of Beat Cinema.

Spaces in *Guns of the Trees* are deployed via voiceovers that begin after musical interludes. In general, one might treat the musical effects in *Guns of the Trees* as operating under the logics of the sound bridge, while the voice is always a part of a “sound envelope”. For example in the scenes at the run down, outskirts of docks, and junkyards; the use of a visual break in filming in combination with the ongoing music of the film creates a sense of connectivity, one might term that the sound bridge, but then the deployment of voiceover establishes what Chion argues cannot occur, a “sound cut” where moving from music to voice presents the significant shift from temporalities and a shift from narrative textures, to narrative details. When I presented a species of or perhaps a more accurate term would be, a strain of this Chapter to PAMLA in 2024, at the Portland Hilton, a fellow graduate student at a nearby institution argued that my notion on the cut ignored the visual’s legacy, the very essence of the montage to put it most succinctly. I regret losing the moleskin with your name in it friend!

In the time following that presentation I have reflected on how sound is nothing but slippages, and so the “sound envelope” is a navigation of the sensation of slippages as

much as the anything and that process is what is meant by the intentional arrangement of duration through sonic cue. The way that sound's carrying of visual events can neither be understood as a strict rule in the contemporary dialogs and in past discourses. But then that reading isn't a limit to potential per se but rather an industry framework created by the same "logics of cost" the underground cinema does such superb work, undermining. To my configurations the thought of the cut has remained mired in the logics of the visual when and being misappropriated into treatments of the sonic. As such the "logics of cost" have thus far inhibited the potential of the sonic or audio visual and therefore also have prohibited the correct interpretation of sound's role in cinema in general. Perhaps this is an invocation of the dubious notion of "survivorship bias" but by overlooking the undermined but ongoing role of sound, film, and cinema scholars have created and defined their own artificial limits atop the commercial industry standards that themselves were always already artificial terms and conditions.

Instead, the sonic should be understood by its own frameworks, the sonic deserves to have a cut in the way that it can move one cinematic moment into the next and denying this I think denies already established traditions such as "the sound bridge" or even the way directors, critics, and theorists treat events such as voiceovers and musical interludes. To my imagining the cut is the moment of the movement in the visual and thus instead of arguing against sonic cuts, its more productive to ask in what way does sound make a cut? The shortest answer is via the sequencing of individualized, yet mass experiences of sonic events organized according to the logic of my term, the "sound envelope".

Of course, this flies in the face of my most privileged theoretical sources from Chion who asserts, “If you try something like this with the soundtrack, the abstract relation you wish to establish gets drowned in the temporal flow” (Chion 44). Here Chion is writing in *Audio-Vision* about how he cannot allow or conceive of the sound cut because he sees it as a chaotic flop in terms of its status as a technique or conceptual maneuver. I remain overly enamored of Chion and therefore feel somewhat more secure taking such a massive departure from the limits they argue for in their research. The configuration offered by Chion is compelling since it shows that sound has temporality to it, and I must agree enthusiastically to this arrangement as I see “sound envelopes” as intentional arrangements of duration. Yet, the limits come to quickly in the wake of this somewhat meager affordance because sound is also in that same step, denied spatiality. “While for sound pieces the temporal dimension seems to predominate, and the spatial dimension not to exist at all” (Chion 44). In this case I strongly disagree with the way Chion argues that sound and therefore that sonic events lack spatial dimensions, especially in the phantasmagoric context of the cinematic moment. For Chion the event of cinema is being afforded “visual spatiality” while being denied any sense of sonic space. How can any who have attended one of the inland empire’s amazing drive-in theaters imagine that there is no spatiality to the event of sound?

To expand on Chion’s thought here, I see them as discussing the way that sound is organized and I am indebted to them for this, I find their work with sound and temporality in cinema to be remarkable and I utilize here in my own work. But I can’t go along with Chion in their so called “Units of sound” which follow what they call the

“Necessary Conditions for a Place of Sounds”. The Chion configuration known as “Units of Sound” begins in a promising fashion as far as my claims are concerned, with its potential to arrange temporality via sound. At the threshold of this potential Chion redoubles their commitment to a certain limit to sound which unfortunately mires it in the very traditions of misconfiguration and neglect that Chion already did exceptional work dispelling in their own scholarship and criticism. I however want to push back, gently at his rather concrete assertions and not simply because they contradict my own but in the whole, because it remains far too totalizing a claim for Chion to dictate what is possible with sound in cinema. Beyond that it remains in addition to the earlier indictment, this stance is also far too totalizing a claim to dictate to directors and audiences what the limits of filmic meaning can be for their creative processes and sense capacities. It is not actually the duty of the critique to close off conversations and possibilities but rather to open them more to greater nuance and discussion.

Even so, Chion also has a stance in his *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* that seems to limit what I want to accomplish with my treatments of Voiceovers because of how he has recentered sound itself, even over what he refers to as “speech”, I think to codify the sonic phantasmagoria he sorts through. To add to this there are countless places in Chion’s scholarship that are the reason for which my own may exist at all and so I do all I can here to proceed with respect, Chion has sound configured in an exceptional fashion and I continue to build from their work. “With the new place that noises occupy, speech is no longer central to films. Speech tends to be reinscribed in a global sensory continuum that envelopes it, and that occupies both kinds of space, auditory and visual” (Chion 155).



In a helpful dichotomy Chion provides a beginning notion to the space created by sound, here splitting it between auditory and visual, but I think we ought to view such points as pliable still. Additionally, I think that speech may or may not still be doing a lot of work in cinema and I think we could even begin to question what it means to separate codified grammar from say... the roar of diesel train. In the end it is fascinating to consider that *Guns of the Trees* would have, for Chion a visual space, governed by the logics of a linear diegesis and then again, an auditory space in which the logics were sonic and likely atemporal. This must be the case because of how Chion establishes sound as exhibiting an enduring effect upon the arrangement of sense experiences that shape the sensorium where the impact of a sound has an enduring place in the audience who witness a true event, even if in their suspended disbelief, the fictive conceits, and contexts of the cinema. Just as Chion has not yet offered speech much consideration in the events of sound, I think that speech is also the location of the sonic cut which he argues against but which I view as an aspect of my “sound envelope” concepts.

Now to move to readings of the film, *Guns of the Trees* there exists, in the junkyard scenes, which perhaps are also the ruins of history, the old man who becomes the Speaker of his poem to the lens of the camera. That is an awkward notion because the tradition of cinematic criticism regards the use of speech in cinema as a device of plot, not as an instantiation of the poetic ethos and the poet’s consciousness into the externalized, cinematic consciousness of the film. When he declares his view of the city and the contrast between the configuration of the ocean as organic and natural and the city as a polluted artifice, he taps into the emotional landscape of the Beat poetics and

Beat Cinema. A profound disturbance at the persistent mechanization of the self, which seems more pronounced amidst the refuse of that industrial rubble. It might be more correct to reflect that this old man is the kind of persona that poets like Frost performed in their works, to hide the real troubles they faced or were and it was precisely this persona that inspired Beats to reject commercial logics. Poets and filmmakers therefore looked to the lore that already existed in their own poetic traditions and found it manifesting organically in the lived quotidian, just another event captured by the camera.

This unnamed Elder's quotidian reflection is elevated to grand stage normally reserved for commercial narrative because it has become the fungible, phantasmagoria of film. The personal and close quality of the scene ends up enhanced by the director's refusal or inability to include live sound, already synchronized with their footage that is, instead Mekas edited later and even left sections of their edited work out of the final film completely. The director then provides more of the context for the events in *Guns* and then the performers and the events of sound shaping their interactions must provide the primary nodes for comprehending this narrative feature film.

However, that legibility remains focused in audio transitions rather than visual rhetoric exclusively. Significantly he directs our diegesis and his voice is not subordinate to the shot, to use Chion's language. "The specifically visual unit of the shot remains by far the most salient, and why the composition of the soundtrack is subordinate to the shot" (Chion 45). Here Chion asserts at last that visuality as such is its own discourse and that it belongs in visual rhetoric, visual metaphors, cutting and the logic of the montage. Against this syllogism, I assert that just because the shot has a commercialized context as

operating solely according to visual logics, in general, it is not the case that this assertion holds ground across all situations and is almost always inverted by examples from outside of commercial narrative cinema. Moments such as this sequence in the junkyard with the old man show the power of the sonic to direct the logic of the cinematic as such and not to remain a secondary or tertiary event happening as an afterthought to the grander event of the visual realm. I value this moment as it implodes the current conversations surrounding both *Guns of the Trees* and more broadly the role of sound in cinema, and its connection to poetics in and out of cinematic contexts.

In *Guns of the Trees* characters reveal a vivid and profound sense of loss through the interaction of sound events in “sound envelopes” that shape the sensorium into reflecting their narrative across multiple temporalities. Actor Francis Stillman performs a living memory of her dead sibling Marcia, who had tragically taken their own life years earlier during a holiday meal. Significantly the film demarcates from a literal and therefore more normative reality here because it refuses to remain in either fictive or diary modes. In the diary modes the narratives all create a constellation, whose web-like interchanges depict a vivid quotidian marked by the sixties Beat liveness and often unruly presentation. In the narrative modes, voiceovers push the questions that drive the plot forward and cement the loss of Francis as a reality, mourned in the past tense, but paradoxically mourned through a living person. This mode also offers insights and creates a sense of legibility for the various events of the plot which may seem disjointed otherwise, in fact they are markedly difficult to piece together through visual logics. One moment the audience witnesses the Old Man and his memories of the sea, the next the

character Benny is racing through a hallway only to open the door to the interview room he just competed to reach first.

However, these characters take control over scenes and partake in varieties of sonic interludes, intentional demarcations of duration I define via my logic of “sound envelopes”. And his moves as a director are somewhat limited, making his genius the allowance of the polyphonic and the encouragement of the carnivalesque from his performers whether they be editors, sonic centric presences, screen-based actors, or voiceovers from his main cast.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon is like the way that the carnivalesque intrudes upon the artist Mikhail Bakhtin’s configuration of the carnivalesque since he doesn’t offer his primary source, Dostoevsky (a Kerouac favorite) as understanding or intentionally invoking this modality. “In order to attach himself to the carnivalistic generic tradition in literature, a writer need not know all the links and all the branching’s of that tradition” (Bakhtin 157). So, then the “Spontaneous” Cinema is one which has an organic tradition of its own which is equally revelatory and grotesque as the traditions tracked by Bakhtin because of how intensely personal, and truthful the performances are in Beat Cinema.

In my configurations of the film *Guns of the Trees* as an example of Beat Cinema, I see the characters as aspects of an ongoing, sonic- poesis which I define and demarcate through the segmentations of duration I refer to as “sound envelopes”. These characters are like the sensory organs of a living consciousness that can transcend the limits of each nodes’ individual subjectivity, but which need not lose distinction from one and other to

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<sup>3</sup> This essay particularly follows Katherine Kinney’s arguments about direct address in this regard.

do so. “Sound envelopes” governs the narrative aspect of the film which is otherwise a series of disconnected vignette style treatments that could all too easily be read as “slice of life”. Their work in acting is based on lived experiences and they are being encouraged to blur those lines, the entire film is more collaborative than commercial logic allows for since the standards of the commercial cinema are limited to the equipment and “logics of cost” that come with shooting cinema at the mass level, be it Charlie Chaplin or James Cameron.

However, that evident such energies may be in *Guns of the Trees* there is more to the film than its disconnections; and in fact, via “sound envelopes” what looks disparate becomes dialogic and contextualized, sonically. That distillation of narrative into soundscapes is a strength of the film and shows the poetry of its age in motion through visual language but reinforces that modality, that visual, cinematographic image with sonic; such that the poesis, occurs adjacent to its visual image and subsumes its logics. Yet none of this decries the truth telling power evident in *Guns of the Trees* which truly shows the lives of its actors, even as it invites them to perform. Inevitably their sets are their own dwellings or associated places they know well, and these settings bear their own sonic realities which the film struggles to unify with the intensity of these characters’ voices.

My essential argument in this Chapter claims that the arrangement of sound in *Guns of the Trees* is configured by the sound centric logic prevalent in this dissertation’s critical revisions and claims about media and cinema. This argument serves to answer my first research question, as stated in the portfolio: What does sound do to the sensorium in

film when the context is Beat Cinema, and how does sound shape the experience of the viewer in a unique way when it comes to “Spontaneous Cinema” (as Jonas Mekas named this phenomena)? I see this Chapter as exemplar of the methodology I will deploy across this dissertation more broadly where I explore the spontaneous aspects of the sonic and liberatory, radical, decolonial space created by sound events in cinema.

In my argument, treatments of acting exist as inherently indebted to the sonic via logics that are beyond the immediacy of their performance centric purview. My reconfigurations of scholars like Frank Lastra, Michel Chion, and Patrick Keating serves to open new dialogs about the potential of sound in organizing various phantasmagoric events. The refusal of underground cinema to operate in the established parameters of commercial cinema resulted in the expansion of potential and meaning to the phantasmagoric event of cinema. In this expansion various new examples of soundscapes showed that industry standards had indeed capped an artificial limit on what sound could do to cinema. Similarly diverting an expected trend in cinema, in “Facing the Camera: Black Actors and Direct Address in Independent Films of the 1960’s” Katherine Kinney traces the role of performance via several close readings of films featuring the cinematic technique of “direct address” which fosters a radical space of empowerment, expression, and an opportunity to indict power structures while inverting the gaze of media inwards.

While describing a powerful sequence in Wexler’s *Medium Cool* where the unnamed character, Felton Perry plays the role of a kind of critical race thinker qua sixties black nationalist, Kinney indicates how direct address gives the authority to the actor and makes the camera subordinate to their performance. “Perry forces the camera to

follow as he acts out his critique of the media's investment in acts of violence. He courts the camera and the audience it promises" (Kinney 73). I am drawn to this reading since *Medium Cool* remains such a unique cinematic experience, one which continues to perform the kind of "spontaneous cinema" I argue for in Mekas. Some of the work with the camera here reads to me as an inevitably sonic appeal because of how Perry's voice serves to give meaning and context to his presence and situates his direct address in the radical context of civil rights and the struggle against racialized structures of oppression. The direct address is held in the gaze, but the cognitive shift occurs through the logics of the sonic, the words we hear as witness to the event.

The way that Felton Perry operates and performs in the apartment is not merely visual however but bears the traces of the audiovisual which solidify the meaning and significance of the direct address technique. Furthermore, his speech solidifies that phantasmagoric embodiment of his private and quotidian realms, forcing us to acknowledge the personhood of the subalternized and the active resistance and endurance of people of color, through cinematic methods and the subversion of the expectation of say a Caucasian messianic move or some species of quasi benevolent gentrification violence. I stay with his voice and cite it as a space of power where the actor confronts not just the film but the structures of governance and media.

At the same time a kind of liveness is performed here which speaks to the spontaneous and lived, quotidian aspects of reality which cinema strives to capture or replicate. As such this mode of direct address also speaks to the "spontaneous cinema" modes evident in *Guns of the Trees* and the New American Cinema group more broadly.

If this is the case, then this essay argues that sound is a means of treating a new mode of direct address which communicates narrative quasi telepathically via “sound envelopes” and we can therefore treat *Guns of the Trees* in the terms that Kinney treats *Medium Cool*. In my case I am looking at how performers in *Guns of the Trees* are invoking “Spontaneous Cinema” via “sound envelopes” as a kind of sonic directness. This is to me, an intensely Beat energy, infused with the poetics of Bob Kaufman, Alin Ginsberg, and Annie Waldmen; a lived performed, immediacy that need not have been “spontaneous” per se in the moment to operate as “spontaneous cinema”. I think that Kaufman gives us a solid corollary to Ginsberg and originary route into Beat poetics with the emphasis on the spontaneous in the way that his poetry is recited not verbatim but always through a live take on an established repertoire, not dissimilar to Comedians and Jazz Musicians.

Paul Arthur sorted through this kind of cinematic performance of the spontaneous, for Mekas, the “Spontaneous Cinema”, in terms of liveliness and rapacious appetites for Dionysian debaucheries. “Yet by immersing himself in the openings created by the social ruptures of the sixties, by translating constant pressures of estrangement into a manifold form of praxis, he was able to implant a spirit of community” (Arthur 23). In this case the way that I am speaking of space related to “sound envelopes” must move with Paul Arthur’s reading of Mekas, the spontaneous aspects of his filmmaking are to thus be read as his fostering and endorsement of community. At the same time, I want to generatively expand upon “what Paul Arthur has called ‘routines of emancipation’ found in both the ‘ritual experience’ of moviegoing and the promise of a widely available ‘domesticated



technology' of movie making" (Kinney 49). So, by tracing the impact of a certain technical shift, the proliferation of "home movie styles" or what Mekas defined as "diary films" Kinney shows how the quotidian realm's documentation empowers the subalternized, specifically of course through direct address, but also via the suddenness of voice events or in short, sound. This trajectory also works through Paul Arthur's concepts where in *A Line of Sight* and elsewhere, he postulates that filmmaking in the New American Cinema held a liberatory role in the lives of the film makers and audiences. My work therefore demonstrates how sound is creating the space of the quotidian and that it takes the role of navigator in the context of the diary moment in cinema or the cinematic mode this work has treated in terms of "Spontaneous Cinema".

The New American cinema and its "Improvisation figures the creative gestalt seeking to free the cinema within a highly mechanized world" (Kinney 1). In other words, the sense of liberation that came with film making as framed by Katherine Kinney allowed for critical space in their treatments of improvisation because of the way it generatively blurs lines between films set as fictions and the actual lives that inform and infuse these various underground cinemas of the early sixties. It was precisely this specific kind of ethos that served to provide a lasting space and place for embodiments of subjectivity and resistance to the logics of commercialized forces. The mode of Beat Cinema came to mark a chief aspect of the sixties, underground style and remained at the heart of the New American Cinema and continued to inform and influence directors like Mekas and his network. "More than a recording of Beat life, Beat cinema elaborated new forms of improvisation, inscribing spontaneity into the very forms of mechanical

reproduction that seemed to threaten it” (Kinney 51). As Kinney indicates, the Beat modes of cinema were spontaneous, but it was often via new forms of improvisation that were contingent upon how resonant and legible they would manifest cinematically.

For example, Mekas praised some of the so called “formal” or “technical” weakness of the Cassavetes film, *Shadows* which often was set as challenging or set as triumphing over the Frank and Leslie film, *Pull my Daisy*, because it made *Shadows* feel more lived, more immediate, more spontaneous. However, a more powerful and decolonial syllogism follows from Kinney’s interpretation where they reconfigure the Beat Cinema in terms of its ability to afford opportunities to actors of color, again in the Paul Arthur configuration of “routines of emancipation”.<sup>4</sup> In this case then routine references the quotidian and the argument is close to an appeal for the centrality of the lived, everyday experience, the move to make real life something as worthy of feature length status, attention, and regard as any commercial, narrative fiction. To make our lives as important and relevant to the mechanisms of externalized, technical memory such as the camera and to then collate that externalized memory into a crystallization of time in the form of film or cinema.

We can examine those routines as follows via the rhetoric of Paul Arthur by remembering the actors as agents in the film making and contrasting that with the experiences of their contemporaries in the commercial cinema who were subject to all

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<sup>4</sup> Kinney claims the following syllogism: “If Mekas’s heady claims are echoed in accounts of a variety of underground filmmaking contexts then and now, the most radical potential of this moment of improvisational filmmaking can be seen in the opportunities afforded Black actors in *Shadows*, *Guns of the Trees*, and *The Connection*.”

number of Hollywood modes of Biopolitical control and repression. “In the late sixties, protest films were programmed alongside avant-garde works for theatrical and college audiences. The Co-op lent films for benefits held by the New York Civil Liberties Union and other organizations” (Arthur 11). In the shape of resistance to a commercial structure with hierarchies was the rejection of all that suppressed artistic potential. Especially in scenarios with industry standards derived through cost and code enforcement matched to technological limits and technological abilities as a vacillating phenomenon, where limits are imposed simply to make a few more dividends. In this context the New American Cinema also came up with some of its own standards because its various film makers, even as they drifted both in and out of the collective, could not work under commercial limits. For instance, Mekas eventually had a vision of what he hoped movies in the collective would be like for the audience and the filmmakers which is shown in the epigraph and so his disputes are largely indicative of the limits of individuals rather than a failing on his part or his collective.

In the end I conclude that the organization of both diegesis and sound events in *Guns of the Trees* shows the resilience and lasting potency of the subjective spaces created by sound in film. These organizations are the “sound envelopes” I theorize shape the course of experience, meaning, narrative, and poesis in *Guns of the Trees*. To reiterate and expand even further, the “sound envelope” is the organization of time, through sound, the cinematic memory of the sonic so to speak and organizes duration intentionally, according to the arrangement of events of sound. I see the film as a poetic adventure into the quotidian reality of lived peoples which stands as an ongoing

reflection, relevant to the ongoing struggles of living, enduring peoples in the present through the unlikely trajectory of the fictional, narrative, feature length film.

There is an intentional and beautiful blurring of reality and fiction in *Guns of the Trees* at play where characters bear real, lived names, identities, and burdens which manifest from their existing quotidian realms and are actively encouraged by the director. Just as “sound envelopes” are intentional demarcations of duration and ought to be read as poetics rather than mere “vulgarity”. Just as direct address has come to signify the routines of emancipation in cinema, so too should sound be configured according to such a gestalt.

*Guns of the Trees* thus becomes, despite its overtly fictive genre performance, a kind of documentation of reality that is through its status as fictive, somehow truer, and more accurately representative of the frenetic and spontaneous life led by these cinematic Beatniks. Its characters’ struggles offer windows into the quotidian hardships endured by people everywhere and thus stand as living art, embodying their ongoing resilience, and defying the ultimate death of any individual. I see a framework of sonic centric textures surrounding the narrative of guns and thus turn to the enfolding mode of the envelope, and its invocation of the quasi-diary space of letters as my metaphor for the arrangement of the sensorium in *Guns of the Trees*.

The following conceptual frameworks serves as a structuring of my thoughts on *Guns of the Trees* and applies a rigorous sound centric take on the cinematic sensorium involved therein, paying special attention to the intensely poetic qualities of the ensuing soundscape. I will begin this Chapter by reviewing critical terms for the sake of clarity on

one part and another for the sake of specificity, whereby predefined terms like the “sound envelope” serve to complicate the way underground cinema shapes the sensorium and how sounds are created in the phantasmagoric event of cinema. “Sound envelopes” should be a matter of poetic rapture and potential and remain potent beyond the capacity of most erasures due to their propensity for apparent meaninglessness. But as I have argued that claim is a reduction and a totalization that neglects the potential of cinema and reception. A chief difference between say Stanley Brakhage’s *DESISTFILM* and Mekas’ *Guns of the Trees* is the way that time is organized in Mekas’ film, he has spent significant energy in his edits, largely in solitude, ensuring that the sonic realm followed and created, bulwarked, and shaped a space that could encapsulate broader temporalities than a linear narrative can allow. With Brakhage we perhaps enter and leave confused and overwhelmed by sensations and by raw, or apparently unfiltered reality, in the case of Mekas we spiral in and out of a multiplicity of vignette like moments in time, each with their own separate contexts, and temporalities unfolding before and after them.

Earlier I pointed out how the “spontaneous cinema”, the “Beat Cinema”, and the New American Cinema group operated around a creative gestalt that Paul Arthur has dubbed “routines of emancipation” and offer more on that now. Arthur has called this—“a general tendency to link the counterculture with resistance to capitalism... identification with the struggles of Third World countries for self-determination, a romantic self-justification figured in a rhetoric of guerilla warfare, liberation, and underground cadres (17), In the acknowledgement Arthur offers Mekas, he shows that the director wasn’t always going for militant approaches, but agreed with the radical thinkers

of his time in general, despite often coming to rhetorical blows with extreme groups or being decried as another kind of villain or state for his work in and with the New American Cinema Collective. The “extreme case” in question, to use Arthur’s own language was the longstanding feud between the Anarchist Filmmaker Jack Smith and Jonas Mekas over such matters as the circulation and control of *Flaming Creatures* which Smith argued was a totalitarian move. In the end its incorrect to configure Mekas as “befouled by commerce” and the arguments between the two filmmakers were in the end more demonstrative of the challenges faced by a so called “new left” as Arthur calls them, but which I refer to more through the invocation of the underground.

I will examine critical sequences in *Guns of the Trees* as demonstrations of the “sound envelope” beginning with descriptions of voiceover in place of dialog in what I call “sound envelopes”. These “sound envelopes” are the ways in which sound events are being deployed as atemporal narrative nodes via deliberate interactions of voiceover and musical edits like Chion’s “x-27” and mesh with the generative friction of the quasi-documentary style of the often spontaneous or unexplained shifts across the visual edits. I begin my treatment of “sound envelopes” in *Guns of the Trees* with the initial sequence of sound events, blaring sirens which give way to various diegetic sounds which I describe as the siren sequence (although it is actually begun and marked by discordant string instruments), interspersed between the Folk Riot and crying children vs. baying hounds, what I call the old man of the sea section, where the films network of friends diverts suddenly and take in wisdom from a lore keeping figure.

In turn these calmer moments of initial “sound envelopes” will contrast with later deployment of voiceover in the limited narrative speech performed outside of the character’s speech. I conclude with treatments of poetry readings and the descent of actress Francis Stillman’s character into despair. She plays the role of “Barbara” and yet also “Francis”, the performance here is twofold as Stillman mourns and revives her dead sister cinematically while also playing out the role of the doomed and suicidal intellectual, enmeshed in interlocking systems of dehumanizing oppression Argus Spear Juillard as a mother and the role that her pregnancy plays in galvanizing the lost hopes of their friend group are communicated in the voiceovers that occur around “sound envelopes”. I think a strong sign of the friendship and hope that Argus creates in this network are that the “sound envelopes” feel dedicated to the optimism and hope Argus places in her child, which she and Benny lean into during the grief and trauma caused by the film’s portrayal of Francis and the more hopeless themes of pessimism that culminate in suicide. I would argue that the significant chorus of baby wails in the film signifies that the child she speaks of in the film comes to be in time and reflects on the narrative of the film with the audience. We might term the audience here a kind of witness to the poesis of Juillard as she explains the quotidian beauty and struggle of her motherhood, against the seemingly obliterating despair of suicide and commercialized logics of cost that extend into every aspect of these characters lives, as they perform a living resistance to that force.

The following segment serves to refresh the definitions behind critical terms relevant to specific film and media studies approaches, the scaffolding I offer here is

partial and does not fully reiterate each wider definition but instead focuses on how they will relate to Mekas' sound event edits. Terms such as underground cinema refer to a moving context of poets, directors, producers, musicians, and artists who come together and fall away from each other as technologies develop and the margins of the social construct shift; they create an alternative and phantasmagoric world where their characters can invert the logics of commerce and power. Among these terms are spontaneous cinema, my "sound envelopes" term, poetics in cinema, Beat modes of poetry, and underground cinema. Earlier I pointed out how the "spontaneous cinema", the "Beat cinema", and the New American Cinema group operated around a creative gestalt that Paul Arthur has dubbed "routines of emancipation" and offer more on that now.

I derive my takes on the underground cinema movements from scholars and critics such as David Sterrit, *Mad to be Saved* which covers the Beats as a movement a cultural force in and out of non-commercial film collectives help to define my underground cinema and to apply more consummate treatment of Beat cinema as it moves across cinema cultures and offers radical new manipulations of the cinematic sensorium. David James, cited from their work *Allegories of Cinema*, elaborates a difficult and nuanced filmic "milieu" that I broadly refer to in terms of underground cinema, but which is geographically centered around New York film groups here which have such direct contact between both noncommercial film makers and again that new and energetic force of the moment, the Beats. In *Allegories of Cinema* the underground is described as "documentaries of subcultures" (James 119). That is to say that the underground turn was intensely committed to creation of space for the self in a paradigm



that increasingly isolated and diminished the self's sense of authenticity and relation to its labor. The voicelessness inflicted by historical and ongoing erasures are precisely the friction points these self-documenting moments implode into critical meaning.

A reiteration of crucial terms here are not limited to but include: the cinematic language of voiceover, x27, cut, edits and so-called "narrative speech", then again, the theoretical terms of the "sound envelope", the underground cinema (style), commercialized cinema, the logics of cost, and the blurred liminal conception of the almost documentary, partially diary entry aspects of Beat cinema. I think that the voiceover largely remains an overlooked and even derided sonic in cinema as it has often trodden to close to the line between suspension of disbelief and recognition of the filmic event. The notion of the sound event supplants the preexisting term, the sound effect and replaces that term entirely in my arguments. The sound event transcends the "Audiovisual" logics and asserts a sonic spatial embodiment. Following Michel Chion in *Film, A Sound Art* I no longer decenter the audio qualities of the cinematic sensorium, but instead highlight and focus, and recenter sound as one of the chief elements of experiential coordination of senses in cinematic events.

The sound event therefore will speak in general towards any instance in cinema whereupon the sonic has taken on the job of informing and shaping the sensorium, often the most crucial of storytelling moments are only possible via the sound event and this conception of the sonic in turn helped me create my theory of "sound envelopes" as key aspects of the sensorium in both underground and commercial cinema contexts. There are layers to the dimensions of space created in sound events as they are organized by the

“Sound Envelopes” in *Guns of the Trees* which demonstrate the sensorium as organized towards the liberatory potential. While perhaps criticism has come to accept the notion that sounds connect scenes, often maintaining the thread of diegesis across the interruption that occur in the visual realm during cuts and various cinematic transitions. These so-called sound bridges are important aspects of cinema studies as the genre pertains to the sonic, but they are too limited in scope and too limited in their temporal potential.

For example, a sound bridge involves the sustaining of the sonic event as the visual shifts around it; meaning that the visual still subsumes the sonic, and that in these rare instantiations, sound briefly exerts more phantasmagoric labor sustaining the narrative. On the other hand, a “sound envelope” will subsume visual logics, and demonstrate complexities in cinematic moments, inverting and imploding the diegesis according to the sonic. The “sound envelope” is more than a sound bridge and does more to connect narrativity across the simulated, asynchronous, phantasmagoric event. Although of course, all cinema is a “one way street” (save perhaps... *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* and the intervention of increasingly cinematic Video Games like Hideo Kojima’s *Deathstranding* and Telltale Games’ *The Walking Dead*) the cinema of the underground destabilizes the reliable linear logics of commercialized cinema ranging from the liminal stretches of eternity packed into Shirley Clarke’s *The Connection*, Maya Deren’s *The Meshes of the Afternoon*, Stanley Brackhage’s *DESISTFILM*, and my example: *Guns of the Trees* by Jonas Mekas. “Sound envelopes” are intentional arrangements of duration set before a witness like audience who must navigate the

poetics of an intensely sonic realm to sort out an equally chaotic/frenetic/bizarre or uncanny visual realm. An intentional arrangement of duration here refers to a stacking of moments in the cinematic sensorium that are meant to work via atemporality or out of sync to achieve sync with each other. “Sound envelopes” help organize the atemporal narratives of resilient cultures, the subalternized and oppressed populations enduring subjugation because they defy the kinds of temporality created by commercial logics, in larger, commercial films.

The “sound envelope” therefore is the manipulation of the sensorium in atemporal narrative gestures that receive their cues from the interactions of sound events and their juxtaposition with the visual edits occurring on screen. Essentially the “sound envelope” theory hearkens back to the earlier and well-treated Sergei Eisenstein informed notions of montage but supplants the seen with the heard as the chief conductor of meaning making in each shot. From the “sound envelope” to the sound event exist a vast body of techniques for manipulating the sensorium with sound which include the simplest and least noted modes of sonic manipulation, the voiceover, and the sudden swelling of musical interludes, or as Chion defined it, the x-27 effect. Within “Sound envelopes” are the sound events like Voiceover and x-27 and the “sound envelope” functions perhaps at the satellite level that is the privilege of “cinematographers” and “directors”.

Yet through the interventions in the treatment of performance as demonstrated in the Beat poetic tradition of cinema, even these metaphors break down as the performance dictates so much of the cinematic event. The cinematic events occurring remain so steeped in the praxis of the emerging “Ginsbergian” poetic traditions that the role of the

speakers in the film become enmeshed with identity of the poetic Speaker who operates within the poem. “This ‘new American film poet’ traverses the same New York neighborhoods invoked in Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’,” (Kinney 50). The role of the director is fraught in the context of the underground movements and “sound envelopes” are similarly more gestural on the part of the organizing edits while remaining intensely embodied, performed, and subjective on the part of the actors. In the scenario of the sonic centric, “sound envelope” theory, the director is more of a sampler, not completely in command.

More than a recording of Beat life, Beat cinema elaborated new forms of improvisation, inscribing spontaneity into the very forms of mechanical reproduction that seemed to threaten it. In these films, the creative act of improvisation persists rather than dissolves in the face of writerly practices such as scripting and revision and the mediating technologies of filmmaking and moviegoing. Understood in this way, improvisation is not something that happens before the camera, but a variety of possibilities that happen in relationship to the camera. (Kinney 51).

The spontaneous aspects that potentially emerge can therefore be read as the more bombastic edits that Mekas adds to his cinema, even while the process of editing remains antithetical to the spontaneous. At the same time his actors and his voice actors become his Speakers and *Guns of the Trees* reads as multi-layered, atemporal account of the entangled lives speaking through the cinema to an imagined audience as poetic Speakers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In treating the audiovisual Michel Chion remarks: “All music in a film, especially the pit music, can function like the spatiotemporal equivalent of a railroad switch. This is to say that music enjoys the status of being a little freer of barriers of time and space than the other sound and visual elements” (81). Here they mean that they see how music transcends the limits of a strict “linear”, diegesis; to expand on that then I am offering that music is just one of many ways that this has always already been operating in cinema across a wide variety of sound events.

The voiceover can be responsible for more than one type or kind of speech in a cinematic construct, for example the narrative speech of the voiceovers in *Guns of the Trees* holds the story together despite the insane combination of frenetic filming, chaotic editing, and often improvised acting on the part of performers. By augmenting the voiceover with greater potency and narrative meaning, directors like Jonas Mekas were able to make films like *Guns of the Trees* exist between narrative, confession, poetry, and documentary styles without ever compromising on the narrative status of the film as such. These methods stand in stark contrast to the commercial style, “the realism of commercial film has often been interrupted by the foregrounding of its own procedures or formal anxieties, in the art film self-conscious concern with filmic form” (James 241). David James positions the art film against the commercial film in their work *Allegories of Cinema* and I work with this dichotomy to differentiate the American underground from that which it resisted and could not be assimilated by, although the reality of filmic differences remains much more complex than this dichotomy allows.

Similarly, moments of documentarian speech in the sound event of a voiceover demonstrate the intrusion of objective reality into the subjective realms of the interpersonal. By inserting strangely abstract voiceover events such as these into the narrative, the speech hijacks the reality witnessed by the audience. In the resulting, intentionally rendered cognitive dissonance, a generative blurring of realities occurs which brings that witnessing audience into relation with the lived quotidian. The bounds of the fictive narrative thereby exploded beyond the limits of the fiction itself but into the lived truths of the actors and thus also, the audience. Comedically the documentarian

voice might seem ambiguous, uninformed, and uninvolved narrator in *Guns of the Trees*. Yet he is not farcical or irrelevant, simply detached, alienated from the action on screen. It is precisely this ability to and the propensity of *Guns of the Trees* to defy the limits of one filmic modality and to instead incorporate multiplicities of methods and styles that makes it such an exemplary film in general and the best example of a sonic centric sensorium for the purposes of my research.

Early on here the speakers swim with more of the jarring and alienating sounds that I often describe in terms of sharpness and intrusiveness. Throughout the film one witnesses that flashbacks demonstrate a domain of loss where Francis confronts the loss of her sister to a Thanksgiving Day suicide, in front of their entire family on one part and at the same time revitalizes that doomed figure through the rejuvenation her lived quotidian performance undergoes via interactions with the nodes of actors who are indeed friends in and out of the film's fictive conceits. However profound and plot driven events around Francis remain, the film unfolds with equal treatment for four main characters, two couples, Argus & Benny, Francis & "This fourfold ego analysis, common in Blake and other radical Romantics, anatomizes Beat ideology into its critical and its restorative components" (James 106). Whether one goes with David James here in *Allegories of Cinema* it is the case that poetry fueled the formation of the film making experiences here. Mekas was noted to have worked through Romantic and Transcendentalist traditions already, in filmic treatments like *Walden* and *Lost, Lost, Lost* but less often is it the case that critics treat *Guns of the Trees* in terms of these poetics.

Because a “sound envelope” theory calls for the encapsulation of narrative in sound in and outside of even the tenuous filmic, temporality offered in cinema, the use of flashbacks represents the opening and finally enfolding of the larger structure of narrative which encircles the linear experience of the film in an ongoing and eternal, triumphant present. Its duration becomes infinitely reproducible now, because of the fungibility inherent to the medium specific format of the cinema. Therefore, flashbacks marked by Francis dictate major themes in narrative structure as per the “sound envelope” theory I develop here. The voiceovers used in the film ranging from documentarian voices to the poetic melodies of Alin Ginsberg’s recitations, and the declarations and despairing lamentations of the film’s network of friends remain the major cues indicating the “sound envelopes”. These same effects also demonstrate the alternatively hopeful and futuristic gestures of the multi racial union performed by Benny and Argus.

The initial sequence in *Guns of the Trees* is disjointed and moves between two figures in a field who appear to have no narrative relation to the movie, but who appear at the start and return in the film’s conclusion. The film score by Lucia Dlugoszewski is crucial here where the combination of flutes played by Isabel Shapiro and Susan Alder sway into high pitched, panicked tones over the consistently abrupt Oboe played by Bernard Shapiro, Howard Vogel’s bassoon, and the clarinet of Nicholas Roussakis. These tones are never used to communicate any of the calm energies rarely found in small celebratory moments but rather signal the emotional states of the alienated. Yet most significant of all in the score, especially here where the orchestra still holds sway and the sonic sensorium has not yet been resolved by the folk songs of Sara Wiley, Caither

Wiley, and Tom Sankey, remains the cello played by William Salchow. As much as the sharper tones of the woodwinds had been drastic shifts into melancholic sequences, the folk songs always signal some sense of liberatory space, even where that space is a limited and temporary moment of resistance that falls short of actualizing change and remains locked in the logics of the gesture and the glance.

The gaze of surveillance fails against “sound envelopes” however because they make meaning out of time, and of sync with the cues of the visual world, since they are not sound bridges and are in fact a more radical shift in the cinematic sensorium. According to Jacques Attali “representation emerged with capitalism, in opposition to the feudal world... with radio and television, representation became available for free” (41). The resilient subjectivity of sound events, especially in the cinematic contexts are that the embodied resonance of the audience as witness resolutely reconstruct and embody the sonic messages. Given the fidelity of contemporary loudspeakers and given the markedly acousmatic traditions of early cinema, it is evident that sound always has and does create space in cinema. Of course, sound theory has established the role that the sonic has always already played in governance and cultural production, a force so potent that in *Noise, The Political Economy of Sound*, must remain in dialog with the ongoing treatment of the Beat Cinematic Sensorium and the potential offered by my “sound envelope”. However, sound can still demonstrate the depths of an individual’s interiority in such a way that the visual may yet fail to enact. The reasoning behind that concept indeed is a return to some of Attali’s concepts because of how they treat the dimensions



of sound, the space it can enact and the extent to which commercial logics limit the sonic, even when they enshrine it, as is the case with the concert hall.

In these perplexing moments, strings create the desperate sense of fear, despair, and uncertainty that dominates the narrative structure and various “sound envelopes” of *Guns of the Trees*. The sustained notes of the Cello keep the audience in a state of tension that is never resolved, the sensation of doom therefore extends across the screen and directly relates to and within the audience. I therefore took the time to name these players because of how they performed through musical interludes, in the film. Each sonic utterance occurring in the space of *Guns of the Trees* operates as a Speaker and participates in the greater “sound envelope” and the various demarcations of narrative and temporal duration in the film’s sub-echelons of “sound envelope” encapsulations of distilled narrative. In this case the complexity of the “sound envelope” as a theoretical construct is clear because of how it now encompasses the voice in addition to sound events rendered as noise or musical interlude.

From here the film moves directly to a voiceover conducting what I’m calling narrative speech, in this case via a poetic reading that shows the internal state or subjective realm shared by the film’s characters: one of profound disillusionment and despair, which they alone can combat and overcome but never receive reprieve from any intervention at the level of the state or medical industrial complex. Then the orchestra is gone, and the poetry recedes, the sound of air raid sirens takes over the sonic sensorium as the film moves in a unique montage of cuts between its chief characters and their respective settings. I take note of these musical textures here so that I can later focus

more so upon the voiceover and the effect actors have on the speakers and the sensorium when their voices signify “sound envelopes” and their speech takes on the role of the poetic Speaker.

The interactions of characters and voiceovers can also represent a poetic speaker to the film, since the voiceover sound events Mekas intervenes into the film with are presenting a duality rather than a singular, “monologism” or a domination of one world view, often via the deployment of a single voice that dominates all others; this despite the persistent reuse of one voice for multiple personas in both the voiceovers of the narrative speech, and the documentarian speech. Then the next layer are the nodes of characters enshrining the chief protagonists, Gregory, and Francis, then the layer after this is the interpersonal and hyper subjective space meant to communicate the agency and internal world of Francis. While many of Mekas’ own journals, publications, diary entries, and articles helped demonstrate the earliest trajectories of his innovative cinema group, it remains crucial to properly configure that cinema collective in a particular instantiation of intersectional context between Beat resistance of corporatism and the immigrant’s resistance of assimilation at the cost of self in addition to the more generalized and potentially nationwide anxieties of nuclear war. For instance, “Mekas Championed documentary of satirical ‘protest films’... his friendship with activist Judith Malina prompted him to film the antimilitary vigils of Mothers’ Strike for Peace in the late fifties (footage appears in *Walden*)” (Arthur 11). And so, one can safely conclude that his work was against more than just commercial cinema but that he sought to indict many of the oppressive entities and regimes he lists in *Guns of The Trees*.

In addition to the work, I have treated from Arthur and Kinney, David James charts how that tradition helped beget or crystalize the formation of the New American Cinema group organized around Jonas Mekas. In *Allegories of Cinema* David James describes these filmmakers under the emerging moniker of the New American Cinema group as “positing the primacy of everyday life in the work of art, even as they invoke the Beat priority of the aestheticizing of the quotidian” (85). In other words, by establishing an aesthetic centering on the quotidian these filmmakers are giving space to the everyday folk which a consumer narrative filmmaker erase or totalize, and thus neglect. “Underground film was the parallel in that medium to the Beat attempt to re-create in writing the aesthetic and social functions of Jazz... but such intradiegetic use of the jazz musician and of Black culture... could become... the vehicle for individual expressiveness” (James 98). In this comparison the cinematic is striving after the experiences created in specific improvised jazz traditions relevant to the Post War period in the United States. A more succinct distillation of the trend in question would be that there remained liberatory potential but that things had to be configured according to destabilizing normative patterns of representation, and arguably still must persist in this day, a potential support to people of color in filmic spaces.

The New American Cinema movement and director Jonas Mekas were unique members of an emerging underground cinema collective sharing and filming together; both writing and aiding in each other’s films. The underground film makers in the new American cinema movement were able to invert the logics of cost at play in commercial

narrative cinema where often the size of cameras began to diminish the lively potential of a given film.

From the beginning of the sixties when we started the Film-Makers' Cooperative it was open for all. Its open to all, to every film-maker... Shirley Clarke and others found that what they were making was still so different from what Hollywood and all the thousands of theatres are interested in, that they won't take their films. They were closer to us. It's part of the New Cinema, so it's a different sensibility. Just look at *The Connection*. It's not Hollywood, it's still the Beat, the hippie, a different sensibility (Sargeant 123).

Shirley Clarke of course should not fall into the limits of the underground cinema, as a kind of limiting factor or even moniker, such a title falls short of the work Clarke has done in and beyond the cinematic world of the screen. Their treatment of race for example leaves the utopic gesture and enters the praxis of radical liberation. But referencing *The Connection* here is a useful way to configure the context of the "sound envelopes" in *Guns of the Trees* which exist precisely because Mekas was not "Hollywood and all the thousands of theatres" but instead, one person with small crews, smaller casts, and a uniquely nomadic and anarchial collective of filmmakers all associating, viewing, and working together. The lines in genre were always meant to blur here where poets take on voiceovers and performances in film. Ostensibly they demonstrate an atemporal, nonlinear mode of diegesis that contrasts and inverts commercial modes of narrative cinema.

As unknown figures begin and end the film, they are allegorical bookends and places to reflect on the more quotidian and less abstract moments throughout the film. I often term them Ghouls, because I want to imagine some false continuity from Mekas to Romero but in truth they are simply business suit wearing figures who describe themselves as the eternal mother and father, they wander a cabbage field in a combination of ecstasy and despair that leaves them utterly illegible. Though these figures are bookends in the larger allegory of intersectional subjective realities, they are not foundational in the way that the old man and the ocean is, the reflection of the old man directly follows a poetic interlude, where the voiceover is Allen Ginsberg reading his poem “Sunflower Sutra” and describing the pervading sense of industrial filth that seems to dominate the post-war, post-industrial revolution landscape of the sixties. The old man who reflects on the ocean with one of the film’s protagonists, “Gregory”, the frenzied romantic seeking to court Francis, and stands for the many layers of obfuscated, yet still existing, working-class subjectivities proliferated around the hard scrabble existence depicted in *Guns of the Trees*. A significant refusal to completely endorse or indict capitalistic structures here is matched by a persistent criticism of industrial refuse. At the same time, industry is rendered poetic by the unlimited potential of the radical subjectivity afforded by the gestures made in the quotidian. We find his mirror in a previous but voiceless encounter during the air raid “sound envelope” initializing sequence, inexplicably Gregory is jubilant and reckless as he careens down the street amidst quotidian activities. His figure is akin to the camera as it interrupts and changes the scene it seeks, in performance to record. The anomaly of Gregory’s interruption into

lived reality demarcates the film's shift from reality to total fantasy. This sonic and visual interruption was the tension of the diary style cinema mentioned earlier, where the events of the films and their textures of lived reality, all come into a world of phantasmagoric, poetic heralding; or more accurately the space of the "sound envelope".

The figures of workers and elders hold countless places in the narrative as quotidian, living, subjectivities that infuse the fictive film world with the realities of working-class struggles. Their performance is not fictive as is the acting of Ben Carruthers or Argus Spear Juillard, but instead is their reaction to the ongoing fiction Mekas weaves around the living city in his film. For this reason, they occupy outer layers of the "sound envelope" process, demonstrating something more crucial even than setting: the inherent subjectivity of the downtrodden every person as they persist through a life designed only to favor youth and wealth. As the voiceover conducting narrative speech asks "why does one commit suicide" for the first time, row after row of people on a bench in central park receive and return the camera's direct address.

Argus and Benny present the film with the hope of futurity and seem less lost in individual sorrow but rather participate in shared hardships together through creative outlets and communal relationships. They are in fact refusing conventions, and Argus refuses to despair, which is something Francis Stillman's character struggles with and against. Where Argus imagines futurity and finds hope in her pregnancy, planning to imbue her child with exuberance and resilience, Francis stays meditating on grief, because her performance is marked by her experiences of loss in her life, and so as she plays her role in *Guns of the Trees* she also remembers and mourns her sister. Argus is

therefore imbued according to her own experiences and her life becomes documented in her beliefs and stances as shown in the film. Argus remains committed to radical futurity against the commercial norms. The embracing of her body becomes part of her character's performance and adds a defining texture of narrative residue to the film. Her friendship with Francis is cemented in their mutual artistic status, each playing a role in the New American Cinema group and various other underground art collectives. These associations and careers are performed in *Guns of the Trees*, but they are also true and thus the narrative renders their performances a more bare and exposed depiction of their lived quotidian realities than fiction can sustain.

Significantly the representation of Argus often goes beyond the context of Benny, and she subverts conventional roles available to a person of color in the commercial cinemas of the sixties. Argus is arguably the more authoritative, grounded, and leadership imbued voice of the character nodes in the network of associations and stalwart friendships. If for example one considers the Susan Delson "Soundie" conceptual framework as an example, it's clear that representation and address held liberatory potential in post 45 media landscapes. "In visual media was harder to come by... Soundies had a dual function: as a relatively unmediated platform for Black entertainers looking to connect to black audiences through film, and as a point of entry for Black culture... into the visual mainstream (Delson 28). While Susan Delson's *Soundies and the Changing Image of Black Americans on Screen One Dime at A Time* is a decade and some change ahead of the filmmakers collective that Mekas will cobble together, or even the more cogent, and more widely proliferated work of Shirley Clarke, their arguments

illustrate a brilliant point which is that few if any mainstream, visual cultures allowed liberatory expressions of Blackness on screen. This reading of “Soundies” is in a roundabout fashion, sustained or justified according to Rick Altman’s reading of cinema before the incorporation of sound in loudspeakers. Here Altman claims that “it is to America’s theaters that we must turn in order to gain insight into the most important musical models for film sound” (30). While Altman means Theatre, because he somewhat flattens the difference between theatre arts sounds and early cinematic acoustic accompaniment, the metaphor carries over to Cinema more broadly.

Essentially, I see that the culture of soundscapes in the United States has forever marked the manner of cinematic relations to sound and consciousness, there remains a sound that acts like a residue of this experience. The singular style that this evokes is one of the atemporal reckoning made possible by the queering of time in jazz signatures, and how this reflects the literary cultures of Beats. These traditions however are from global perspectives and represent the art of the subaltern in the United States. If Soundies were a means of transmitting a subalternized culture then “Sound Envelopes” are more direct and non-commercial (in origin) methods of creating space for self and the protection of culture, the fostering of identity through praxis. The Soundie would have remained mired in a logic of capitalism and racism due to its targeted structure and the intent behind the creation of that infrastructure as well as its placement.

I am fascinated at how the intersection of race, representation, and cinematic sound technologies work to undo the racist structures informing governance in the United States. In later Chapters I look to comparative approaches to demonstrate the bizarre



ways that medias can either reinforce or destabilize the categories informing and shaping race both in the United States and in a global context which acquires too much nuance to list in this Chapter. I see the centrality of people of color in Delson's configuration of Soundies as a trajectory in sonic representation that bears traces of Kinney's arguments into performativity ranging from their treatments of Duane Jones in *Night of the Living Dead* to Marlin Brando's vocal resonances. The casting of people of color was limited to what Delson describes as the servile roles, which might well see total rupturing in the underground cinema, but which could only ever be defied in limited, highly localized, and technologically specific, mass sensory experiences like the "Soundies". The issues Delson traces resonates throughout sixties cinema however and each scene decentering the Eurocentric settler body, remains a utopic rupture in the larger narratives shaping structures of governance.

Research by Katherine Kinney corroborates this via reception because of how the performance of Duane Jones in *Night of the Living Dead* was not treated in the criticism of the film, that served to erase his labor by neglecting to consider his acting. Delson focuses on arguments about the role of cinema, race, and sound technologies. "In Soundies the presentation was low-key and straightforward, with Black and white musicians shown together on the bandstand, primarily in wide shots" (Delson 201). In the presentation of the Soundies as a format one notices that the framing matches the industry standards of sparseness but diverges from its presentation of race. Further these modalities of filmic and sonic expression were zones where integration could occur, be performed, and exist seemingly without consequence due to the precise nature of the

Soundie as a uniquely Black mode of expression. In Kinney's case, however, the emphasis is on the way the critics have not acknowledged a person of color when they were cast in a role that wasn't "servile".

In a sense the thinkers converge here where they consider performance, but Kinney's arguments demonstrate actor's work and the way they transcend the situation of the film, and this commitment to performance has inspired the way I look at *Guns of the Trees*. At the same time, I cannot help but imagine how sonic centric the Soundie is, which of course feels so obvious, given its name; but it remains significant that the sonic Soundie was the space where race could be treated outside of the frameworks of segregation. Where these ten-cent music video prototype like cinematic experiences could show people of color at leisure, and in positions of dignity, and authority, they were also rupturing the conventional and colonizing realities fueling the logics of cost behind the commercialized cinema leading up to the 60's. "Sound Envelopes" operate according to similar logics as Delson's treatments of "Soundies" although the two terms develop in massively separate contexts, they are nevertheless unified by their re-centering of the sonic in studies of cinema cultures. Because "Soundies" had already proliferated across, at least, the east coast; the atemporal logic of cultural production through sound, but with cinematic elements was always already in the cultural milieu.

If the presentation of bodies in Soundies were marketed to people of color as Delson suggests, and if Kinney's readings on *Night of the Living Dead* resonate, then there remains power in film making, especially in the communal centric style offered in the so-called underground cinemas, the New America Cinema group fostered by Mekas

and his colleagues. Connecting these examples is the issue of sound in cinematic contexts, and how the sound's role amidst the forces shaping the sensorium is that of spatiality; a role related to instantiating aspects of space manifested and created by sound.

In the layer of the "sound envelopes" which demarcate the center of the film, Francis makes the most poignant moves to resist, rebel, and more than anything, to question her reality. Significantly she is not always "acting" but also is performing a kind of poesis that transcends even the most diligent performance of committed and heavy hitting actors like Marlon Brando's method acting that took him from the husky to the deranged. As Film Critic and Cinema Scholar, Katherine Kinney argues in "The Resonance of Brando's Voice" the textures that Brando utilizes to become registered in the realistic framework, he had to of course behave and perform a kind of prosthetic sound, often through physical alterations and augmentations. Francis' poesis is that of the confessional poet but comes from the culture and aesthetics of the Beat poetry most clearly demonstrated in sixties counter cultural treatment of Ginsberg, Snyder, Kaufman, and Ferlinghetti. When in dialogue with Francis, the world around these two women shrinks away and the camera's angle, the disposition of cuts and close ups make their conversation the life sustaining struggle that the suicidal ghost inside of Francis Stillman's character and her real-world memories of loss both need and care.

For example, when Argus confronts Francis' nihilistic and potentially solipsistic turn towards inner and all-consuming despair, she points out how totalizing a depressive take on life can truly be for an individual existing under commercial narrative structures which dominate American cinema in the larger and more mass culture models of

production. Turning back again towards Lastra's takes on sound technology in cinema, "sound was always understood as having a very specific role to play as a carrier of information. Thus, the reproduction of speech was implicitly... guided by [that] preordained role of speech" (Lastra 145). By these statements on the expectations applied towards sonic reproductions across the cinematic sensorium Lastra's is pushing back on the notion (too often accepted without enough reflection or sufficiently framed critique) that sound must tell a clear, logical, linear, and intelligible message about the diegetic world and the film's narrative arc. This notion of limited sound potential shaped the treatment of sound events as vulgar in the notion of such thinkers as Percheron who do not move past this initial and overly totalizing treatment of the way sound shapes the sensorium. In fact, sound is neither temporal in a linear fashion nor is sound, especially cinema, an authentic one for one adaptation of the true source of any given sound. For example, the wealth of research on the filmic adaptation of Palahniuk's first novel, *Fight Club* often go into rigorous detail regarding the way that the sound of sparring is rendered without of course any true damage to any animate flesh.

The takeaway is that sound doesn't have to be logical to make a massive impact or to shape narrative. All that is required are that a string of powerful moments can be lassoed together via sonic events, as if wrapped in moments by melodies. While Francis insists that life is worthless and can never undue the larger structures that hold her in a place of alienation and oppression, dismal despair and worse; Argus, a woman of color and a mother to be (in the film's more fictive takes) has endured intersectional oppressions of race, gender, and class while Francis maintains at least the privilege of a

Caucasian woman in the framework of the overtly racist media and legislation evident both in her time and continuing on into the present. Absent from these moments then are both men and structures of power because it is in these dialogues between women that the space for their resilient subjectivity unfolds. In this moment we see the enduring power, grace, and dignity of Argus both as her character (still just her name) and as her true or non-cinematic identity.

Very often it is not the director making choices that moves *Guns of the Trees* but some near spontaneous invention witnessed in performance, this rule can't be enforced evenly as certain sequences like the mimes are very obviously the work of an intentional hand and a staged event. On the other hand, the Folk riots, the old man that Gregory encounters after playing with children in the street are not even truly under the control of their organizers. These brilliant intrusions of the real world are in fact hyper carnivalesque incursions on the party of the quotidian reality the film is framed in, as they intrude into the fictive narrative the film halfheartedly attempts to sustain. To return to David James in *Allegories of Cinema – Guns of the Trees* was a film that always meant to take a particular and to this day innovative stance towards temporality and the various modes of documenting quotidian life/ making diary style content for the sake of the narrative. “Reflecting Mekas’s situation as an alien caught in a cold war which allows him neither homeland nor political belief, the historical condition in which these characters alive is imaged both naturalistically and surrealistically” (James 105). There remains a unique and fraught sense of poeticism in the film that must come through interactions since the action is dependent upon friends and their innermost needs and

emotions, and the struggle to be places that are safe for each other. The larger importance I track in *Guns of the Trees* is beyond the director's purview alone however and extends into the arrangement of lived moments as documented in the film's creation and reiteration as phantasmagoria. This intervention is only possible by reconfiguring sound through "sound envelopes" to better articulate and express the layers of resilient subjectivity encoded in each scene of Mekas' film.

The music of the film (which moves through the x-27 effect by swelling in volume and demonstrating that evocation of potent emotion so common to meshing of music and cinema) insinuates a species of melancholic, misanthropic desperation in the limited time viewers are given to make sense of sudden cuts between title, between poetry and print cultures subsuming of cinema and the inexplicable apparitions of mimes or ghouls or clowns in a cabbage field. As Frank Lastra argues in *Sound Technology and the American Cinema* – the development of film sound was shaped by a legibility or in his words a species of "intelligibility" which would create friction or are the sites of friction in filmmaking. "The historical resolution to the conflict between fidelity and intelligibility returns us to the vexing problem of 'the original,' which functions as the center of both the technicians' and academics' debates" (Lastra 143). Meaning that sound events were being reduced to the wrong types of questions by both experts in the field and experts in academic treatment of the cinematic genre of criticism. Sound events in *Guns of the Trees* are an excellent implosion of the kind of totalization Frank Lastra is beginning to track in *Sound Technology*.

At times these sound edits are overwhelming the sensorium and creating a sensation of extreme horror marked by shades of discomfort and uncertainty, these persistent, shrill, and atonal string sections at the introduction sequence are some of the more obvious examples of sound overwhelming the sensorium in *Guns*. Still other scenes bombard the viewer with barking dogs, sirens, and crying babes, to demonstrate the ongoing violence that law preserving agents enact on the masses. As I move through this critical treatment, I unpack the nuanced complexity of the edits to sound done in the wake of filming *Guns of Trees*. Significantly the edits to the sound events shaping the sensorium in *Guns of Trees* take on intensely literary traits. I remain fascinated by the abstraction of these moments, the defiance of conventional logics of sound and editing which had already begun to ossify into inevitable logics of cost which limited both production and innovation in commercial cinema.

In tracing that underground turn, this section focuses on the way that *Guns of the Trees* (1963), which was Mekas' feature length and narrative film; committed itself to the radical subjectivities of its actors and creators, its muses, artists, and inspirations. As such, the film is an exemplary artifact of media driven through the creation of space with sound. *Guns of the Trees* is the story of several couples, or family structures, and their local networks of drunks, artists, and notably, a priestly figure. These are archetypal characters who show the complexity of those feeling displaced by mass culture and the mobilization forces evident under regimes in the sixties. The drunkenness' of characters begets their realness, arguing for a vivid, lived residue of quasi- documentary reality—these people aren't perfect, and they aren't hiding their flaws; they are haunted by pain

and loss.<sup>6</sup> Cinema is a memory made external in the abstraction of the technologies of production and the moments in time that are captured, in truth, in earnest, with sincere means, goals, and authentically lived experiences leave behind residues of experience that enrich the phantasmagoric event.

Meanwhile the theologically robed and hermetic figure of the monk serves to remind the audience of spirituality outside of mass religion, that relative hermitage of the monk and their greater freedom in comparison to the Priest who stands in the public view. To my reading of *Guns of the Trees* each character has a specific sonic space in the greater narrative network offered in the sensorium shaped by “sound envelopes”; each bears both a documentarian, or lived and quotidian reality to the film via intersections of spontaneous performance and a species of what I will define here as “spontaneous editing” on the part of Mekas, and then again also as allegory in the wider and more cosmic sense. Circling back to discussions of Paul Arthur lead by the work of Katherine Kinney, this spontaneity doesn’t have to be the kind of authentic, truly “spur of the moment” moves but instead reflect the sense of performing the quotidian immediacy in a grandiose sense.

So though these “spontaneous editing” moves are indeed also at times haphazard, or sudden, or done with emotion rather than reflection and precision, they are all equally a valid, “spontaneous cinema”. To be clear it is not the case that either Mekas or his actors move without conceit or that *Guns of the Trees* is not in fact a fictional film. All

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<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Mekas remembers Dostoevsky here where in *Crime in Punishment* one observes how the drunker characters and drunken moments demonstrate some of the more complex truths of structural oppression surrounding their efforts and failures.



the same the way that Mekas has included so much of his diary style of cinema that are exhibited in films like *Casius* and *Remembrance of Lithuania* complicate the alleged fictionality. At the same time the structure and setting of the events in the film are often enough lived spaces, like homes and workshops or well-trodden trails and alleys or street corners.

“Sound envelopes” are crucial to the interpretation of underground cinema like *Guns of the Trees* which remains committed to the uniquely subjective space created by sound, especially in cinematic time. As such the steps taken to influence the sensorium in *Guns of the Trees* might be read as a kind of underground standard for the “spontaneous cinema”. I work to configure the strands of the spontaneous in *Guns of the Trees* through “sound envelopes” such that I argue for reading the scenes alongside each other, much more in the sense of a mixed up “soup” of an experience. This theory opposing the linear reading of the spontaneous, explodes the potential of narrativity in underground cinema and seems to have a trajectory across the cinemas of the United States in the 1960’s.

In turn, that resistance of amalgamation stands as a model for the greater work the film performs cinematically, across the sensorium. The couples however argue for futurity and against segregation policies and experiences in the United States, which continue to complicate conversations on race and representation in the film. Essentially, they demonstrate the lack of opportunities and the endurance of the subalternized the sixties in New York in particular, where economics and imagination were being diminished by the totalizing force of mass culture models of consumer capitalism. While Gayatri Spivak initially theorizes the subalternized as the oppressed persons denied

agency and voice in their seminal treatment: “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in the context of *Guns of the Trees* I argue that the subalternized is recentered, giving itself voice and agency over the seemingly indomitable structures of an increasingly commercialized media landscape. Within *Guns of the Trees* race and gender take on categorical and valanced meaning where allegory and satire reach sites of implosion in the turn to documentation, the capturing of the lived quotidian and the filmic reproduction of the recorded, rendered as fantastically real.

In *Film, a Sound Art* – Michel Chion claims; “Filmmakers therefore give noise to the body through sound effects” (Chion 237). By this syllogism, Chion means to assert that sound not only creates space through an invisible textuality and texture of sonic resonance but also that sound creates embodied space. Michel Chion’s work remain critical here in the space of theory and its intersections with art and criticism, his text *Film, A Sound Art* is a robust treatment of sound events in film which reconfigure almost everything he examines in cinema and film criticism. By taking the time to examine the impact of sound in various public cinematic experiences Chion was able to establish a viable and unassailable position.

For example, in his treatment of the so called “Audiovisual Contract he describes how sound has traditions that become erased by the construction of “narratives of progress” in what I otherwise am referring to as “logics of cost” and commercial cinema. “The sound media (recording, talking pictures, radio) of the twenties through forties subscribed to a certain notion we have virtually forgotten today: phonogeny” (Chion 101). In their phonogeny sequence from *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* Chion refers to

how voices can or cannot sound good in certain recordings and sound systems/  
loudspeakers of now lost eras of technics, the ability or tendency for someone to sound great “singing in a can” so to speak. In this configuration the audio visual meets the sonic projects at the sight of enjoyment. Towards this metaphor I consider the way a cat can rest atop a loudspeaker blaring music, something about the vibrations remains inherently soothing even to a being that has an antagonistic relationship to loud noises. There is pleasure to the sensation of the public space and nostalgia for the textures that are lost when technologies moved past these phonogenic eras. The larger significance for such a resilient subjective space is its undoing and implosion of the logics of cost which so constrain commercial narrative filmmaking. This term remains rather abstract to my work except that it highlights the pleasure in hearing, which might be aligned with the visual’s “scopophilia” or pleasure in viewing. Part of the pleasure in hearing is not necessarily the beautiful but indeed the poetic or meaningful rendering of the overwhelming, for the sake of reflection and to serve as an outlet for identities that lack legibility in a commercialized context.

Jonas Mekas defied the conventions of commercial narrative filmmaking when he manipulated the sensorium in *Gun of the Trees* with sound events centering on the subjectivity of these subalternized characters. The sensorium refers to the arrangement of sense frameworks into spaces of narrative in film. These spaces of sense are frameworks elicited through mechanical reproductions of cinema such that a presentation of senses is transmitted by the careful creation of sense experience conditions. In other words, this is a sound centered take on the arrangement of sense experiences in various aspects of

cinema and yet also across more broader definitions of various cinemas. Reproductions are potentially better framed in the language of technics or techne and therefore as kinds of technologies. This reframing would allow for the innovation of wider “techno” cultures that have created immense research spaces for the conception of the organic as technical moving past and reconfiguring the research of the post human and more. Such a sensorium is therefore not an alienation in the way that most conventional phantasmagoria remain, abrupt and sometimes ontologically violent “cuts” to frame the sensorium in cinematic terms. Instead, such a sensorium, that of the sonic centric, or merely the sounds of the sensorium over the privilege of the visual as commanding filmic logic means that people are not externalizing all their cinematic consciousness—indeed the sonic realms of the sensorium serve to resonate with the bodies of the audience. That resonance is key to this project since it is within this relation of real time sensation goes beyond the sometimes-skewed observation of the visual and reverts to emotions built by sound spaces moreover the frenzy of vision and montage.

The sensorium remains an ongoing interactivity that begins in the planning and assembling of montage where triggering sensations that elicit sense responses create illusions of lived sensations. At worst the events scripted into cinema are such that they offer a blurry legibility to even the least compelling films and narratives. A sensorium style analysis of filmic fantasmagoria centering in the sonic focuses less upon narrative and more upon transmission of and creation of space. The manipulation of scenes and sensory experiences via voiceover, x-27, and my terms: “sound cut”, and “Sound Envelope” allow for sonic spaces to register atemporal narratives and provide shelter to

subalternized identities. These “sound envelopes” are segments of film I argue become governed, shaped, and made legible through various events of sound in the filmic phantasmagoria. While my theory of “sound envelopes” is not limited to *Guns of the Trees*- it is centered here such that the theory might well have a solid origin in media of this fashion, from this film collective and operating in these Beat, underground paradigms. I look to the way that “sound envelopes” can organize cinematic time sonically, thus creating a space of resilience, a place to defy time and structural oppression alike. The large question of this section remains how sound can be configured as a contrary energy in cinema when manipulated according to a nonlinear sensorium.

*Guns of the Trees* follows an atemporal logic characteristic of various cinema worlds in which moments of phantasmagoria beget a logic of subjectivity and emotional resonance. Instead of an obvious visual logic, *Guns of the Trees* takes on an audio logic across a series of sound events. Audio logics are transmitted via “sound envelopes” and convey atemporality inherently because of their individualized affect fields which evoke grammar and music through vibrations. Yet this project demonstrates, and *Gun of the Trees* serves as a model of that demonstration; that potent potential remaining in reconfigurations of narrative according to sound at the level of film and media studies. Sound as one might well remember begets language and language serves to externalize and symbolize thought, that prosthetic and pliable sonic dimension hides, like gravity, between, within and upon as well as without phantasmagoria. The alterations sound makes are indelible and lasting associations, and relations begin and sustain with this

audible realm even in the visual cultures of cinema cultures (film, television, various “newer medias”).

### Chapter 3: Postmodernisms Implosion of the Speaker, Beat Poetics, and the Shift to the

#### Confessional Mode

“It is possible for what is frightening and pitiable to arise out of spectacle, but it is also possible for her to arise from the very organization of the actions, and it is exactly this that takes precedence and is the mark of a better poet.”

-Aristotle, *Poetics*.

“*Oh angels,*

Keep the windows open

So that I may reach in

And steal each object,”

-Anne Sexton, *The Complete Poems of Anne Sexton*.

“Sometimes when I’m lonely,

don’t know why,

keep thinkin’

I won’t be lonely

by and by”

-Langston Hughes, *Collected Poems*.

In this Chapter I establish my arguments on poetics and ground my discussions on the Beat poetics with confessional themes with references into various modernisms. I consider that the sonic quality of poetry remains within the construction of the lines of the poem and in the grammatical structures governing its temporality. My claim is that confessional poetics do not belong to a heteronormative framework after all, but indeed operate in a counter cultural capacity that remains dubious in the spectacle of mass media like reality television, but which also remains liberatory in the context of the underground cinema of the 1960’s and its constant invocation of Beat literary traditions and poetics, all of which take on an intensely confessional motif. The significance of this is that it helps deconstruct the fraught binary placed between representations of queerness in the

performative moment of drag as it is configured as antithetical to confession which often received a heteronormative logic.

In the end I seek to assert a critical and vibrant link between the poetics I observe Ginsberg participating in this essay, as well as the notion of documenting the quotidian I observe in the filmic worlds of Jonas Mekas and his underground cinema colleagues in Chapter 2 such that I can argue for a sonic decolonial space as the atemporal resistance to the logics of cost present in commercialized cinema. Since such commercialized cinematic logics negate subjectivity in favor of objectivity, and operate more like T.S. Eliot's modernist speaker, detached, and distilled (ideally) from the self of the poet, they are not indeed radical sights until they achieve "confessional poetics" initially with the Beats, later and more clearly with the work of Anne Sexton and in my opinion going as far back as the post modernisms of Gertrude Stein. Since the cinematic and poetic concepts have already received rigorous treatments, I reserve this section for the way that space built by sound becomes the inherent space of resistance, the zone where the subaltern speaks.

Because of the inherently decolonial, interpersonal, subjective, and often antagonistically rebellious quality of Beat poetry, and Beat Poets, I work through complex intersections of race, gender, class, theological/ faith-based beliefs and/or statuses of being. However, I localize my intersections in this argument according to their poet and therefore must work carefully with identity, representation, performance, and performativity, especially in my configurations of poetics. These intersectional approaches are aimed towards a conversation that describes the spontaneous aspects of



the confessional poetics that Christopher Grobe observes in drag, and which I argue are also in the critical treatments of poetics offered by scholars such as Maria Damon who works with underground poetic movements and origins / metaphorical offspring's of originary Beat poets. Another important intervention in this argument is the Jose Esteban Munoz argument for queer futurisms through gestures and traces of queerness demonstrated in the resilient work *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*.

The issue of confessional poetics is critical to my dissertation in general as it grounds my disparate and multi-modal research trajectories in a single, somewhat unified field of American literary criticism and print cultures at the same time as influencing and occupying stream and screen cultures across the same media landscapes. Thus, following Grobe's dive into confessional poetics, I too, look at identity, race, sex, queerness and attempt to configure the apparent liberation of a democratic and capitalist poetics when it fails to meet political demands on certain valences – such as the work of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot – and then conversely how much higher the spirit of Ginsberg and Sexton can soar through the abandonment of modernist restrictions via their Gertrude Steinesque implosion at the site of the subject and the destruction of overt, traditional semiotics. I want to see how literary traditions from modernisms and post modernisms play out through the Beat style and to observe the sonic quality of these poetics, their commitment to immediacy and the sense in which this mode is one that acts like documentary cinema. The Beat poetics as metaphor and method here, but perhaps less stringently applied than might have been the case in previous decades of criticism.

If instead confession can be understood in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical, then the space between becomes the sight of resilient subjective expressions of self. Declarative space operates in a chiefly sonic sensorium and hearkens back to ongoing underground cinematic traditions that manipulate sound as the space creator responsible for the achievement of the filmic sensorium. However, this would mean that poetics of confession would be to express the complexity of the carnivalesque in the gesture of the "spontaneous mode". In turn the sound of the poet in real time affirms the authenticity of their alleged sincerity despite any irony, and this same praxis remains embodied in the performativity of self.

In my conclusion, I argue for a confessional theme that unifies poetry in the emerging underground of the post war and early sixties that traces a more rich, complicated, and disparate path through American poetics. Confessional themes allow a more generalized treatment of American poetics that configure some of the ethos and energy of lived spontaneity and quotidian realities. The confessional poetic style is critical to my work as I use it to connect the cinemas of the sixties, to the reality shows of the late 90's and early 2000's, and from these televised examples to the hyper fungible platform based, digital screen cultures that mark the two thousand's own roaring twenties, as I often configure our contemporary post-post- allegedly "meta-modernity".

Important to this configuration of phantasmagoric poetics are the underground cinema of the sixties such as the work of Jonas Mekas in *Guns of the Trees*, Shirley Clarke's *The Connection*, and *Pull my Daisy* by Robert Frank & Alfred Leslie. Although research into the way that poetics play out across novelizations receive intensive

treatment in the wake of modernism and even more so arguably after the post-modern turn/ inversion; not enough has been added to the sense of confession at play in the quasi-documentary space of so-called reality television. The tension between a performed Speaker and the role of the voiceover in any cinematic moment already complicates the notion of the often-visual centric phantasmagoria at play in cinematic dialogs.

Films from the sixties underground cinema like *Pull my Daisy*, *Shadows*, and *Guns of the Trees* show the way that loudspeakers in the cinematic sensorium have taken on the role of the Speaker in the poetic sensorium. The voice of the poet in the loudspeakers in such a case does find their corporeality across the phantasmagoric body of the cinematic event, yet their presence, the space they build, occurs in the sonic recitation of the written, poetic word, performed, and captured through cinema. In turn, reality television showed the world that confessional poetics had a limit too, one where authenticity evaporated, and yet again was the entire appeal or marketed aspect of the medium.

It can be difficult, 25 years on, to remember a time when reality TV had — or felt the need to profess — a social purpose, but *The Real World* did at the start.

Media scholars and cultural critics have justly tallied the programs failings, then and now: the way it removes ‘identity’ from its context, the way it’s casting tends to tokenize racial, sexual, and regional minorities, and the way it can therefore short-circuit social thinking before it rises to the level of politics (Grobe 194).

Grobe makes a poignant intervention here by first demanding scholars must and have already acknowledge the potency of mass media modes of poesis and then indicting the

way that these poetics are “short circuited” or cut short of actualizing radical change. It’s important to see the Munozian/and therefore Ernst Bloch informed notion of a critical lack, also outlined and explained by Maria Damon in *Post Literary America* operating in the distance between reality tv and the embracing of radical subjectivities across the wider valences of media and techno cultures.

Jose Esteban Munoz had configured the utopic horizon as antithetical to and lost to the heteronormative configuration of space, an often-linear delineation subject to cause-and-effect logics governed by even further logics of cost. I think this is especially apparent in his treatment of the gesture which implodes the critical need to label or judge a poet’s sexuality resulting in their sequestering to a proverbial closet. And though this is a compelling logic, I also think it’s important to hold the closet and its denizens to a certain level of accountability without at the same time dipping into the judgements and condemnations which could only be homophobic and ablest in any context.

What then of the heteronormativity of the reality television scape all the way back to *Real World* and up to the contemporary examples of say... *Love Island*, *Love is Blind*, or even *The Great British Bake Off*? To speak mainly towards the examples offered from reality television/visual cultures centered in the United States, the trend remains – despite massive hits like the *Ru Paul* media, and affiliated quasi-reality/ quasi-competitive shows – one dominated by a heteronormative binary. To a large extent this argument indicts the legacy of Jack Kerouac as a force of masculine energy in the always already queer, utopic, feminist, anti-racist Beat poetry. At the same time, following Munoz, I seek to elaborate on the traces of the queer horizon potentially locked in gestures, without

making the move to call the poet, or the author closeted; for our purposes they are of course, merely dead (Roland Barthes) and perhaps can even come back again later in the poems of those that remember them. The urge towards overcoming the obscurity of postmodernity remains alive in Kerouac and his resistance to commercial logics remains one of the more laudable examples in the American tradition of Walden Lake style “civil disobedience”. Yet that legacy is also fraught and haunted by the failure of the artist both to themselves and to the world around them across several valences including but not limited to rape and homophobia.

The connection I see in Kerouac is a critical “stich”<sup>7</sup> within the way Gertrude Stein’s poetry worked to establish a bold new tradition and style of art in the modern and postmodern tradition. This link is something I see in their playfulness, the extent to which they allow the gesture to perform for them, on and on again, the eternal mystery of the heart, the conundrums of the sensations, and the conflict of the resounding emotions that course through the Speaker. This bold personal approach is echoed in the rise of documentary styles of cinema in the sixties, but which also exists in the plasticity of reality television. There is not true reality to this brand of screen culture in a Kantian sense, meaning that as the philosopher Immanuel Kant argued, the truth of the event remains an absolute that exists beyond the limits and beginnings of perceptive senses belonging to the homo sapiens qua Eurocentric human. Kant was of course operating in

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<sup>7</sup> This is actually TikTok language and a methodology of the contemporary reality television formats of mass distributed, mass proliferated, handheld screen cultures. I think an expanded work might include a chapter on the “sound envelops” of social media which would unpack the cinematic sensorium shaped by sound events in popular communication and networking websites and applications that included or center multimodality.

the European, continental traditional through radical new inversions of theories on perception and perceptivity. My interest is therefore in his inversions of perception which at his moment, defended notions of aesthetics and judgement from the instability. Instead, the reality is indeed, inherently poetic in this framework and so the sublime remains a factor in the experience of reality. Either for better or worse, even for affirmation of commercialized logics, the existence of reality television, like documentary cinema in the sixties, is something of Beat poetics. The self performs, the self they want to see performing; the identity follows in the praxis, where performance begets the ironic control gained by the sardonic performer. Their indolent pain and pleasure become the centrality of the situation, their take on the situation informs the shaping of its perception as an artistic, intensely cinematic moment.

Going beyond merely identifying the critical lack in television and other mass media; and instead demonstrating, and recentering the works of innovators who demonstrate the already existing rejections of commercial standards in film and television where they reflect and demonstrate the poetic impulse of *Speaker* and *verse*. Both in his diary films like *Walden* and in his singular feature film: *Guns of the Trees*, Jonas Mekas had already moved to document lived experiences, via a poetic framework derived from the increasingly confessional poetics of Allen Ginsberg in feature length, narrative cinematic projects such as *Guns of the Trees*. Mekas had also created a wider body of films he termed “Diary” style cinema which were shorter, less plot driven, and even more focused upon the quotidian realm. Further, *Guns of the Trees* destabilizes the distinction



especially museum directors  
act  
...The spiritual is best conceived/in abstract terms  
(Ferlinghetti 82).

He begins here with truth, an ontological concern that often only ever receives epistemological treatment but uses that moment as a stage to ground the spiritual in a queering of secular culture. We can see a massive shift that seems to ignore (it might be more appropriate to say that Kerouac was categorically incapable of noticing the work of Stein?), Stein in Kerouac's work which engages with language as playfully as Stein, perhaps, at certain points and in certain frameworks, that of Beat poetics, lived, quotidian enshrinements, and the confession of the poet through the speaker.

My beloved who wills not to love me:  
My life which cannot love me:  
I seduce both.  
(Kerouac 1).

Unlike Stein, Kerouac lacks rigor, scientific/medical precision, and the sheer brilliance of Stein who continues to be ahead of her own eras and zeitgeists. However, the lack of rigor is not necessarily an indictment here because Kerouac was rather in rebellion against structure, form, and it seemed, labor that alienated the self-such as the comedically, dystopic, factory sequences of Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Kerouac didn't want to be the tramp caught in the gears of *Modern Times* but perhaps something more like the tramp we witness triumphant through whimsy in *City Lights*.

At the same rhetorical juncture there must exist some note of the way Gertrude Stein keeps a clinical playfulness alive in their lines, as if in total control of herself and of the dissolution of language her brilliance performs. Kerouac's innovation is still



important, but it feels distinctly masculine, and muted somehow... almost like one desperate to be perceived as more masculine than they truly were as is certainly the case with Kerouac. While he had his “American football player moment”, in general Kerouac remained in awe and in emulation of other men. If the conclusions of scholars who sort through masculinity, gender, and queerness in media studies, film, and cinema studies are to be considered accurate, then a “centricism” upon a heterosexual masculinity always already doomed Kerouac’s poetics to a certain set of almost Fanonian limitations.

His dismal reflections while showing the holes and flaws in the hallmarks of a heteronormative culture are still framed from the perspective of the heterosexual, white, male; and notably, also that of the catholic and thus Christian perspective of spirituality. Gone then is the sense of speaking in the presence of the divine, alone but in public sphere; instead, the Beats seem to enshrine the world in homeliness and to paint their own interiorities as the unconquerable landscape. Oddly enough Kerouac is steeped in Dostoevsky (whom he refers to as “Dusty”) and rather ends up in a nearly Bakhtinian move but since he has not embraced more of the potential decolonial rhetoric that such a literature can provide, Kerouac’s poetics do not take on the polyphonic quality of the poetics Bakhtin traces in Dostoevsky. The Christian process often assumes the need for intercession of voices on the behalf of subjects, and the alienation of distillation of self was pre-scripted into the discourses of all those devotees and followers of that theology. This of course is specific to Kerouac’s Catholicism however and could not always be said of each Christian spirituality possible, especially in the intensely proliferated, Christian imbued, theological landscape of the United States.

Lacking somewhat in Jack Kerouac is the call to listen to others as it is seemingly replaced with his demand to be heard. This perhaps too is an aspect of that residue of spiritual life from the hierarchical structures of Catholic upbringing. In a sense he is a poet who confesses to the world, the enormity of his own illusions but with and through tremendous triumph and pleasure. Many of those around him were also profoundly esoteric and deeply, reflective, metaphysical in their angst. For example, as Joyce Johnson points out in their unique and supremely important memoir *Minor Characters: A Memoir of a Young Woman of the 1950's in the Beat Orbit of Jack Kerouac* many women felt that society had held them to the standard of comforting men, denying their own subjective realms, and neglecting to address their own private sorrows and tragedies. Therefore, a Beat turn with the poetics of confession brought these artists, activists, and intellectuals to terms with finality of death more casually than other movements might handle. Hemingway for instance, although not a poet, would have to shy away from confronting mortality. While in the Kerouac interpretation of various Dharmas and his own families' religious influences, poets and writers were almost courageous against oblivion as if daring death to deal them a worse hand than Ginsberg's "Moloch" had.

Death Could be your proud refusal to come to terms with the existence that had been meted out to you. Or there was the view Alex had once expressed that one could view self-destruction as the opposite of apathy, the final proof that one could still function. (Johnson 66).

To contrast Kerouac somewhat, the work of Marie Ponsot can stand as an equally Beat (although truly she is in her own league and arrives here largely via the collating energies

and efforts of Ferlinghetti) in ethos and confessional in style poet who also comes from a Catholic background; I think that her work however seems more ready to learn and listen, to build radical communities.

Come to term the startled child shocks  
Peace upon me; I am great with peace;  
Pain teaches me primal cause; my bones unlock  
To learn my final end. Formal increase.

(Ferlinghetti 25).

Within the resignation of her peace is the traumatic memory of the startled child and the shocks it sustained in the formation of its identity. Ponsot's work in the Ferlinghetti collection indicates that her transitions are ongoing and that she still learns more from the pain of life. Again, absent here is the sense of speaking alone, to an audience, in public, that is nevertheless absent, because in this configuration the pronouns of I and me ground the poem too firmly in a first-person perspective. By staying in "me" and "I" language, this catholic perspective cannot always form the same profound and inherent sense of community possible with Ginsberg's mysticism.

Some of the joy of Kerouac and thus some of the carnivalesque praxis comes from his persistent self-centrism and this remains a paradoxical aspect of the Beat poetics as a genre.

Did I create that sky? Yes for, if it was  
anything other than a conception in my mind  
I wouldn't have said 'Sky' – That is why I am the

Golden eternity.

(Ferlinghetti 249).

Here I observe that Kerouac perhaps speaks not in Damon's autistic monologues, but instead a kind of schizoid/ dissociative poetics of divine dialogue where poet as Speaker consistently loses track of their identity. Note how Kerouac performs a slippage between both asking and telling, the move from did I to yes invoking both power and yet also, a kind of guilt. Somehow, perhaps Kerouac feels he must justify the scope of his self-conception, and yet in that act he also recognizes the built in folly of his quixotic quest. Kerouac remains both suffering mortal and smiling God in his own poetry.

In the following we see Kerouac engaged with reflections on mortality and focused on the more vivid and grotesque imageries of death and decay. These adjectival choices are severe indications of the implosion of his own methods and help dictate the necessity of further innovations in poetic form related to confessional poetics.

I  
clearly  
saw  
the skeleton underneath  
all  
this  
show  
of personality  
what  
is  
left  
of the man in all his pride  
but bones?  
And all his lost snacks o' nights...  
And the bathtubs of liquor  
thru his gullet  
...bones – he mopes,  
in the grave,

facial features  
changed by worms  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
from him  
is heard  
no more.  
(Kerouac 18).

The fomentation of worms and its placement near silence imply the dissolution of self rather than the triumphal basking in magic holiness that we see Ginsberg reach in “Footnotes to Howl” or “Kaddish” nor even the joyful quotidian of “Sunflower Sutra” no matter that its confessional themes directly invoke Kerouac as a saintly aspect of the world, perhaps even as the grime covered sunflowers that forget themselves beneath the locomotives.

After all Kerouac’s legacy remains a tragic annihilation of self and values in the praxis’ failure to mend the critical distance between signifier and signified in semiotics. A distance clinically cold despite all efforts to fuse these matters; where Stein had opened a door, it seems that Kerouac falls through it but Ginsberg floats across that desperate chasm somehow fueled by futuristic visions of a utopia stronger and more wholesome than the demon of “Howl”, “Moloch” the devourer of children. In the end, via queerness and queerness as a horizon, the Jewish mysticism imbuing Ginsberg from his maternal memories also finds a joyful resolution in the tranquility of found community. The resilience of shared peril and trauma matched and exceeded by the glorious promise of queer futurity. That ability to form and sustain networks of care and concern, of listening, hearing, and sharing.

As Maria Damon points out, it is this will to hear and listen (which we observed in Stein and Toklas) to the other that forms the kind of bonds which resist problematics in power structures, since the issue with those structures remains precisely their inability to stop erasing the subjectivity of the oppressed. “To listen to someone who’s really listening—to hear people listening—initiates collaborative communities” (Damon 124). However, Damon offers an even more radical reason for the Poetry of the confession, the privileging of the self as a listener in a network of listeners with shared empathies and sympathies, which is that it prevents a blight of cultural consciousness she refers to rather dubiously as “Memory death”. “To leave something out is to consign it to memory-death, to fail in one’s task as a dialectical historian cum refugee; at the same time the monstrosity of Mother or holiness lies in the “unreassemblability” of the severed parts” (Damon 216). Here Damon invokes Freudian and therefore also Jewish poetical traditions of the dialectical, historical, struggling, and diasporic figure. Avoiding the memory death is something like a preservation and a creation of the self-amidst what is almost always a uniquely colonizing and colonial violence. For the Jewish Diaspora this extends to the near mythical figure of Nebuchadnezzar’s infliction of “Babylonian Captivity” and then again, the occupation of Israel the kingdom by Rome, the republic and later empire.

Jewish poets speak directly to God and no other; thus the stakes are much higher. The exclusive and awed address, with its exaggeratedly asymmetric power relation, can account for the ‘autism in public’ aura that accrues around such monologic outpourings; they are witnessed but not shared by readers or hearers;

they are not intended to be overheard, but the poet is not responsible to any audience but an Absence (Damon 218).

For Damon there is a sense of inherent community to the praxis of poesis in the context of the Jewish poet and in the context of a Jewish subjectivity, one which she then traces in poets Bob Kaufman and Allen Ginsberg. Consider “Sunflower Sutra’s praise of the ordinary for example: “a perfect beauty of a sunflower // ... poor dead flower? When did you forget you were a / flower? When did you look at your skin and decide you were an impotent dirty old locomotive?” (Ginsberg 37). In such moments the Speaker is of course Ginsberg and the descriptions of the Sunflower seem to flow like Kerouac’s own alleged “stream of consciousness” or in terms expressed earlier via Grobe, “flow”. One might also compare this with the “Footnote to Howl” where the holy is invoked with no ambiguity whatsoever: “Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul” (Ginsberg 28). Ginsberg takes on the theologically charged notion of holiness previously reserved for the intense and fervorous, religious, experience of ecstasies, and instead promotes the everyday world, marked by grime and destitution to that same ultimate holiness previously kept only for an unnamable and incomprehensible deity.

From here, Ginsberg’s secular, and queer divinity (operating somehow still within the Jewish mysticism he inherited from his mother), it is an easy leap towards his spiritual wife Annie Waldman and their vast collection of poems which seem to explode confessional poetics into a trajectory still ongoing in the contemporary moment. And again, Ginsberg’s status as Jewish is also an othering that is inflicted on his subjectivity yet which he does not chaff under as his work moves beyond the value systems that

create such colonizing distinctions and logics. Textures of multiple traditions of mysticism and identity coalesce with the brilliance of Ginsberg's poetry which remains charged at its core with queer love and humble appreciation for subjectivity. Ginsberg is a poet who will confess to return once more to Christopher Grobe's configurations, to the deepest secrets, hopes, and fears of his identity.

I will try for a change to write a letter where I have no axe to grind— not even metaphysical. Life continues in New York, It continues! God know how, there are so many events and crises, each more cataclysmic and definitive than the last. Also people come & go, but I seem to stay here for good  
(Ginsberg & Cassady 51).

There is little difference I can trace in the Ginsberg who writes to Neal Cassady in the Barry Gifford collection, *As Ever*, not to say that the poet doesn't put his shoes on and roll up his sleeves so to speak, because Ginsberg does become something else when he writes and reads. But that is a polishing of a self, a suit tie for an interview, but underneath the same honest performance.

These same logics of subjectivity and recentering love, eros, and embodied selves exists in the poetry of Ginsberg's "spiritual wife": Annie Waldman. Waldman offers stunning confessional insights into the poets shaping the genres that come into being after the postmodern movement takes hold and gives way into Beats and confessional poets. As Kenneth Rexroth, an early mentor of Kerouac's points out in their 1958 *Esquire* article on music and recitation, music and poetry are linked more obviously, more inherently, and more overtly in the Beat traditions. These are forms which are mutually



capable of beneficially resounding off the spaces they both instill across the audience's (we can again configure them as witness to event) sensorium. "I read poetry to jazz because I like to. I like poetry. I like to read to people. I like jazz. The people like the combination. But there's more to it than that" (McDarrah 59). Their work seems to live somewhere between the ragged desperation of Kaufman and the grandiose melodrama of Ferlinghetti, a zone occupied by poets like Gertrude Stein and Allen Ginsberg because of how innovative their work remained both during their lifetimes and long afterwards, in Ginsberg's case his poetry seems to have an almost radioactive half-life which persists across multiplicities of poetic and visual/media/technocultural landscapes.

At the same time these are poets who deal in the complexity of reality to a degree that would challenge even the most Metaphysical of Immanuel Kant's disciples; that is to say, there is so much there, there that the poems demand one return to them anew, again and again, always afresh. And while that is perhaps a rule of poetics, it seems so much more active within poets like Waldman and Ginsberg, for whom poetry works like a kind of hologram generator. Poetry encapsulates surreal phantasmagoria for the poets in these traditions to the extent where we feel these lost times and peoples return to us impossibly and at the same time, as a matter of course.

Waldman's poetics are polyphonic however and speak to the dead or deceased, robbing from death the finality of its sting and therefore also, its sting. By reflecting on Frank O'Hara as alive and imbued with agency her poem about him becomes an ongoing interpersonal present, encapsulated within the machinery of her poetic lines.

And dying is such an insult. After all

I was in love with breath and I loved  
Embracing those others, the lovers,  
With my body.”  
He sighed & laughed”  
(Waldman).

Remembering Frank O’Hara and rather updating the elegiac forms by performing them in such open verse modes, Waldman is right alongside the “Ginsbergian” declaratives, what Damon had configured as the autistic status of the monolog moment, where she speaks implicitly to the listening other even when and where the other cannot, must not, and may never be again. O’Hara still moves and speaks with Waldman, and she imbues his presence into her lines; notably hiding absolutely nothing of herself from the audience in her speaker and choosing as her topic in the poem, the abstract sensation of grief and isolation as grounded in the bizarre mass communication technology invoked by the presence of the phone in the lines.

As I turn in conclusion to several of Anne Sexton’s poems, I want to note that her innovations to this form take this somewhat Beat infused, somewhat Lowell centric notion of the Confessional poetics and revive in them aspects of Stein’s clever inversions of form but mapped onto the reflections of Speaker as Poet. Sexton’s work shows that her perspective holds an interesting command over reality, that the heaven’s seem closer to her speaker’s whims while the limits of earthly matters remain trivialized, not toxically, but generatively, as if correctly configured at last.

Let God divide them in half.

Let God share his Hoodsie.

Let the waters divide so that God may wash his face in first light

...

Let there be bananas, cucumbers, prunes, mangoes, beans, rice and candy canes”

(Sexton 396).

Sexton’s mirth in her discussion of the “Hoodsie” that the initial violence of division fades away; by the time the poet reaches “waters” at last, we see what God divides, but perhaps not whom. The act of God cleaning himself in first light, as a gendered creature seems to speak of saintly love or the desire for one, something the biography of Sexton shows she did not begin life with nor perhaps ever truly attain.

Yet this is a happy explosion of fruit nouns, their scents hidden in their names but reeking through the poetic lines all the same. In the next poem water again plays a strange role, almost Arthurian in scope and tone, and theme; yet this move is immediately negated by the hand’s ignorance and then its trouble. The invocation of salt and fishes moving quickly towards a ritualistic invocation of sea and cathedral, sea as cathedral. These also are the tokens of commerce and yet do not communicate the embodiment of the owner, nor the consumer, but rather the working/ fishing figures of industry and labor. The reaching of God, from mouth is strangely aquatic as well and takes on, yet again, something more of a sexual, and erotic tinge – rather than that of spiritual reverence or fear.

From the sea came a hand,  
ignorant as a penny,  
troubled with salt of its mother,  
mute with the silence of the fishes,

quick with the altars of the tides,  
and God reached out of His Mouth  
and called it man.  
Up came the other hand  
and God called it woman.  
The hands applauded.  
And this was no sin.  
it was meant to be” (Sexton 421).

Here the voice calls to Sexton’s speaker voice, from the bizarre reaching, hand/mouth of the deity and instead of striking doom, sin, and punishment femineity is praised and centered. Sexton uses God to glorify women, turning him into some species of benign Poseidon, with an almost Zeusian interest in her own, provocative beauty. Last, the treatment of laziness and soul in the following lines remains an essential inversion of masculine poetics courtesy of say Pound, Eliot, or even Kerouac.

I am not lazy,  
I am on the amphetamine of the soul.  
I am, each day,  
Typing out the God  
My typewriter believes in.  
Very quick. Very intense,  
Like a wolf at a live heart  
Not lazy.  
When a lazy man, they say, looks toward haven,  
the angels close the windows...”  
(Sexton 467).

Significantly the Speaker indicates her own status as a writer through the description of the typewriter. Further, Sexton asserts that the motion of her typewriter, her act of writing, her very praxis, is itself a laudable and holy thing, especially in her hands and by the means that she, Sexton, alone possesses. Sexton creates heaven in this poem, just as Ferlinghetti swore that at the poetry reading, with the rhyming erection, heaven was not so far away after all.

What then is to be made of the poetics of the increasingly fractured and reunified identities of poet's as they move past the traditional limits of poetic form, explode them into various modernisms, and then the implosions of the post-modern approaches that in truth go back to Gertrude Stein, if not a kind of tenuous destabilization of normativity that can only lead towards a queering of form and subjectivity? For the sake of categorical approaches, it remains the case the distinctions in style and form help dictate the elaborations from the early modes of American poetics into the post war shifts away from austere modernism and into more liberal post modernisms. These in turn help inspire a radicalizing force across sixties counter cultures who shift poetics out of the limited receptions and reading spaces and proliferate poetic persons, personas and their speaker across the mass scale, industrialized phantasmagoria of post war media techno cultures such as film, radio, and at last (as Christopher Grobe generatively points out) television.

These moves around sudden moments, confessional themes, and the general implosion of modernism's sense of a distilled Speaker recenter the person in the poem's Speaker and free the poet to talk directly on their experience, to escape that distillation of the persona so evident in T.S. Eliot's modernisms. From the vantage point offered by Beat poetics, the distillation of modernist self as it dissolved into the abstraction of it performed Speaker was a negation of self, an abandoning of the radial ethos of individuality, and a concession to overarching structures shaping personas via mass culture infrastructure as opposed to agency and preference, nor even experience or desire. "No nirvana is possible for a single consciousness... Consciousness is in essence

multiple... Not another person remaining the object of my consciousness, standing alongside mine, and my own consciousness can exist only in relation to it” (Bakhtin 288). I would argue that as per Bakhtin’s formulations; the self alone also does not, “solipsistically” devise that entirety of a poetic depiction creates; nor is poesis performed in isolation despite the profound and often terrifying spells of isolation and loneliness both described and suffered by some of history’s most well-known poetic figures.

Perhaps significantly, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s writing serves as the experimental chamber for Bakhtin’s ideas since, although perhaps grounded in an Orthodox Christian morality, Dostoevsky performs such exemplary polyphonic sprees. For instance, in *The Brothers Karamazov* the speaker of the novel consists of a multiplicity of voices which coexist as separate entities and are synthesized into on “monologic” take. The importance in the multiplicity of voices here is perhaps the triumph of subjectivity over objectivity in the wake of phenomenology. As Dr. Grant Palmer, a post phenomenologist, techno cultural researcher and video games theorist at the University of California, Riverside indicates: “Phenomenology is a kind or organ system of its own, the perceptions are separate and yet intertwined— the paradox exists besides itself”. The madness of Pound, the wildness (kept secret) of Frost, the manic, and unpredictable episodes of Lowell all show this much to be the case. Their perceptions were always already shaping the way they had tried offer the objectivity so sought after in H.D.’s imagism or Frost’s uneven portrayals of selfhood.

I seek to show the links that inherent to spontaneous forms and poetics from the Beat literary moment, the poetics that is created out of the ethos of suddenness, and lived,

quotidian grandeur with the later and more overtly confessional forms most commonly attributed to Robert Lowell; but I would argue remain most provocatively evident, poignant, and clear in the confessional poetry of Anne Sexton, Annie Waldman, and then the critically, historically and racially conscious poetics of Dionne Brand and Claudia Rankine who complicate the representation of bodies, race, class, and structural oppression through that same poetic mode. It is my hope that I can show how the Beat poets helped propel the post modernisms of titans like Gertrude Stein beyond their initial playfulness and deeper into a commitment to a kind of “radical selfhood” or a quotidian subjectivity of sustained resistance, and self-creation. Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen* stands as a brilliant and multi-modal poetics treating these precise issues; by focusing on the forces that make structural oppression less visible via micro aggression, Rankine charts a poetics of resistance and confessional themes that invert the work of the confession from the Speaker/poet/self to an imagined audience, part kin folk, part community, and in part her antagonists.

You take in things you don’t want all the time. The second you hear or see some ordinary moment, all its intended targets, all the meanings behind the retreating sounds, as far as you are able to see, come into focus. Hold up, did you just hear, you just say, did you just see, did you just do that? Then the voice in your head silently tells you to take your foot off your throat because just getting along shouldn’t be an ambition (Rankine 55).

Rankine’s remarks and poetics of refusal indicate that the violence of racial bias, historical oppression is conducted at the sight of language as much as in corporeal

violence. This same space was the place where “micropoetics” helped liberate Maria Damon’s poetic communities. We should take more away from this interactive field than treating it as a kind of dubious pharmakon; there is more to the situation than bane and balm according to application.

Instead, one ought to chart the radical differences at play in the subjectivity active within Rankine’s poetics; where is power and what is it doing, what is Rankine’s speaker up to and does she accept power? Rankine takes several steps in just this small segment of *Citizen* which taken would beget the exclusive attention of book length project. One move Rankine makes here is to model the way structural oppression, micro aggressions, and racial hatred all in fact performances of mass culture which interpolate not just the racist oppressor but also inculcate the subaltern into the toxic network of dehumanization and degradation. At the same time however Rankine’s speaker reflects on what is happening to herself when she is faced with these microaggressions across her quotidian spheres. Rankine is aware of them and can see what and when they are as active forces across the fabric of her poetics. Last Rankine, rejects and refuses these erasures; proving that she was never truly overcome by her oppressor, that in the end she, as poet, has indicted that structure via her own radical subjectivity. It’s important here to state how Rankine manifests an entirely unique poetics that cannot be claimed by confessional poetics or by Beat poetics. Of course, Rankine is still part of an important trajectory of American poesis, and I do work to try to frame *Citizen* via a kind of reverse confessional logic. *Citizen* remains an aspect of a larger trajectory relating to the sensoriums, speakers,



soundscapes, and various cinematic moments I collate under the term cinema, and which explores the further nuanced potential of sonic centric interrogation of media studies.

At the same time these very Poets reconfigure pastoral themes, rural spaces, and wilderness, namely in Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. The rural and pastoral are indeed chief focal points in many major trajectories of Poetic traditions in the United States. Later these are evident in Kerouac especially in some of his lesser known and more obscured work from the time he spent as a fire scout, high and alone in the mountains.

The form is easily discernible

easily right through

Those habitual tree tops

A sea of enlightenment

Leaf [drawing of a leaf]" (Kerouac 53).

One imagines the Kerouac of the transcriptions and notes Charles Shuttleworth offers in *Jack Kerouac: Desolation Peak, Collected Writings*. This Kerouac is working through the poems out loud, as that is the main affordance isolation grants the Author. Kerouac loses his muses and inspirations alongside his comforts and his protectors, his milieu and context but gains the illusion of the godlike power to dictate reality. I would also extrapolate further and argue that for many of the poets in the various traditions of poetry endemic to the United States and proceeding that governance as such, that these are traditions which are equally birthed of experiences of solitude that shock the social self out of the grooves of daily life, just enough to let them turn to nostalgia, romance, to

poetic elevation when they next turn to treat in the lived, in the daily, to speak from their emotions. Of course, this is a totalization and I move for it here more to establish a possible trajectory through poetry in the United States as an inherently sonic tradition in addition to its established status as a literary movement and literary tradition(s).

The moves poets made in the United States are, however, inherently informed and shaped by the poetic traditions of various peoples from Ireland to Japan and never without the indigenous, first nations, and self-declared American Indian peoples, whose traditions and poesis endures and informs multiple modes of poetry in the present. Snyder works with Ch'I Shan Wu Chin across translation in notable examples from *Mountains and Rivers Without End* and this in turn infuses the poetry scenes adjacent and relevant to his work with that same drive to mitigate distances between poetic traditions. An early and perhaps Quixotic attempt at an American decolonial poesis.

Clearing the mind and sliding in

To that created space,

a web of waters streaming over rocks,

air misty but not raining,

seeing this land from a boat on a lake

or broad slow river,

coasting by.

(Snyder 5).

Somewhere in the tensions of these sixties' reflections on postmodern poetics, new forms smash together and come into being while inspiring still other groups and poetic forms in

an ecology of grass roots poetics. Maria Damon's notion of the "micropoetic" or that almost imperceptible counterculture that forms around early Beatnik influences (in this case we look to the work of Bob Kaufman as introduction and genre convener). In the "micropoetics" of groups like the Twin Cities' I observe a collective spirit to recenter the everyday moment and the erased person as the chief heroic figure of the fractured and fragmented world they inhabit.

Persistent duality marks the audience who experiences a phenomenon regularly regarded under the tenants of visual cultures explicitly. Yet if sound precedes recorded speech and if poetry is a performed self even when confessional, the inclusion of poetry in any verbose, audial fashion renders cinema linked to poetic discourses in literature. "The question Eliot and Pound and Williams and poets right up to Rich and Ashbery have asked in our time — is a question that goes to the heart of what form is. But it is also a question goes to the heart of what form was" (Strand & Boland 260). For Strand and Boland, the reflection on Modernism through Eliot and Pound helps them offer an industrial standard towards the nebulous block of disparate projects that fall under the purview of modernisms. The question of form became a place for Eliot to hide from himself and his audience in my configuration, a kind of poetic closet to house his person in and to instead perform publicly, a kind of masculine straightness that would deny all the softness it in turn foists on the feminine.

Generatively Grobe offers further elucidations on ideas of poetic form as applied more specifically to Confessional poets. "Form is not just the architecture of art, to be taken in whole, then translated into meaning. We experience the form of performance as

flow—feeling its force whenever an obstacle threatens to bend or disrupt it” (Grobe 169). Here Grobe at least allows for emotion and performance to meet the more playful notion of flow, adopted from psychology and meaning a state of nearly Heideggerian ectasis, not totally unlike that of the epileptic except that instead of rendering them thoughtless and immobile (as my grand mal seizures leave me) they are more alive and in tune with their embodied needs/ desires. Yet the softness was Eliot’s and lived within him, despite his abstraction and distillation of self through form and poesis. Remember the advice of Munoz as well here where the self must, to engage in the queerness still yet to come, also embrace vivid ectasis at the subjective and embodied level.

The future is a spatial and temporal destination. It is also another place, if we believe Heidegger, who argued that the temporal is prior to the spatial what we need to know is that queerness is not yet here but it approaches like a crashing wave of potentiality. And we must give into its propulsion its status as a destination. Willingly we let ourselves feel queerness’ pull, knowing it is as something else that we can feel, that we must feel. We must take ecstasy (Munoz 185).

Munoz has many meanings here, some are more to the liking of the crowd than others but he stays in earnest when he calls for us to abandon the limits of the here and now for the broad expanse of future, this future is one which we reach by creating utopia within ourselves and expressing via poetics. When describing, for example, the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, Munoz takes great care to read through what they identify as “queer traces of desire” along the lines of though scholars of poetry like Katie Kent and Munoz

remains cautious, dubious even of calling any given poet's work closeted. "Approach the poet with a different optic, one that's attuned to the ways in which, through small gestures, particular intonations, and other ephemeral traces, queer energies and lives are laid bare" (Munoz 72). However, the situations of the meta-modern poetics tend to transcend the issues of bare life that are potentially referenced in the Munozian configuration of "queerness laid bare". Those needs transcend in turn, my current focus and must be addressed later in the more thoroughly decolonial arguments of my fourth Chapter. It is worth noting that both the themes of settler colonialism and the decolonial critique praxis have become intensely nuanced, fraught, and tragically weaponized.

I argue this in sharp contrast to Eliot's claims about the speaker in modernism which limit selfhood while supplying a moody and pessimistic reading of the present as a prolonged, decaying, "doomscape". We can apply his ideas in retrospect to the wider body of Beat poets such as Ferlinghetti who take time in verse to elevate the recitation of verse in communal context, a beautiful, and intensely ritualistic move which doubly sanctifies poetic space, and poet; all the while existing in the bizarrely, liminal ethos of confession.

Heaven

was only half as far that night

at the poetry recital

listening to the different phrases

when I heard the poet have

A rhyming erection

then look away with a

lost look

‘every animal’he said at last

‘after intercourse is sad’

But the back-row lovers

looked oblivious and glad. (Ferlinghetti 1).

The theme of heaven serves to remind the audience of the euphoria, but it also firmly situates the ritual of the ongoing, still yet to be, poesis, in the futurisms that I will later attribute to Munoz and their rejection of the *No Future* pessimism of Lee Edelman. Heaven is the utopia present at the sonic space of speech in elevated poetics with the context of the audience, always already configured of like-minded poets. An implicit camaraderie is in the heaven and its queerness comes to life with the vivid eroticism of the rhyming erection which explicitly paints the scene in themes of queer resistance, queer community, queer love, an uncloseted public space, intimate, sexual, and yet still somehow not the erotic of the cruising per se. This liberation was not always in poetics, consider the pain and secrets lying behind the modernist persona performed by T.S. Eliot, especially in *The Waste Land* where his speaker can only find a dull, distant peace in the murmuring talking cure of the repeated “shanti” lines in the poems final closing stanzas.

The persona was for T.S. Eliot as recorded in the Stephen Axelrod collection *Modernisms* a distillation force, and an identity other than the poets. Another sense of that persona performed in the role of the Speaker of the poem was to consider it as an abstraction from the poet’s self, much to the contrast of the self-revealing, self-reveling,

confessional style of Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton as well as in Ginsberg and other Beats demonstrated in Christopher Grobe's: *The Art of Confession*. "Texts, as literary scholars know well—as actors—know better—are always inviting us to dance. The important question is where are the steps, and who gets to lead?" (Grobe 167). Grobe here identifies an important note that Michel Foucault touches on in the Self Learning Technologies Seminar he offers on the ethics of self-care where he offers a notion of the self as a recursive communal text, ever edited by its interactions.

The text becomes the sight of performance in Grobe's framework and may take on hyper textuality before and after the digital shift to hyper fungibility. "From documentary drama and reader's theater to our increasingly bookish avant-garde, American artists have made theater out of books, letters, transcripts, and other printed ephemera—treating them not as prior scripts, but as present and "scriptive" things that visibly license and constrain performance" (Grobe 168). There was then a link between emerging confessional styles that stem out of Beat and Lost Generation inversions of tradition and implosions of modernisms but then also a shift in topics and treatment of subject that went along with the increasing Speaker.

However, Bakhtin had also developed and advanced treatments of poetics which push past the supposed inert status of text. "Out of the concrete and integral consciousness of the characters... surgically removed ideological feces, which they either arranged in a dynamic dialectical series or juxtaposed to one another is absolute irreducible antinomies" (Bakhtin 9). So, in his readings of Dostoyevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin observes something of a confessional style as well; but marks it as a dialectical

series of juxtapositions. This move from objective to subjective is likely an aspect of Bakhtin's larger commitment to the "Dialogic" as opposed to discourses which Bakhtin configure as a kind of semiotic violence which denies the dialectical status of grammatology on the one and perceptivity on the other. He then is sorting through layers of performance as they are influenced by various echelons of politicization.

Linguistics and meta-linguistics study one and the same concrete, highly complex, and multi – faceted phenomena, namely, the word — but they study it from various sides various points of view. They must complement one another, but they must not be confused. In practice, the boundaries between them are very often violated.

(Bakhtin 181)

Bakhtin interrogates poetics beyond the level of linguistics and seems to yield more than the semiotic discoveries made by Roland Barthes. Bakhtin at least sees a generative tension in the friction between meaning and performance, between the real and the poetically rendered imagined. "But all logical links remain within the limits of individual consciousnesses, and do not govern the evidence – interrelationships among them"

(Bakhtin 9). In other words, it is precisely at the confessional site of the poetically expressed individual embodiment that the truest logical links in poetics and poesis may be observed. Scholars have also long accounted for the Roland Barthes treatment of author as inert, and text as living, recursive, and the only source of authority in modernism and post modernisms fraught search for "meaning". Grobe had however simply points out the truest fact of poetics and poetry thus far which has remained



relevant since the fossils of Aristotle or later in the sedimentary layer of “Baudelarian” fossils, Sir Phillip Sydney, who points out the extent to which poetry is lively, lived, vibrant for its lushness of detailed vivacity.<sup>8</sup> An aspect which we might retroactively dub in terms of the confessional and in terms of the spoken, and therefore the sonic.

Grobe however is prudent to recenter the discussion of text, or rather of “the text” in terms of who moves, who is called to move, who leads, as the questions help demonstrate, dictate, and later serve to problematize structural oppression, identity, representation, and themes of queerness, queering of gender and of poetics. In the foundational and intensely antique text *A Defense of Poetry* Sir Phillip Sidney describes how poetics seem to occupy a liminal space between the established, institutionalized academic knowledge, and the forms of popular culture that are organized via oral traditions, at the grass roots, and often in resistance to erasures or structural oppression. “In our neighbour Countrey Ireland where Truelie learning goeth very bare, yet are they Poets held in a devoute reverence” (Sidney 85). Here the famed Elizabethan intellect covertly suggests a surprisingly controversial take: that the existence of popular poetic forms amongst populations relegated the colonial inferior of his native Kingdom, nevertheless, possess to them the ability or propensity to take on, command and perform culture through the elevated language of poetry.

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<sup>8</sup> By the time he collates *The Flowers of Evil* Baudelaire has already committed intensive labor towards the reconfiguration of poetics. Now, things that seem base or were regarded as vileness become beautiful when observed in truth and earnest and when one lays bare the subject, their confession begins. “Black murderer of life and art,/you will never kill in my memory/the one who was my glory and my joy!” (Baudelaire 63).

It is this common folk, lived quotidian potency that challenges the rigidity of what will soon form into the industrial eras, rationalist framework, and its enshrining of objectivity as the standard for beauty, science, art, and culture. Aspects of this began as far back in Eurocentric traditions of literature and poetics as Aristotle, for whom the following was the greatest defense of poetry possible in the wake of the stern scorn offered to art and poetry in Plato's *The Republic*:

It is therefore necessary for the story that is in beautiful shape – not double as some people claim — changing onto good fortune from bad but the opposite way, good fortune to bad, not through badness of character but on account of the great missing the mark either by the sort of person described by someone better than that rather than worse (Aristotle 37).

For Aristotle, as would somewhat be the case with Sidney, Poetry had to be defended from the labels both secular and spiritual authorities had long since foisted upon the artistic praxis since the time of Socrates and continuing well past Charlemagne's quasi mythical era. Poetry had been limited to a kind of crass, vulgarity, fit solely for the absurd and the base characters; one would not trust the poet, not look up to them but rather enjoy a fleeting moment of their rancid wit... and while this isn't a justifiable way to treat the ballads, odes, and lengthy heroic forms that nevertheless persist throughout all recorded history. Even so, it had been the case that this inherent good had lost its foothold with established culture making forces amidst larger social and cultural frameworks amidst the Eurocentric tradition.

At the risk of reducing such varied and diverse traditions to an essentialization I must note, the same would not be true in Chinese poetic forms, or Japanese modes of poetics such as the Haiku and Tanka. Both of which massively revitalize and all but save American poetic traditions from total obscurity in cases as early as Adelaide Crapsey, but then still later with say Ezra Pound and then even later with the case of Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. Snyder in turn helps foster this mode of translation poetics in Kerouac who in turn inspires many, albeit each in their own turn and time and never for precisely the reasons Kerouac envisions or plots in his admittedly masculinist postures. Snyder also led Kerouac to the spiritual test of Desolation Peak which was where I think his gregarious identity came to terms with true suffering and darkness, as the collation of work, notes, and reflections demonstrated in *Desolation Peak* indicate, Kerouac had in fact been prolific while living alone in the wilderness, but this writing seemed to stay with him, a darkness too vivid to demonstrate fully alongside the golden visions he hoped for with *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* or *The Subterraneans*.

As recorded in Noel Riley Fitch's informative biography: *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties & Thirties* where she points out how Stein's poetics permanently mark her as an innovator. Stephen Axelrod goes even further however when describing Stein in his collection: *Modernisms* where his treatment of Stein has her operating as an atemporal rupture in poetics, breaking form tradition as a modernist and breaking from modernism simultaneously and creating, for many scholars, the first iterations of post modernity.

In blurring the boundaries that separate Prose from, poetry, her portraits eschew plot and character and toy with the conventions of the essay while focusing on verbal images and highlighted language, much in the manner of a lyric poem (Axelrod 90).

Thus, by time of the Gertrude Stein poetic shift across and between various modernisms that Axelrod so diligently traces; the themes we see in the confessional poets have already begun to crystallize around the oeuvre of the so called Lost Generation or Sylvia Beach's many expatriated colleagues inhabiting Paris between the two World Wars so infamous for destroying and reconfiguring entire civilizations; if not the very fabric of "eternity" and "reality". However, it is notable that from the rich crop of those many expatriated artists; most specifically do the great innovations arise from feminist innovations and queering(s) of form over the more masculinist, terse, refined verbosity of Hemingway, Pound, and Eliot.

When Walter Benjamin, in the late 1930's, protested that to give the masses a chance to express themselves without giving them their rights was the foundation to fascism, he was not, of course talking about the contemporary multicultural (Damon 120).

Poetry then was (thankfully) also already shifting, or even had already shifted into themes that went beyond modernisms limits, the early and bizarrely wonderful post modernisms of Gertrude Stein standing as a near heaven sent rally point for Jewish artistic and intellectual projects. Much as Theodor Adorno's expatriation from Germany to San Diego served as a beacon to the surviving members of the now fugitive Frankfurt school

Intellectuals, poets like Stein were communities for the artists around them and for their queer Partners to take strength from.

Where before the counterculture crawled along a surprisingly limited and privileged elitist circle; after all, not every American could escape to Paris with Stein, and not every poet of Jewish decent had the extreme fortune of surviving the Vichy roundups which displaced, relocated, and at last, massacred the majority of the Jewish populations in Europe; now there was a ready for the worker style presence available to poetics.

Where the politics of identity meet the creative endeavors of the Poet, the Speaker then takes on the enormous burden of social legibility; such that this creation of self in the poem can either serve as the resistance of the individual against an oppression too overwhelming for one's solitary struggles to hold benchmarks against or again that Speaker can serve to reify structural oppression as I would argue must have been the longer half-life and after life of most modernist projects, especially as was the case for Pound and Eliot.

Of course, this had begun with industrialized technics like early film and radio already, namely with the examples of bizarre outliers like Walter Benjamin's Children's Radio projects; designed to combat the fascistic manipulation of radio cultures and mass media auras by the soon to be emerging Nazi power structure. However, and again as Grobe shows in *The Art of Confession* – “This was a world in transition. But in preserving this sense of possibility and conflict, we open a space between ironic drag and sincere trans womanhood— a space where sincerity and irony can coexist” (107). The poetics of self and the performance/ implantation/ role of the Speaker in a poem shifts

and adapts with the new interactions and complexities of post-industrial consciousnesses expressed in the externalization of visual and sonic memory into a highly fungible form such as emerging television modals and before them the poetic cinematic style of Beat films, and the underground cinema group described in my Chapter two treatment of Jonas Mekas.

The brilliance of Grobe's intervention is how precisely he can link the poet to the performance of confession in this bizarre context of mass media techno cultures which begin disseminating radical new poetic methods as early as the Harlem Renaissance and continuing into the present with poets like Claudia Rankine. If we remember Roland Barthes' takes on semiotics, "The soul of any function is... what allows it to sow the narrative with an element, which will ripen later on the same level or elsewhere on another level" (Barthes 104). In other words, meaning comes towards blossoming in the consciousness of the audience if there is a process of semiotic meaning at play within a grammatical framework. Yet these moves of meaning are perhaps insufficient or are merely the staging area for a far vaster and more profound poetics. Yet even here Barthes has more to say: "It will be — perhaps — the grammatical categories of the person (accessible in our pronouns) which will provide the key to the action level" (Barthes 120). Barthes ends up being rather ahead of his own semiotic project in *The Semiotic Challenge* – because Barthes has already opened the critical space for radical subjectivities in his motion to ground the so-called action level of semiotics in the personage of the individual, but only through the access of their pronoun.

While it is not sufficient to treat the resistance to commercial limits and imperial dictates nor even settler colonial endeavors as having resolution in the advent of the confessional poesies, there remains nevertheless the space for the subalternized to speak in these confessional poetic forms. In such a scenario, it begins to be the case that the implementation of a distilled, and separate identity for the poetic speaker (again we consider Eliot) was in fact a complicity with oppression more than it was an advancement into personal liberty. This paradoxical turn is further complicated by the grim after life of many modernisms, for example the fractured fate of Imagism which Pound promotes and then pummels according to his own private and often, political needs.

So, on one hand the honest critic must acknowledge the freedom in H.D.'s Imagism, not constraining her glory to the limits Pound would have us sequester his former lover and colleague within but at the same time one must remain dubious towards the notion of Modernism's Speaker which nevertheless persists in movements like imagism, but which evaporates or transforms with the confessional turn. As I move into my fourth Chapter which, I also want to acknowledge the central role confessional poetics keeps in the unifying of my largely decolonial critiques of imperial techno cultures. Due to the essentializing, totalizing, and erasing energies enforced by the structures of commercialized cultures, that remain complicit with settler colonial empire, the implosion of the modernist Speaker across and beyond postmodern poesis into the confessional poetics I track in Ginsberg, Rankine, Waldman, and Sexton helps mitigate the destruction of self that comes with the experience of empire. Intersectional struggles

meet at the sight of the poetic form and the role that the poet now plays in larger societal valences in the wake of the shifts through and beyond the various modernisms.



Chapter 4 The Decolonial Sensorium –  
Problematizing Themes of Representation via  
“Sound Envelopes”, and Decolonial Critiques of Media

“The second effect of property is despotism.”

-Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Property is Theft*

“Indeed, in Stalinist cinema, the Russian classics are not where they were before.”

-Evgeny Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History*

“Sound envelopes” –sonic demarcations of atemporal, asynchronous, and non-linear narrativity which are not beholden to commercialized cinematic logics are in turn examples of decolonial shifts in representation logics. To be clear these manifest as the collective organization of various sound events in cinematic contexts so the comingling of sounds towards a specific narrative objective would be an analogy of the “sound envelope” as a framework across media. Thus far I have argued that “sound envelopes” been arrange narrative structures in Jonas Mekas’ *Guns of the Trees* and that sonic logics also govern poetics across multiple traditions, beyond that I have moved to establish how sound and the confessional mode of poetics have demonstrated a shift in the way subjectivity is deployed across various media. In those treatments I have already begun to show how sound is an inherently spatial device across media and that poetry performs the identity of the oppressed such that it endures oppression and subverts the logics of the oppressor. In Chapter two I established Jonas Mekas as a decolonial film collective creator, film maker, and activist. In doing so I indicated how he uses sonic events in edits to help instill his visions across his “spontaneous cinema” which mean that he was both

in control of the film and yet responding to the changes and performances made by his collaborators as well. In this last and most synthetic of treatments I attempt to gesture to the broader and more decolonial critiques of settler colonial media through the deployment of close readings on films, video games, poetic traditions, and literature.

To reiterate the “sound envelope” which is a collation of sonic cues across the sequence of a phantasmagoric event and can include aspects of what has been regarded as noise, the voice, the aural imaginary, and a reconstruction of embodiment in sonic space. The profound potential of such spaces presents the self with a poetics for mitigating the alienation of commercial culture. “Sound envelopes” are shifted from Beat cinematic contexts to decolonial critiques more obviously apparent than those found in say Jonas Mekas. Here the “sound envelope” carries on as a matter of intentional duration signaled by blends of sound events that govern the larger phantasmagoric event of cinema.

I will also use sound in my arguments to argue for the ongoing, dialogical maintenance and performance of culture, language, and identity by the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples currently living under the administrative structures of the Russian Federation. As demonstrated cinematically, sound offers less of the paradigms of surveillance in their racialized constructions and paradoxical ambiguities, mistaking children for armed men of large stature and labeling elders as threats rather than heeding them as reminders of culture and identity. The Sakha (Yakutia) traditions were always already a “sonic poesy of selfhood” and therefore provide inherent “sound envelope” style approaches to storytelling, both in the traditions like the oral epic, the Olonkho, which I argue are

evident within the cinematic traditions of Sakha (Yakutia) cinema.<sup>9</sup> I will pivot a great deal between what I sometimes call the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition”, Sakha traditions/activism/ media, and the United States examples of *Bioshock Infinite* to triangulate a treatment of soundscapes in media that works to explore implosions of the settler colonial imaginary along the borderlands of the decolonial imaginary where soundscapes do not reiterate the logics and ethos of power structures but instead resonate directly with communities resisting and enduring historic and ongoing oppression.

According to the Robin Harris treatment of the “Olonkho” form in *Storytelling in Siberia: The Olonkho Epic in a Changing World* the poetry form follows from a kind of heroic narrative named after the hero and moving from a so called exposition of their material and spiritual possessions/ attributes/ relations, a call for action, a development of action (qua problem/antagonist logics), the eventual victory of the hero (the “bogatyř”), their return (they punish those who opposed them [potentially]), and the conclusion where the “bogatyř” arrives back to their homeland and participates in reproductive futurity and material wealth that has been blessed by higher and more elemental or spiritual powers. “The tradition of “olonkho” exemplifies all three categories: a cognitive affirmation of the spiritual nature of reality, an affective embodiment of Sakha traditional musical and poetic aesthetic values, and the evaluative nature of a metanarrative in which good must always triumph over evil” (Harris 15). I read Harris here as configuring the Sakha (Yakutia) style through a somewhat Eurocentric, still colonial mentality and worry

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<sup>9</sup> The Sakha epic tradition of Olonkho features the longest and most complex epic tales of all the Siberian indigenous groups, combining drama, lyric song, and poetic narrative in telling the stories of the great heroes of the past (Harris 11).

about the way it seems to conflate the “olonkho” with the oral epic traditions from Athenian poets and orators, which would then serve as a Slavic-centric orientation as epics such as *The Odyssey* remain embedded in the cultural imaging centered in Moscow.

If, however we proceed with Harris’ claims cautiously, it bears mentioning that the outline of the Olonkho they offered is evident in several of the films that I will explore via my concept of the Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelopes” and therefore we can begin to unpack the poetics of Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelopes” with this limited reading and then demonstrate Madina Tlostanova’s concept of “post-Soviet” difference and the decolonial difference they develop while working with Walter Mignolo in *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. An important aspect of the contemporary turn to decolonize Sakha Republic (Yakutia) and then Russia more broadly is that this is the first time since the Czars that the Sakha (Yakutia) and other indigenous Siberian and Turkic peoples can legally perform their own languages and therefore cultures and customs without immediate legalized state reprisal.

I situate my exploration in the sound events that constitute the enfoldment of my concept, the “sound envelope”. The “sound envelope” remains an expression of sonic temporality, intentionally shaped expressions of duration; however, one might liken it to a species of Bakhtin’s notion of the polyphonic. This essay therefore uses “sound envelopes” housed in Sakha (Yakutia) examples as arguments for the way that Brandist’s revisions of Foucault, through Bakhtin are indeed a better starting place for the decolonial

projects of “post-Soviet” people than the discourses of Evgeny Dobrenko or various Russian Formalists persisting in the present.

In this essay I show in part the discourses surrounding the lands and the audio-visual dialogs of the Sakha (Yakutia) people and examine this against the grain of popular and allegedly subversive dystopic and post-apocalyptic science fiction from the soviet and “post-soviet” periods as they pertain to a praxis which is perpetually subversive simply by returning to indigenous lands but in a framework that centers the unique experience of colonization relevant to the Sakha (Yakutia) people. For Sakha (Yakutia) peoples, the “post-Soviet” turn has been dubious and left their lands under the jurisdiction of the same Moscow/Kremlin centric power structures while leaving their infrastructure to crumble slowly, although it is notoriously outdated and soviet era technology. In its most general definition my concept, the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” refers to the critiques of the pre, during and Post phases of Soviet empire which all relate back to a power structure centered in the Kremlin, just as power resides in D.C. in the United States. In both cases there remains the bizarre distortion of history such that neither project can admit their mutual novelty, historically speaking on the very lands they celebrate as their own. If after all Russo centric state building is indeed a settler colonizing as thinkers like Mignolo, Tlostanova, Politkovskya and Gomboeva have already proven, and indeed that project is contemporaneous with the earliest waves of Spanish exploration and settler colonization; then in fact both empires, the United States and the Russian Federation are in fact obvious interlopers. Constructs of modernity grafted into the increasingly post, postmodernity already concluded in the sixties. In the

bizarre forever unhistorical present, a time marked by ongoing, proliferated, calamity and genocide, it remains crucial to unpack the less anticipated sites of resistance, the more overlooked aspects of critique, and more than all else to chart the enduring identity of the subalternized against the limits inflicted by nation building and identity constructs originating from without.

“Post-Soviet” refers in general to all nation constructs that exist in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR, but which can also include states that remain colonized by some of the vestigial power structures of that Soviet period of governance which contained so many of the structures of Czarist Russia before it when it came to empire and the construction of racialized hegemony. “They feel themselves as the new old colonies of Moscow, and more and more actively discuss different possibilities of separation and survival on their own or with the help of different partners— from Western Europe to China and Iran” (Tlostanova 13). Tlostanova shows how the “post-Soviet” is a configuration that reveals what has always been the heart of the empire making energies across Russian regimes, the Moscow power structure. Moving beyond the “post-Soviet” however seems to be beyond the decolonial imaginary deployed in Tlostanova’s thinking. The flaw I see in Tlostanova is that a “post-Soviet” logic implies that the conditions of the Soviet experience have ended for peoples that lived under them even if as she describes it, “unevenly”- but the situation goes beyond uneven when one considers that it wasn’t until the end of the of USSR that Sakha (Yakutia) gained recognition as a republic at all. Then this small bubble that scholar, activist, and indigenous Siberian Anna Gomboeva terms a “temporary end of history/ that time when we were children and

history had ended” itself ended, as if in Putin the old colonial projects awoke anew, continuing with greater vigor and darker exigency. I quote several aspects of their ongoing research and activism here especially where their work critiques influencers across media scapes, where state building can occur through the seemingly innocuous social media formats of TikTok or Instagram. The “post-Soviet” is therefore also deconstructed by the Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelope” because it cannot account for the reality of crumbling Sovietism in the allegedly “post-Soviet” present.

I work to answer the following question: What kind of worlds are created in the representation of lands and colonial struggles and how can violence be mitigated through the sonic qualities of media? Where can the resilience of the self-stand against empire in relation to the creation of its own enduring selfhood and how can these be seen as expressions of the “sound envelope”? These examples will receive the sonic centric treatment developed in this dissertation which I hope to apply to wider “dialogizes” which supplant the centrality the settler colonist seeks to promote for themselves on indigenous land; examples of which will here be localized to the United States but are in operation throughout the international context, especially in the Russian Federation’s abuse and conscription of colonized peoples such as the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples which are called Ethnically Siberian in the Russian administrative parlance. Directors such as Stepan Burnashev[/Bernashev] (*Our Winter, Another Life*, and more) from the Sakha (Yakutia) republic argue that cinema is a modality of radical selfhood, survival, expression, and proliferation of their cultures:

Through cinema, [Sakha] Yakutia has a chance to show the world that there is such a people, such a language, and such a place. We can use it to

acquaint the world with our culture,” Burnashev said during filming in Yakutsk for his latest movie, titled *Bihigi Kyhymyt* (Our Winter). “People across the globe now watch Korean cinema. Why can’t they watch [Sakha] Yakut films, too?” (Luxmore).

Although the apparatus at work within the Sakha (Yakutia) republic lacks the prestige of the Moscow academic world, the consistency of its high-quality film making across the long decades from the decline of the Soviet Union until the present are beginning to attract mild expressions of favor even from the Russian Federation’s political apparatus. With success so undeniably evident however one risks forgetting that this art is in fact, radical and decolonial and is not ever truly supported by the state and settler colonial apparatus. In their article “A Cinema of One’s Own Building/Reconstructing Siberian Indigenous People’s Identity in Recent Cinema: Examples from Sakha (Yakutia) Republic and the Republic of Kakassia” Caroline Damiens argues that “For Sakha filmmakers, film possesses a ‘simple language, more accessible and more popular than theater’ ... Apart from logos, films often exhibit many other identity markers. The first national element that attracts attention is language” (5). There is a sense in which the vocality of Sakha language serves as the decolonial space in the Damiens treatment of Sakha (Yakutia) cinema because of how the transmission of language in cinema is most predominately a sonic experience, a profound invocation of the always already existing oral traditions of poetics, language, and culture.

The Sakha (Yakutia) example under from the administration of the Russian Federation, are situations of extraction economies matched to cruel partisan, structural oppression, and racism; mapped onto already existing biases and violences. In this case ranging from pipelines to diamonds and gold. In later research I will argue for parallels in



the United States' treatment of the Dakotas, especially in the wake of the Bakken Pipeline and the ongoing resistance to extraction economies in those sacred regions. The reality for indigeneity in the example of the ethnic Siberian experience is one of dehumanization, quotidian peril, neglect induced disasters such as yearly floods left the swallow entire cities rather than receiving preparatory or post crisis care from the central government, and of course, the most intense and brutal experiences of conscription which always led to the deployment of indigenous bodies in the deadliest and least respectful, frontline positions. These logics have been treated in the reception and research Sakha peoples and decolonial allies have brought into conversation with the now acclaimed, *Sakha Sniper* an important filmic demonstration of the peril Sakha peoples faced and still face for the greater benefit of wider networks of peoples, in both cases ruled by a Slavic centric, Kremlin based, authoritarian governance.

In other words, the politics of land ownership remain in favor of the settler colonist who asserts themselves upon the land as the originary “stewards” despite the fraught relationships they have with seasonal cycles or again the persistent extraction logics fueling most land grabs and land claims. Sakha (Yakutia) cinemas show the way their culture and interactions with the land which transcend multiple iterations of “Slavic-centric” settler colonialism and often exist beyond the logics of land grab politics. Due to the Eurocentric logics of Slavic centric settler colonial projects, there also exists a bizarre implementation of a kind of hit or miss quasi “Slavic mestizaje” logic to the treatment of the indigenous peoples of Northern and Central Asia; many of whom share certain Turkic ancestry that gesture to a broader stewardship of a land vaster even than the current

abstract, construct, the Russian Federation. Perhaps not unlike much the implementation of mestizaje logics, there should be tremendous decolonial potential in the Slavic identity, as it resists European logic even as it implements it for its own systems and governances. Yet, the Slavic identity meets far more complexity in the example of the Russian Federation, a governance for whom identity politics are inherited from longer, older traditions of a Moscow centered world beginning, infamous as it is to say, with the earliest Czar Ivan the terrible and his originary settler colonial projects. These brutal land grabs effected a variety of populations, including Slavic peoples but were most brutally endured by the indigenous peoples of what the Slavic centric worldview would come to label as “Siberia”. And to be clear this essay is not contra the Slavic identity nor even arguing against the existence of Slavic peoples, Slavic settlements even, on Sakha lands but rather to show the extent to which Sakha centrality is the appropriate response to an ongoing legacy of erasure, exploitation, racism, and colonization. Because of colorist logics linked to swathe of archetypal racisms or stereotypical racist tropes, the identities such as Sakha or Buryatia are seen as safe targets for abuse or ignored and neglected by the same governments that tax and conscript them at will and unduly.

An unexpected implosion of settler colonial imagination occurred however in the recent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, an ongoing catastrophe rivaled only perhaps by the utter destruction, the annihilation and erasure of Palestinian land by Israel in 2023 and 2024. The logic that Israeli settler colonization deploys against Palestinians is however and somewhat ironically opposed at present by the Russian Federation. There is therefore some kind of implosion at play in the way that settler

colonization is treated and defined in the present because the Russian Federation is quite simply just as much of genocidal, settler colonial state as Israel has proven itself to be in recent months and in decades of Nakba. This implosion is the reasoning for my inclusion of the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” which is otherwise much more relevant to a Ukrainian centric media studies critique of Soviet and “post-Soviet” themes. In the end I see the invasion of Ukraine in the present as proof positive of the Russian Federation’s ongoing settler colonial designs, goals and plans to extract land and resources from neighbors’ historic stewards of land like Sakha (Yakutia) peoples and tragically now with the conscription of their fighting aged men. The Federation cannot deny the extent to which it is the cruel, despotic, interloper in nearly all circumstances relevant to the utterance of its name and the reach of its self-assigned authority. Thus, too of the United States which still looms surreal and destructive, attacking the world from above with critique and force alike in a disturbingly accurate parody of Columbia from the video game, *Bioshock Infinite*.

While the implosion I traced above in relation to the “S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition” is generative, it remains here largely a reference, as my true goal will be to unpack the potential of sonic events in Sakha cinema. This reading occurs in a broader context that is intertextual, interdisciplinary, and navigates between the United States and the Russian Federation in its broader critiques of settler colonialism and media. In the end I am still working to establish how my theoretical construct, the “sound envelope” works across contexts so apparently (at first glance perhaps) disparate as say poetry in the United States, films like *Guns of the Trees*, and then these cinematic examples from Sakha

(Yakutia) filmmakers. I see the grounding connection sites as the structuring of narrative against the language, logic, expectations, style, and traditions inflicted and promoted, and beneficial to the state's interests. For example, film series like *Day Watch* and *Night Watch* rather glorifies that "post-Soviet" worlding whereas *Stalker* actively critiques its own Soviet present. Even as far back as the Tarkovsky film there remained a sense of the Stalker as one who was at odds not with any common person but with the very apparatus of Soviet empire itself, exposing government secrets and leading the willing/paying to the room of miracles. As the censorship *Roadside Picnic* faced demonstrates, the very concept of the Stalker as a gruff and rebellious figure was immediately branded "un-Soviet", despite the novel's setting in fictional Canada and the way the novel overtly deconstructs and critiques capitalism via dialectical materialism. While I move through Sakha (Yakutian) "sound envelopes" I will be maintaining ongoing reference to the "S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition" which continues to play a massive role in how the Sakha lands are seen and rendered and demonstrated in media, as the barren and hostile landscapes of *Escape from Tarkov*, and *DayZ*.

The following Sakha (Yakutia) cinematic examples show cinema cultures preceding and following the collapse of the Soviet Union and demonstrate the vibrance and centrality of Sakha (Yakutia) peoples in their own region. Informed by the Smithsonian Folklife digital magazine publication on Sakha film and the state website: "sakhafilm.ru", I examine the following Sakha centric films: *Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Марфа*) directed by Aleksei Romanov (1986). *Tüüingngü kyys* (Түүһһү кыыс / *Девушка-видение* / *Dream Girl*) directed by Gennady Bagynanov (1999), and *Khara jai*

(*Хара дьай / Нечисть / Misfortune*) directed by Evgenii Osipov and Stepan Burnashev (2016). *Маарпа/ Manna* depicts atemporal loops of disembodied, and yet paradoxically embodied, non-corporeal states of being that remain exclusively available to the Sakha (Yakutia) tradition. But these are aspects also of its narrative which deals in spiritual spaces and relates to the Sakha (Yakutia) configurations of lower world, middle worlds, and other realms comingling across what one might consider the physical realm during certain, repeating, significant, and seasonal periods of sacred time.

*Dream Girl* demonstrates more traditions and cultures of storytelling and grounds the viewer in an ongoing Sakha lived culture which nevertheless problematizes the “post-soviet” structures of governance which are depicted as diminishing the inherent vivacity of Sakha (Yakutia). Because the “Dream Girl” recedes as the protagonist moves into the denser capital cities her presence across the film might be read in terms of a call to honor traditions, to reject Slavic-centric configurations of modernity and to embrace the ongoing, living, Sakha traditions continuing in the present. In *Misfortune* (2016), sound plays a pivotal role in establishing the embodied space of quasi-haunted, demonic interludes that serve as reminders of culture through suspenseful, horror entertainment genre cinema, and in the second of the four vignettes the use of a Ouija board holds the dual purpose of plot device and yet also demonstrates the way that Sakha (Yakutia) people reconfigure the Slavic-centric Cyrillic alphabet into their own languages. Another significant feature of the films gathered here are that they mark the already present desire to “de-Russify” or decolonize the Republic of Sakha on the part of the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples. These films shift in depictions of landscapes and gender in ways that merit

further dialog, yet they all demonstrate the extent to which the Sakha (Yakutia) people are in fact continuing their traditions in and out of the Russian language, and its Slavic-centric normative hegemony. I want to offer that *Sakha Sniper* ought to be here but that I am writing on it in a separate work which situates it in a central context.

*Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Map̄a*) directed by Aleksei Romanov (1986) is a film that is described as participating in the previously outlawed Sakha (Yakutia) “shamanism” cultures that extend back beyond any established religions or customs in the area as far back (in colonial memory) as the 17<sup>th</sup> century but might hearken back to so called “pre-history” when approached through the decolonial framework.

The narrative is an elegant legible fairytale like legend or myth but of course is not truly any of these terms as they invoke the colonizing logic common to eurocentrism and stand here only as allegory for the deeper, embodied traditions that are too sacred for me to perform. As the Katya Yegorov commentary in *Folklife* elaborates, “these films are saturated in Sakha sociocultural contexts, presenting Sakha culture, history, and lived realities”. As such *Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Map̄a*) remains a bold release because of how it was centering the experiences that had been for so long, the entirety of the USSR in fact, illegal. “Moreover there were cases where children were openly denounced for speaking Sakha on buses” (Issacs & Polese 107). As the Aimar Ventsel article indicates, the Russian speaking, Slavic-centric, settler colonial governments housed in Moscow have never tried or admitted the authenticity of their colonized, subalternized “Siberianized” Asian peoples. Even so their existence has served to overcome the resistance of the Slavic-Centric Moscow governance ruling over the

Russian Federation. Sakha languages have forced themselves into the superstructure of the Sakha Republic and the ongoing reticence of Russified” Slavic centricism to this trend has not ceased yet remains incapable of overcoming this expression of living culture and tradition. Since *Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Маппа*) shows the Sakha myths and faiths, their shamanistic ideas, and sacred legends of the ytyk mas (sacred tree) and depicts a young, male, protagonist who prays before the tree for help, in reverence to its sacrosanct status and in humility before the power of the land, especially in winter. “Unlike the inhabitants of the neighboring settlements who shunned Maappa and therefore saw her ghost as a haunting, vengeful spirit, the Ilja received compassion from her” (Yegorov-Crate). In a surprisingly prolific problem across “international” narratives, *Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Маппа*) is somewhat centered on the issue not of death per se, but of dignity, the amount of care and respect, the process and praxis of culture, and identity due not just to the living, but also, to the dead. In a kind of “double inversion” of colonial logic this spirit centric film shows two separate forms “living indigeneity” or the extent to which the colonized person persists and resists colonization across history, and in the present. In the *Maappa* (Sakha: *Manna* / Russian: *Маппа*) narrative the spirit is a kind of living ghost cast by the equally ghost like filmic event, that phantasmagoric moment of cinema where the inert, assembled film springs into mechanical/ technological life before the viewer. At the same time as the film is cited in *Folklife* as the first Sakha (Yakutia) language film, it shows how that language persists after years of erasure and violence.

*Tüüingngü kyys (Түүһһү кыыс / Девушка-видение / Dream Girl)* directed by Gennady Bagynanov (1999) is another striking example of the persistence of the shamanistic traditions of the Sakha (Yakutia) people against the grain of the settler colonial projects continuing across their lands. In this case the film might be read as a reflection of the director and the film makers upon the process of the assimilation that Sakha (Yakutia) peoples endure in the past and present. The notion of land and spirit are not necessarily tied to the representation of Sakha (Yakutia) identity but rather are in dialog with the people. There are depictions of life in cities and in rural areas, both with dignified options and careers and with a complete decentering of the “Russified” aspects that comes with colonization in the Slavic-centric context. *Tüüingngü kyys (Түүһһү кыыс / Девушка-видение / Dream Girl)* depicts the relations to land in the rural settings more favorably to the urban setting and uses both visual and sonic logics to accomplish this argument. In terms of the visual, the receding apparition of the favorable and benevolent spirit which visits the protagonist in their dreams corresponds with the increasing approach of larger cities and the subsequent efforts to gain admittance to Moscow Film schools. The intersections of age and movement from rural space to dense, cityscape is a theme the film treats and advises, with a cautionary logic, as if to say that progress in one realm begets loss in another. If the world is gained in the secular, the spiritual connections to the land are lost in the spiritual.

*Khara jai (Хара дьай / Нечисть / Misfortune)* directed by Evgenii Osipov and Stepan Burnashev (2016) also reflects on themes from Sakha (Yakutia) traditions but places them amidst the often more densely populated cities of the present. For example,



one of the “tübelte (scary stories)” is a one room, four-person, low budget, masterpiece of a haunting with the frenetic energy of *Blair Witch* and the polish of a more modern rendition of *The Exorcist* tradition and occurs within the capital of the Sakha Republic, Yakutsk. Yet again the “tübelte” vignettes show the tension between the city which seems the purview of the colonizer, but which is not actually there’s either; and the countryside, which seems the purview of the Sakha (Yakutia) and where settlers like the car thief are undone by their own aggressions and appropriative proclivities. Moving between city and rural country is more fraught in *Khara jai* (*Хара дьай / Нечисть / Misfortune*) and it is not always a case of Sakha (Yakutia) here and settlers there; but instead, a framework that makes the settler appear as they truly are, the outsider in a world that belongs to the Sakha (Yakutia).

While many of the examples above are selected from a mix of availability and their sense of chronological order moving from late soviet, to early and at last, the present “post-soviet” period; they nevertheless demonstrate the sacredness of Sakha (Yakutia) space and deploy sonic allegories and sonic events to invoke, or even perform the culture and history of Sakha (Yakutia) peoples. The Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelope” is shown in these cinematic examples to be demonstrably atemporal, decolonial, imbued with language, tradition, and operating as an instantiation of space creation. The “sound envelope” of the Sakha (Yakutia) cinema is one which holds the decolonial space building role often reserved to the visual cultures of most cinematic treatments from Andre Bazin to David Bordwell and beyond. This decolonial space demonstrates the living traditions of the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples and the centrality of their world despite

the ongoing colonization occurring across centuries. A certain reflexivity of that liminal context of quasi spiritual, shared mythical, sacred space that Sakha (Yakutia) cinema evokes remains inherently political, because of the way the Sakha (Yakutia) language has been historically and currently excluded and often forbidden from cities and official contexts throughout the Russian Federation, a policy that goes back to Soviet era agreements and concessions.

The colorist logics of Eurocentric settler colonialism, grounded in racism and general xenophobia, do however unite the separate experiences of colonization in the United States and in the Russian Federation, each returning to that dubious declaration of enlightened modernity in the 1600's and the beginning of Eurocentric settler colonial networks. Therefore, the shoal metaphor remains poignant even in the "landlocked" situation of lands known administratively as "Siberia" because of how liminality is thrust onto the colonized as they are branded as an "other", and the way that such logic begets instability on the part of the colonizer for whom the lies can never pay the check they write in their inception and so, like credit debt on interest, beget ever more lies and deceptions. "At the shoal (and shore) – or the in-between space... most important, a focus on the shoal as a process works to reveal the ways in which the attempts to secure White cartographic stability through violence and Black and Native death are tenuous and unstable" (King 78). The invocation of the hemispheric communicates the liminality thrust upon the central, northern Asian, and in general all identities outside of Slavic Orthodoxy in terms of what Madina Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo have observed described as blackness. This liminality posits their bodies as the "Blackness" which is

oceanic to the settler colonist. For the gaze of the Moscow leaning Slavic centric, settler colonist, the proliferation of anything Sakha (Yakutia) presents a massive problematic with the potential of destabilizing their entire world view.


The deleterious practice of racialization of identities beyond Slavic/ orthodoxy contexts is perhaps unsurprisingly stemming from some of the oldest configurations of empire, eurocentrism, and orientalism. “As a result of the soviet modernization, the religious difference was completely translated into race and the Caucasus and Central Asian people acquired the common name of ‘Blacks’ that they still carry” (Tlostanova & Mignolo 6). The Slavic-centric construction of Blackness is in some ways, less aware of person and agency of the other than almost any preexisting colonial project imagined; I think on par with this however would be the cruelty of chattel slavery and land grab politics of settler colonists in the United States. However I begin to argue that the hemispheric moves entail a reframing of the situations and movements demarcated as decolonial such that they include the way that the settler colonialism of the Russian Empire, the USSR, and then the Russian Federation represent a coeval colonial project with that of Spain in the case of Czarist Russia, and then that of the United States in the case of the USSR and of course the “Post Soviet” Russian Federation.

The term Slavic-centric is a step in the decolonial methodology I deploy here from scholars like Madina Tlostanova and ethnic Siberian, Anna Gomboeva whose methodology conducts critiques of settler colonialism in Russia across the three modes of regime known thus far: the Czardom, the Soviet era, and the allegedly “post-soviet” present. Gomboeva’s experiences as an ethnic Siberian woman in the Russian Federation.

In the following reel/ tiktok video I argue that the scholar Anna Gomboeva has created a Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelope” where she critiques the content creator “polynamusic” who is a settler colonist that appropriates the Sakha (Yakutia) culture for monetary gain and benefits doubly from racist power structures of governance in the Russian Federation.

Instead, a space like TikTok is yet another sight for “sound envelopes” – qua intentional demarcations of duration indicated and governed through a sonic logic— will serve as an example of a growing and dialogical resistance to ongoing and historical settler colonialism in the Russian Federation and beyond, but most especially the “post-Soviet” space where the indigenous Sakha (Yakutia) persons are erased from history and the present simultaneously. One benefit is that she can gain favor from the government by reinforcing the erasure of indigenous peoples, through “Siberianizing” the Sakha Republic and “Russianizing” its culture; her identity performances have accordingly shifted from “ethnic-Russian” to “ethnic-Siberian” according to her needs and the beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Another benefit she gains is that her brand profits off a construction critics refer to as her “pseudo-Siberian mythology”.

[The] polynamusic controversy. she blocked me that's why I cannot stitch her video.

it's a  when a white person says that there is no racism in the place where they are from. also, the term North Asia is more appropriate than the term Siberia because it includes the entire mass of land in Asia colonized by Russia that is still part of the Russian Federation. the word Siberia in Russia usually refers to administrative regions in the West and Center of North Asia, while the North East Asia is called The Far East.

-Anna Gomboeva, @annachickensaredinos, “polynamusic controversy”.

In this online duel Gomboeva was able to call out steps taken by the influencer and polynamusic where they performed cultural appropriation, largely of the Sakha identity. Polynamusic's stance had been that this culture was essentially automatically at the disposal of the Russian self. However, since the Sakha identity suffers ongoing colonial violence at the hands of the Russian Federation its clearly not an accurate depiction. Much of the troubling reality manifested in the seemingly lighthearted and more public space of revelry which TikTok most commonly manifests for the broadest categories of consistent users is that Polynamusic can effectively produce an international settler colonial and white supremacist dog whistle via the Slavic centric invocation of alleged historic identity. The assumption of the status of the abused party while performing an appropriation and a negation atop the legacy and ongoing brutality this chapter has already gestured towards and introduced indicates the extent to which denial and fabrication serve this narrative.

A solid contradiction then is conversely for these public moments of resistance to occur as they continue do across quotidian, ludic realms. And of course we must not forget that just because the settler colonist can claim to be innocuous, it does not mean that they are; in fact the majority of popular servers amongst games that Slavic and "post-Soviet" peoples play all indicate a persistent trend of homophobia, islamophobia, and above all else, a long running aggression towards Turkic peoples in general but usually under the limiting moniker of "Turks". Given the ongoing policies of European neighbors such as France, its clear that hostility to Turkic identity informs the cohesion and construction of Slavic centric identity and likely even broader categories of constructed

Eurocentrism. To add further insult as irony, the configurations at play here do not even acknowledge that Sakha identity is in fact, Turkic identity and that this link alone shows how displaced their peoples have been by Slavic centric settler colonialism in the Russian Federation.

Gomboeva's research and continuing activism demonstrates the lie that the Russian Federation makes towards any sense of equality or fairness but rather indict and expose the latent hegemonic racism informing the structures of governance in the "post-Soviet" paradigm. In their depictions of schooling in "Siberia" where Slavic women denied her the grades she earned as penalties for refusing to cease critiques of corruption in the school or in their current struggle to maintain safe visits with family members still living in Sakha (Yakutia) lands and therefore directly under the gaze of the Russian Federation.

The pseudo-Asian, lurking "savageness" that the Slavic centric intellectual project has always pinpointed as the "Russian" persons intellectual or social "weakness", hence Czar "Peter the Great's" intense interest in "westernizing" his Russia. To go into greater detail, the appropriated identity is the method by which the Slavic centric thinker ignores living indigeneity, and on the other hand it bulwarks that same intellectual construct of an identity justify the ongoing antagonisms the Russian cultural consciousness maintains against so called "Western" countries.

The racism of the Russian liberal intelligentsia is a local symptom of the global colonial and capitalist system. Bykov's condescending attitude toward the Global South and the East recalls Western Orientalist frameworks that acquire local context within home-grown Russian colonialism. After all, Moscow's imperial power and wealth originates in remote places that became part of Russia as a result of military intervention and dispossession.

-Anna Gomboeva, "Russian Liberals and the Kremlin: Racism and Colonialism as Common Ground Pt. 1"

Inevitably the resolution of these impossible contradictions emerges as the bitter, pessimistic humor of the defeatist logics favored by all too many of the "post-soviet" intelligentsia which still hold tremendous privilege and power within the Russian Federation. In fact, the complexity of identity for Sakha (Yakutia) peoples has many of their great poets such as Crispy Newspaper's "Ayhal Ammosov" missing after visits to neighboring "post-Soviet" states like Kazakhstan, alas it is the case that Sakha (Yakutia) artists, scholars, and activists all face extradition and deportation to Russia from areas like Kazakhstan. The differences are pronounced between Sakha (Yakutia) peoples and that of the Kazak's or the many diverse groups that are usually reduced to "Tatars" and the state works directly under the command of the Moscow government in the Russian Federation, but the experiences also resonate across the colonized peoples of Russia.

The moves made by the Moscow centered expressions of Slavic-centricism always deny the existence of Asians in Russia as such and yet also denies those same peoples, the ability to exist outside of any racialized category besides the Slavic configuration of "Black". "The Orthodox Christian commonality of Russians with Osetians (until the war with Georgia over South Osetia), Georgians, or Armenians has been systematically downplayed and replaced with racism and Orientalism from the nineteenth century until now" (Tlostanova & Mignolo 6). The identity of "Blackness" is argued as possessing the liminality of the geologic formation, the Shoal, which is a "neither here-nor-there" formation, assemblage style, of land, sea, and yet neither. More

accurate then might be the notion that out of settler colonial thinking comes a dialectic that is dominating and, in the Sakha, (Yakutia) experience Stalinist.

In my argument, these communities resist this through sound events in cinematic scenarios, in Sakha (Yakutia) as much as in New York, Auckland, or Toronto. For example, in *Guns of the Trees* the casting of and centralizing of people of color with a focus on the internal life of female performing actresses was a resistance to logics that excluded them from the mainstream or commercial cinemas of the 1960's and this achievement occurred through the arrangement of sound events that centered those experiences. I reflect on my work with *Guns of the Trees* here in passing because of how it informed the unique perspective of the "post-Soviet" experience in terms of post war immigration, displacement, and the fostering of identity and community through praxis. The "Sound Envelopes" I first trace in *Guns of the Trees* remain relevant here where I work through the traditions of "post-Soviet" peoples, the "S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Tradition", and specifically audio and poetic traditions of the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples.

However, by presenting women of color as leaders the film showed the reality of the civil rights movements of the sixties, which were constantly burdening women of color with activist labor. This trend indeed persists to the present. While I am not the first critic to work at cinema in the United States through this contemporary and decolonizing focus, nor am I the most adequate judge of colonial conditions; I do offer innovations via sound centric cinema critiques which help unpack the myriad and limitless subjectivities created and preserved by sound events in mediascapes. My interventions argue that the analysis of Slavic-Centric, Kremlin/Moscow centered Russian Colonization of Sakha



(Yakutia) requires research into the colonial and property-centric governances ranging from the Czars to the Presidents of the Federation. This analysis would configure the complexities and unique instantiations of settler colonialism critical to the Sakha (Yakutia) deconstruction of the oppressive structures of the Russian Federation in the present.

My argument also makes the claim that “sound envelopes” disrupt the forces of representation, commodification/ commercialization, and offer instead decolonized space for Sakha (Yakutia) sound. It is my claim that “sound envelopes” are performances of and references to dialogical movements that allow the proliferation of separate voices side by side, in the daily or lived moments of the common people. Indeed, the work of visual cultures in the police/ state/ corporate war on crime represent some of the least liberatory technologies of the 2000’s as they are crowning achievements in necropolitical indifference. Opposed to this are sonic interventions like the Sakha (Yakutia) punk band: Crispy Newspaper who, arguably returning to the very origins of Punk Rock in Bolivia and other communities in the Andes regions, create music that indicts empire. Crispy Newspaper remain a powerful and lingering remark against the Russian Federation, one which grows truer with each new round of contractor flavored conscription and each season’s intensifying flooding which comes with the climate change oil economies have wrought. As the band’s singer Ammosov continues to seek freedom from their dubious arrest at the hands of Kazakhstan’s authorities the plight of the Sakha (Yakutia) situation might well be summarized in their lyrics and musical project.

For now, the closest I have come to the ancient and poetic Sakha language is to translate, roughly, these Crispy Newspaper tracks simply to be able to register them on KUCR 88.3 FM's Spinitron website more accurately, thereby ensuring royalties and recognition go to the band no matter what happens. In the ongoing research I will continue in Sakha Resistance and what we might optimistically term "Sakha Studies" or even "Sakha Poetics" I will move to master some Cyrillic alphabets which are paradoxically the only path remaining into the language and the textbooks depicting and discussing the Sakha (Yakutia) peoples. An example of Ammosov's lyrics follow: (forgive my early steps in translating this language that makes even my ancestors appear young) "What is the best prayer? What is the best prayer? Today, Alrosa is the best place to go" (Crispy Newspaper). Any cursory web search reveals Alrosa as a (sinister) Russian Corporate Mining Group/ Association of Companies specializing (monopolizing) "exploration, mining, manufacture, and sale of diamonds" (Wikipedia of course). As it stands now, much like the Bakken pipeline, there remains no ethical nor respectful nor even legal means by which such extraction settler economies may operate. For one, the Sakha (Yakutia) people haven't had authority over their own land since Ivan the Terrible which means that for centuries of shifting governments and endless occupation, mines have been run and Sakha (Yakutia) peoples have been made to work these mines across Siberia for the wealth of distant owners in cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Various examples of this persist across Russian literature, in Tolstoy these were those alleged charming countryside peasants who apparently all too eager to entertain landlords on their holidays. Later one learns Tolstoy was assaulting women in his villages

and paying off brothers, fathers, and village leaders for the pleasure. In Dostoevsky these are the rural peoples of the distant Siberia that always looms as both punishment and baptismal renewal/ salvation for the various insane characters from say *The Brothers Karamozov* and of course the same party in *Crime and Punishment*. Yet Oligarchic structures owned by the state indeed operate with impunity and might even manifest more of the governance of say Northern Siberia than any Russian Federation official would be comfortable alleging. Therefore, this guttural cry against oppression has taken notes from cross cultural punk and anarchal exchanges and then been adapted to the unique situation of Sakha (Yakutia) nation building. But beyond the significance of punk rock in the native Sakha language, there also remains the haunting resonance of the music not just in lyrics and meaning but in raw physical appeal. Somehow those of us who know oppression know the wailing cry of Crispy Newspaper in all its rage and despair to be the voice of truth. It is troubling however that we can relate so easily to the distant example of Crispy Newspaper precisely because the context in the United States is so radically distinct from that of the Russian Federation, that comparisons of this nature should not be feasible. And yet the same “sound envelopes” that applied to Beat cinematic angst now work again here in the context of Sakha (Yakutia) decolonial resistance.

My “sound envelope” theory owes a great deal of its ongoing legitimacy to the courage and activism of Sakha (Yakutia) peoples because their work ignores or goes on despite the intense censorship and political/carceral violence being deployed against activists in this region. Crispy Newspaper unfortunately has been too successful in its

critiques of the Russian Federation, and the specific ways that Sakha (Yakutian) Stewardship and identity are erased by the Moscow centered regime. In truth their work is what would be deemed harmless, youthful excess in a regime like the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, or Ireland because it doesn't reveal anything that isn't already known. The way Crispy Newspaper most angers the state is its least aggressive aspect, the use of Sakha language in criticism of oppression. By invoking their own language, they demonstrate and speak through layers of experience which effortlessly reveal the hypocrisy of the settler colonial system. Essentially the issue is, if it is that easy to make the state look that oppressive, so obviously, then soon, everyone will be acting out across multiple separate and often related indigenous or original peoples of the lands that have become the Russian Federation. Notable examples that come up in Mignolo and Tlostanova are the experiences of "Buryatian" peoples in the Urals, but I cannot yet speak to the beauty and complexity of these people aside from the limited notes my dialogs with Sakha (Yakutia) activists and my research into the limits of the "post-Soviet" world view.

Additionally, Post Rock bands such as Element of Dust, who are perhaps known for their 2023 track single *Sibekki* and their earlier album *Are You Sensitive to Dust?* In both cases one can see that there exists some small irony in the treatment of themes on the part of the artists, this is because of how ubiquitous contamination and natural disaster have become for Sakha (Yakutia) peoples whose land shoulder the burdens of extraction economies and industrial pollutants from factories kept out of major cities like St. Petersburg and Moscow. Furthermore, Elements of Dust describe their work as

“birthed out of sadness and anger, calmness, hope, and happiness. In general, we try to write and play music so that the listener has all of scenes (pictures) in their head when listening. We hope that each of our listeners finds their own story in our music” (@Uniteasia). Here in the words of the band then is another description of what I am defining as the “sound envelope” because it shows how a complex and personal experience is crafted and shared through the intersections of sound and culture.

Or as Evgeny Dobrenko argues in *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History*: “In essence, history is also ‘images of the past’ which ‘rule us’,” (1).<sup>10</sup> Like so many in the United States, Dobrenko is a thinker of great potential who because of some inability or refusal to truly decolonize, never moves past the pessimistic indictment of power and into the land return praxis politics needed for decolonial movements to have significance. Dobrenko speaks into the reception and afterlives of the film makers who because they were forced into the Soviet system’s assimilatory logics, lost agency, community, and identity in a surprisingly and, given the soviet context— tragic inversion of the expectations that same system set out for itself and its subjects. “Of course, the cinema does not ‘purloin’ literature simply to ‘replace’ it ‘where it was before’, but that is not the sense of ‘sharp practice’ here; on the contrary, ‘distortion simply serves as evidence of the polyvalency of the classics” (Dobrenko 133). Dobrenko offers the beginning of some kind of treatment of complexity in his takes, but because he makes the Slavic-centric and

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<sup>10</sup> Later my work points out the shocking and troubling limits to Dobrenko’s critiques because of the way his thought remains mired in the formalisms of first French thinkers such as the admittedly celebrated figure of Foucault and then again in the less clearly ameliorating figures of the Russian Formalists who’s “discourses” still dominate the “post-soviet” person.

therefore ironically (as it is likely not desired?) Stalinist moves that reduce peoples such as Sakha (Yakutia) and so-called Tatars, and wider categories of Turkic peoples to an amalgamated trace.

However, that is generous, in truth there isn't room for what I refer to as "living indigeneity" following examples from American Indian traditions and performances<sup>11</sup>. The mirror between soviet colonization and American settler colonial endeavors is unequivocal and demonstrates the inherent structure of colonial projects. They are endeavors that manipulate sense and space, that disrupt temporality and instill linear logics as well as commercialized, "logics of cost" which delineate ever more narrow purviews of possibility, all the while erasing the native, in other words, displacing and dehumanizing the indigenous peoples of any given land. "The totalitarian revision of Marxist class character leads in Stalinist art to the revision of feudalism. The Czars here are dealing with one category – 'the people'" (Dobrenko 40). Rather than a critique of any Marxian or even socialist praxis, Dobrenko here indicts colonial structures informed by race, gender, and class; especially for their denial of the Audre Lorde, notion of intersectionality developed in their configurations during "The Hierarchy of Oppression". Yet Dobrenko denies the dangers of structuralisms and thus never engages in the generative work of Bakhtin's critiques of Stalinism and the forces within its "monologisms"— these denials of subjectivity which Bakhtin seeks to mitigate with dialogical moves and the invocation of the separate yet coexisting polyphonic.

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<sup>11</sup> Looking back on James Luna's *Artifact Piece* which presents the audience with paradox of a living person where an alleged deceased Indian is said to be on display in authentic garb. The colonizer is surprised by the paradox of their own false rhetorics and epistemologies.

Dobrenko is not able to go along with the Bakhtin circle therefore and can never reach the decolonial thinking Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo reach in their work *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* which offer complications of even the post-soviet thinkers who remain, like Dobrenko, mired in the tracks of Stalinism, even as they seek to describe and critique it. At the same time Mignolo has never acknowledged the critical role Cusicanqui plays in some of the earliest conversations around decolonial critiques and Tlostanova often does not reflect on the problematics inherent within the “post-Soviet” framework that makes an eternal present out of the now defunct eternal “preset” that had been the Soviet Experience.

I would also argue that the lack of sonic potential in Dobrenko’s configurations might well be an indication of their complicity with the structures of surveillance because they fail to account for the public sphere and its resistance to interpretation and domination via visual logics. An important step made by Tlostanova and Mignolo which echoes Cusicanqui but fails to reference her follows: “although the point of origination of the particular conceptual structure (modernity/ coloniality/(de)coloniality) was located in South America, its scope is not limited to South America and the Caribbean” (Tlostanova & Mignolo 3). In other words, it remains the case to begin configuring the decolonial critique firmly in the “Americas” but then it remains equally crucial, or at least viable to apply this logic beyond the originary scenario. However, the logic of decoloniality, much like any indigenous labor, was all too easily coopted by settler colonialisms; especially as the Russian Federation sought to justify its ongoing colonial projects, while simultaneously seeking to portray these deeds as merely the purview and fault of nations

like the United States, Great Britain, France, and its perhaps most preferential historical foe: Germany. Thus the “post-Soviet” celebrates the ongoing lack of decolonial space in the governance of not just the Russian Federation but other so called “post-Soviet” states like Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan.

The notion fueling the “post-Soviet” is rather uncritical in its erasure of indigenous experiences and often assumes a kind of shared, mutual misery out of all subjects, agents, and bodies in the configuration of former Sovietism. The ideas expressed in the category of “post-Soviet” stay limited to the concept that the soviet experience flattened the reality of those within its purview to the extent that the “post-Soviet” may be treated as a monolithic metaphor for the entirety of the former U.S.S.R. This however is not the case, whether we go so far as some do to call the current state of affairs across the “post-Soviet” as some manner of “tribalism” (not my words) it still isn’t true to claim that this “post-Soviet” moniker adequately treats the whole of the manifold experiences and peoples under that category.

Furthermore, the category of the “post-Soviet” only works because erases the experiences of what the Eurocentric framework refers to as indigeneity. Yet since for instance, the Sakha (Yakutia) experience was that of a banned culture, both their language and their customs alike, secular, and otherwise, were all made contrary and illicit embodiments during the USSR. It is therefore insufficient to treat the “post-Soviet” as Tlostanova does in terms of a kind of network of shared trauma, the Soviet and thus also the “post-Soviet” experience remains an uneven terrain marked by privilege and the systemic oppression that fosters it by denigrating entire peoples, regions, and worlds. For



say the Sakha (Yakutia) experience, how can the soviet experience end when its frameworks, logics, power structures, and problems persist in a present still marked by the reality carved out by the now ancient and often forgotten Czars?

These “post-Soviet” pessimisms were logics that are not limited to the post USSR world but rather remain at play in each colonial tension. As Craig Brandist argues—Stalinist thought had already portrayed the colonial project as the work of Bourgeois imperialism: those of the USSR’s innate political foes. A claim that despite its falsehood (given say the usurpation and annexation of countless lands by Stalin and later Soviet expansionist policies) remained seemingly defensible to subjectivities still aware of and remembering the fraught position the United States and Great Britain played in supporting the totalitarian Czar and royalist “whites” during the Russian revolution. The problem with the structures of Stalinist thought transcend the brutality of the regime and speaks to a kind of implosive energy to that earlier structure of heavily state centric, Soviet settler colonial empire. “Now being invited (to fix machines in the training unit). But it is obvious that in this way, they produce replenishment to the Russian Armed Forces. From the training unit, you will go straight to war. Only a warning or a fine is provided for not appearing in the military committee. There is no criminal liability” (freeyakutiafoundation).

The legacy of “Stalinistic” orientalism in Slavic-centric thought in general, but in the administrative practices and structures of the Russian Federation which continue, in too many valences, the colonial projects of those soviet eras, in their current “post-soviet” moment. Craig Brandist argues, in a major intervention “contra-Foucault” in the

decolonial critiques surrounding both the soviet and “post-soviet” periods; both that there exists a competing brand of ongoing orientalism in Slavic-centric thought, one which must not be used as a totalizing take but rather as a larger allegory in the conversations taking place around settler colonial projects from the revolutionary period and in the present.

The idea of competing bourgeois and Soviet orientalisms discussed above was no more than a crude and highly selective summary, an opportunistically deployed formula derived from long and intense debates about the relationship between knowledge about the colonial world and the policies of the various colonial powers in the revolutionary period. (Brandist )”

His formula is useful as a beginning point... It is a temptation to go along with Dobrenko’s earlier configurations regarding the post-soviet and the elimination of history, however Brandist demonstrates shocking and problematic limits to Dobrenko’s Post Sovietisms which leave him looking more dubious and less informed than one would dream of from a revolutionary thinker. To a certain extent Dobrenko may yet be another colonizing energy, by existing in the intelligentsia and by ignoring Bakhtin’s theories and formulations.

To again reference the ongoing scholarship and activism of Gomboeva, in our ongoing dialogs which inform my decolonial praxis, methodology and critiques, they explain how the “post-soviet” Russian Federation, settler colonist is both a Slavic-centric thinker, and also in denial of their biases; however they enforce racial bias, prejudice and racist violence across networks and circumstances, making the “non-slavic”, “other” subsist in what must be considered a necropolitical framework that often recreates the logics of apartheid via racialized segregation. Dobrenko’s treatment of Stalinist cinema

falls short of depicting the true extent of the colonizing forces at play within Russia historically, during the USSR, and then afterwards, extending into the present and ongoing invasion of Ukraine. An invasion largely spearheaded by disregarded, conscripted, including Sakha (Yakutia) people, who are treated as “cannon fodder” on the frontlines and then regarded as racial inferiors at home.

Even so, I am still interested in what Dobrenko does with the idea of a reconfigured or revised kind of feudalism in the Slavic centric imagination of post-soviet empire building. The revision of feudalism here is also a colonizing energy that later post-soviets and thinkers who have already worked to transcend the largely Slavic limits of this category by pushing into the decolonial praxes of Walter D. Mignolo, who in turn draws his research from indigenous female activist workshop collectives in the Andes and elsewhere in the Americas as recorded by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. Cusicanqui, in *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization* had already delineated the limits confining radical thinkers when they do not transcend the colonial logics dominating the power structures of settler nation states and later Mignolo expands on this work, essentially bringing it to a kind of broader context which, while risking and often committing erasures of Cusicanqui's workshops, also brought ideas of the decolonial critique to the context of the post-soviet condition. Cusicanqui grounds her stances firmly in living indigeneity: a stance which remains ambivalent of Mignolo's decolonial work even as it critiques colonizers.

Cusicanqui describes the inversion of reality created in the imagination inflicted on the land by the settler as something that is neither natural nor inevitable, they correctly

correlate settler colonial projects as disruptions and distortions in the truth built as bulwarks for the crushing, perhaps even Lacanian real presented by the sheer scope of the stolen lands, artifacts, and peoples. “The upside-down world created by colonialism will return to its feet as history only if it can defeat those who are determined to preserve the past, with its burden of ill-gotten privileges” (Cusicanqui 97). The notion of the normativity enforced by colonialism is upended as a matter of course, the colonial projects at work across the Earth will always remain an impossible construct, built to spill, and doomed to implode. Yet at the same time this force is always on the prowl, always already lurking within structures and intellectual productions of “worldings” which negate the agency of forces like land and water defenders and various native coalitions working against ongoing colonial projects.

A well-known and potent, sonic example of Sakha (Yakutia) “sound envelopes” which resist empire even in the present, “post-Soviet” configuration is the work, art, poetry, and activism of the band: Crispy Newspaper. Crispy Newspaper has faced tremendous state oppression as Sakha (Yakutia) peoples but have also elicited the extraneous cruelty of police brutality and unjust incarceration for the acts of civil disobedience against the conscription taking such a heavy toll on the Sakha (Yakutia) populations. Its significant to note that the Crispy Newspaper call to indict settler colonialism and police brutality are one in the same call to action, the band makes no distinction between police of the Russian Federation, its soldiers, or the power structure in general, because for the experience of the Sakha (Yakutia) people, these entities all perform the same colonizing violence.

At the same time examples not intentionally decolonial such as the youth cultures of say, the Sakha (Yakutia people) who make translations of music and quotidian entertainment from the common and often Eurocentric languages of mainstream media outlets or respond through these same outlets in their own traditions, and languages demonstrate the ongoing cultures of the Sakha (Yakutia) people as living and adapting through each new ordeal of empire. Preserving values and expressing the concerns facing Sakha as a republic seeking liberation from the Moscow centric paradigms underlying the Russian Federation. Rather than allowing oppression to continue in silence, the existence of music from Sakha punks Crispy Newspaper, the peaceful translation of cinema in Sakha language structures, and the work of Sakha (Yakutia) activism in protests and online all demonstrate the resilience of these peoples.

The rejection of colonial authority via sonic demonstrations of culture remains the focus of my arguments because these are the methods by which I can proliferate knowledge about Sakha (Yakutia) resistance in my own network as an academic and a kind of quasi-documentarian Twitch streamer, a College Radio DJ, and in my own research that comes from these intersections. I can for example, play Crispy Newspaper and dialogize on the way that civil disobedience is practiced by the singer and the band, this praxis in turn sends their voice across networks in the United States that can foster dialogizes around international networks of people resisting colonization. When then, more music emerges, its resonance with the historical resistance of global activists abroad, and the literal resonance with the Sakha (Yakutia) people in their home districts and cities make a community out of the sonic event.

Along with this musical, punk “sound envelope” are the stirring, documentarian/activist social media accounts like FREEYAKUTIA and SAKHAAGAINSTWAR which help to present news in the perspective and to the aid of / relevance of liberation of Sakha (Yakutia). Although operating in separate media these accounts remain in dialog with a variety of groups resisting settler colonialism and expand across networks that inevitably transcend the Sakha (Yakutia) examples. This connectivity begets an invocation, in my opinion, of multiple methodologies of decolonial critique, this is because the situation of the Sakha (Yakutia) people must not fall into previous configurations of say indigeneity or nativeness but rather possess their own decolonial Sakha-centric dialogizes which will in turn allow the communication of self and identity across mediums. I argue that we move in terms of ethnicities and identities in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic famously denied confederal status during the Soviet Union, and this would be a move that follows the arguments that Mignolo and Tlostanova imply in *Learning to Unlearn* where they argue that the humanist structures in the Russian Federation indict even its own intelligentsia, which remains an important praxis among decolonial thinkers in both the Russian Federation and the United States. This move was directly communicated to me by the scholar, activist, writer, and journalist Anna Gomboeva, whose status as “ethnic Siberian” transcend and invert the colonial logics of administration which rendered Sakha (Yakutia) lands as “Siberian” in the first place, back in Czarist Russia.

By reconfiguring colonial outlets and colonial languages in the service of Sakha languages and cultures, the “indigenous” or “ethnic Siberian” resistance to empire occurs

through the most innocuous and poetic performances of self, of heritage. The power of language and play together are unrelenting forces of individuated liberation which cannot ever cease or be ceased by any power structure however they may be and at present are restricted, punished as a result. Perhaps echoing the same bizarre “red face” racist, settler logics that elicit performances of “pseudo-Indians” in the United States, the Russian Federation has, in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine, begun to broadcast to itself a kind of “return to Asian past” rhetoric. The logic is faulty and informed by an unequal, appropriative rhetoric that allows the Slavic settler their simultaneous experience of resistance to “Mongol hordes” and then at the same time, assert their own “quasi-barbaric” “prowess” – perhaps this is evident as far back as the Herbert-Walker Bush era Vladimir Putin, the shirtless body lifter always atop a horse, beside a river, with a fish and an effortless expression of confidence.

This appropriative propaganda is not a novel occurrence, as it has often been the case in say the literature of Leo Tolstoy or later Fyodor Dostoevsky, that the outlying areas which in fact make the life in civic centers like Moscow possible were portrayed as extensions of the Slavic settler’s identity, like a residual wildness that they might tap into during a war time pinch or other difficult endeavor. Something that Bakhtin does not tend to investigate is the way that “Siberia” remains a lingering terror for characters in Dostoevsky, for whom that realm communicates that absence of comfort and a sense “primitivism” marked by constructions of “savageness” and “barbarity. Furthermore, the mines in *The Brothers Karamazov* are the punishment for criminals but in fact are “extractionary” violence conducted against the consent of various “Siberian” peoples,

including but not limited to Sakha (Yakutia) peoples. Beyond that even the peasant and the rural person, the indigenous, and the foreigner were all configured in deleterious frameworks that made them either the purview of a rich settler, living as his to organize and abuse at will, or as criminal elements undeserving of kindness and/or inclusion. This depiction of peoples outside of the racist, hegemonic structures erected to enshrine Slavic supremacy reduces the colonized to a trace and renders them as nonliving in the contemporary moment of the meta-modern present.

Thinkers like Evgeny Dobrenko remain in Stalinistic intellectual frameworks, even as they critique and describe aspects of cinema in the wake of Stalin. Scholars and critiques of Slavic centric settler colonialism in the Russian Federation such as “ethnic Siberian” Anna Gomboeva point how the “post-Soviet” seem to blame the soviet past for the colonial present. The work of the scholarship thus far has only decentered “ethnic Siberians”, Gomboeva claims, and too often there is built into the rhetoric of the “post-Soviet” a toxic pessimistic humor that denies the futurity indigenous peoples fight for every day with a casual dismissal. I am grateful for the ongoing dialogs with Gomboeva as they shed light on the ongoing, and increasingly invisibilized struggles in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) which seeks, in general, to begin a decolonizing trend for Russia more broadly; but beginning in Sakha (Yakutia) as its size and remoteness create their own kind of logics for independence even without any further argument. According to our dialogs they’ve witnessed a kind of refusal to see the other in their indigenous colleagues that can only really find its wording in the discourses of Frantz Fanon. Yet “post-soviet” thinkers do not cease in centering their own experiences and remaining complicit in the



exclusionary racism and architecture of the Russian Federation's capital's which do not allow transit to Sakha (Yakutia) peoples without special passports, and which do not deliver vital civic infrastructure in times of natural disaster. Just like the midwestern states in the United States, the "Siberia" is subject to seasonal shifts in snowfall, freeze, and then flooding, all of which can be counted on, related to, and prepared for with the right understanding of the land and limited application of government expenditure on the part of the Sakha (Yakutia) community.

However, cruel the soviet Reality had been, it is often reconfigured as a benevolent force in contradiction with the harshness of soviet colonial violence. For example, in the article "Republic of Sakha and Nation Building" Aimar Ventsel seems to move in and out of a colonizing perspective. "In the Soviet era the Sakha [Yakutia] language held a very complex and controversial position... there existed an 'unspoken agreement' that Sakha [Yakutia] was not spoken in the city... the Russian language was often seen as 'progressive'. A language for the 'Soviet nation'" (Issacs & Polese 106).

<sup>12</sup>The United States demonstrated this same capacity for cruelty via neglect more than once, and quite recently in the case of the Hurricane Katrina failures. Its therefore crucial to combat the pessimism of the "post-soviet" since it informs and in the case of Putin's politics, actively shapes U.S. policy and at the same time finds in the heart of the United

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<sup>12</sup> Sakha people themselves trace the history of Sakha as a written language to the 17th (Yakutia 2007). Nevertheless, it is assumed that the modern Sakha written language was created in 1922 using the latin alphabet. However, in the Soviet era the Sakha language held a very complex and controversial position. In general, Sakha was a language for the rural population and was not very actively used by ethnic Sakha in Yakutsk (the capital of Yakutia) and other cities where the russian language dominated.

-Aimar Ventsel, "Republic of Sakha and Nation-Building" (Issacs and Polese 106).

States reactionary, a sympathetic ear, and financial supporter, and a political puppet useful in the rejection, subversion, and inversion of decolonial projects worldwide ranging from the liberation of Ukraine to the liberation of Palestine.

To combat that monologicistic reduction, I work to show the indelible connection between the treatment of poetics offered by Mikhail Bakhtin and the need for the embracing of dialogism as a starting point to decolonial critiques and the embracing of new modalities, what Alexander Weheliye seeks from his treatment of racial assemblages in *Habeas Viscus*. At the very least the self-rejects internalization of oppression this way, while also performing no violence to self, structure, and so on. There is not say, a parallel to this outside of the Weheliye configuration of the racial assemblage except perhaps in aspects of the decolonial past/present/future configuration operating within Chicana critiques of settler colonialism, their complications of mestizaje, and then again, their deconstruction of border spaces through liminality. I recall the configuration of the Chicana offered by Emma Perez in *The Decolonial Imaginary* as operating in a fluidity of both embodiment and upon a fluidity of spatiality or locality in transit.

The diasporic subject is not only here and there, is not only Mexican or American, or Mexican American, or even Chicano/a, but more, much more, is always re-creating the unimagined, the unknown, where mobile third space identities thrive, and where the decolonial imaginary gleans the diasporic's subjecthood (Perez 78).

Emma Perez has a logic here that remains relevant across many of the feminist and decolonial "translocalities" argued for across this Chapter, that there exists a space of the decolonial horizon in the praxis of the subaltern, the diasporic, the colonized.

What is a third space in the Sakha (Yakutia) context? How can “Sound envelopes” show this at work? In essence, such sonic logics implode the fascist rhetoric that depends upon the epistemologies of the humanist after all, and therefore serves as a space where the subaltern, speaks, resists, heals, performs, and maintains their culture, their identity, their resistance to assimilation and colonization. There is not for instance a way to colonize the audio realm because it can always be reproduced as a whisper in the underground and then in the same breath, elevated to the scream of a riot with the implementation of a megaphone or, a “sound envelope” that resonates across a phantasmagoric network. The experience of colonization endured by the Sakha (Yakutian peoples) carried out even through the grammatological frameworks expressed in the implementation of a Cyrillic alphabet and the enforcement of subsequent waves of Slavic centric settler culture first by czars, then by soviet programs, and now in the present the Russian Federation. But then by turning these same alphabets towards their own languages Sakha (Yakutia) peoples have already inverted colonial authority at the site of the sonic exchange, in daily and written language.

The examples that I utilize in this argument move begin to move from the Russian Federation context to the Gloria Anzaldua informed “border thinking” tensions that in the end remain dissimilar from what is at play in Sakha (Yakutia). That is to say that despite the distance and difference in the experiences of colonization there remained a sense of the embodiment argued for in the Anzaldua style configurations of border thinking, and how this called for the politics of what is needed in each embodied moment. Turning

towards mitigating biopower however was only a framing step in this process of decolonizing the “post-soviet”:

Positioned at the intersection of ontology and epistemology, aesthesis acts as a mechanism to produce and regulate sensations; hence, it is inevitably linked with the body as an instrument of perception that mediates our cognition. Our bodies adapt to spaces through local histories— collective and personal. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (1981, 23) famously called this a “theory in the flesh”, stressing the importance of the “physical realities of our lives,” which “fuse to create a politics born out of necessity.” (Tlostanova 28).

Tlostanova here brings their own decolonial arguments into the dialogic motions of their research by turning towards the *Decolonial Imaginary* as Emma Perez would describe it in their treatment Chicana consciousness, identity, representation, and above all, recognition in the ongoing and historical traditions of mestizaje.

Demonstrated in “sound envelopes” increasingly sonic quality of the decolonial sensorium deployed by Sakha (Yakutia) peoples resisting settler colonialism within and beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The shocking connections between the Sakha (Yakutia) resistance to the colonialism and the ongoing settler colonial projects in the United States are not limited to their mutual usage of such thinkers as Walter Mignolo but indeed united in their methodologies. The decolonial move towards “dialogizes” was an intervention accomplished by scholars of Mikhail Bakhtin and was evident across the “post-soviet” “world” when Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova collaborated on collections which problematized the “post-soviet” conditions affecting indigenous

populations in the Russian Federation via the originally South American centric decolonial configuration Mignolo offers. However, I argue it would take the interconnective modalities of still other decolonial projects to fully demonstrate this connection. In the very expression of the decolonial difference in the space created by sonic affirmations of the self. The “sound envelope” thus describes the event of what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as “the carnivalesque”.

By using sound as the privileged sense in my focused exploration, I move beyond the visuality of techno cultures in general and assert the necessity of atemporal narratives conducted via my concept of the “sound envelope” which I argue is inherently decolonial in scope and impact since its deployment most commonly occurs in underground cinemas working to resist commercialized logics, and since commercialized logics, subject to the limits of cost remain complicit with the erasures conducted by empire. Whether through the voiceover, the dialog, the implementation of musical effects, or the “sound envelopes” and imaginations possible in music, it remains the case that the “sound envelope” offers more to the subaltern resistance of empire than visual cultures have thus far— especially given the implantation of racist visual algorithms in such widespread examples as Google face recognition or the inexorable, yet dubious proliferation of police information technologies; including but not limited to robotic “dogs” and scanners.

Chapter Five Conclusion – The “Sound Envelope” and its Various Afterlives, the Half-Life of Lived Quotidian Subjectivity Elevated to Cinematic Poesis

The logics of the sonic do not meet immediate corollaries in the other ostensibly humanized sense frameworks and seem to imply live beyond the parameters of the human in so far as the human remains entangled in settler construction of selfhood which dehumanize constructions of otherness to exist. In the sense frameworks of media production in the United States there often exist erasures of identity and ameliorations or obfuscations of problematics in governance. However, when one moves underground proverbially, they then discover vast networks of resistance through that same sense production in cinema, that of sound events. In the situations that sound events create in cinema, films take on tones and depths of meaning, layers of nuance that expose the core of the creative process and the sensorium as it is being created and imagined. For my research I found that poetry had often led the sonic traditions of peoples organizing film making outside of the context of commercial logic and while this does not make these films inherently greater or lesser, it does posit a sonic tradition to filmmaking that begins to be inherent to the way films shape sensorium's.

For example sound is the initial sight of obfuscation in cinema studies for thinkers like Michel Chion, where they spend so much of their arguments in *Film, A Sound Art* in the sole effort of demonstrating how much sound the alleged “silent” cinema always already had occurring via acoustic or performed are often not limited to voices and instruments but also various devices of early sound, often times remnants of outdated Vaudeville “Technocultures” or even more likely, assemblages of folk sound

communities. Chion proved how important the “acousmatic intrusion” had been to earlier modes of film making, establishing a mode of criticism that now considered so much more of the sensorium shaped by the affect fields of cinematic events. Chion also has done work with the audio visual in his work by that name and elsewhere in the *Film, A Sound Art* text where he indicates how sound shapes, the way the visual was constructed, or how when sound could not yet be synced to film, the way that the visual in turn, implied the sonic (*The Great Train Robbery* and pistol shots).

Where do we begin and where do our media landscapes end in our formation might well have been a question this work asked because of how I researched what happens when cinema is studied from the sonic approach, and how this approach worked so well when framed via confessional poetics being spoken aloud in film, and that speech as occurring from the Poem’s Speaker, rather than regarding that voice in cinema as some inert vulgarity exuded by the cacophonous loudspeaker for some base or low purpose of entertaining those too ignorant to behold the montage. Despite my stance, I value the montage and the visual, but I do not think them greater or even coequal to sonic, rather they are separate forces that give and take to one and other, but which in the end must be for cinema to occur. The questions guiding this work were iterated as: first what does the sonic event does to the cinematic sensorium in the context of so called Beat and “Spontaneous Cinema” as far the experience of the viewer in the cinematic event, second what does that sonic shift and shaping of sensorium’s in cinema (and other media/cultures) via avatars and embodiment shifts across these screen cultures, and third how are the Beat and postmodern poetics informing the media’s interaction with sonic

shifts in the cinematic sensorium; all of this intensifies the role of the speaker, the Loudspeaker, and the Voiceover sonic event in cinematic scenarios, medias, and more.

These questions came to be answered from a variety of fields through the various ways I traced “sound envelopes” as operating in the cinematic as an atemporal source of space, time, and memory, a place for identity. My work with sound is thanks to my parents and the way I was raised; there was an uniquely Quixotic energy alive in the upbringing practices of the early nineties and leading into the 2000’s wherein children were raised amidst bizarre confrontations with settler colonialism and literature, of poetics with cinema, of the world at large with the details of the community, the relation of the quotidian community reality in its place with the larger, international conception of the multicultural mythos which has by now both crystallized and diffused across various identities including but not limited to the Chicano/a/Latinadades/LatinX communities that I lived with as a member of the Los Angeles county.

The intersections of my identity formed in the fraught post modernisms afforded by the roar of airplanes across the duplex my mother and stepfather rented a section of somewhere between Inglewood and the misty-eyed splendor of playa del Rey and Manhattan beach adjacent communities. To me the sound of the planes was a kind but forceful reminder of how large the world I lived in truly was, that everyday new people went back and forth across the sky, just to visit each other, just to trade with each other, and very often, merely to learn from one and other. I was profoundly inspired therefore by the space that sound created in general because the planes were a reminder I was never alone. It was a natural move to me when I watched *Guns of the Trees* in Katherine



Kinney's cinema seminar, during my coursework, to write on the way that sound operated in the film.

I became fascinated by the roaring potency lingering and lurking in the poetic landscapes that Jonas Mekas offered and the extent to which his identity as a kind of "post-Soviet" refugee informed his cinema, and the cinema collectives he worked with. I was stunned by the film when I watched it first in coursework with Dr. Katherine Kinney, I had the pleasure of viewing this film alongside many colleagues have since become potent forces in their fields. Among them was the UCR Alumni and current Lecturer Dr. Grant Palmer who works with Video Games, Media/Cultural Studies via a kind of post-phenomenology informed by Bakhtin and Rabelais which I am to this day inspired by and seek to emulate in my work. I was impressed by Palmer's article on *Pokémon Go* and his term "The Technological Carnavalesque" which goes into the monstrous body of the cellphone in the ludic context of franchise like Niantic's *Pokemon Go* especially in the context of *The Patchwork Girl*. Palmer's distillations of various fields came from a shared context of our UCR English department's commitments to students, to the upholding of knowledge production, and to the decolonization of peoples and lands everywhere.

This robust environment was where I also had the good fortune of meeting and working with Dr. Mark Minch whose insights have guided my research from its admittedly limited Marxian perspectives towards a broader notion of what it truly means to be thinking in terms of decolonial critiques and how to bring the promise of praxis into my own pedagogy, research, and quotidian activities. Dr. Minch gave me courage and

insights which inform how I read through media and fostered in me the interest in decentering colonizing perspectives from media/cultures/ narratives ranging from Proudhon's *Property is Theft* and Marx's *The German Ideology* to Nichols' *Theft is Property* and Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals*. I also learned about the film collectives in Aboriginal lands such as the Karrabing Film collective who often worked with Elizabeth Povinelli author of *Geontologies* in filmic projects conducted via small phones and tablets rather than studio grade equipment. The result was something real, something creative, quotidian, and uniquely of the Karrabing Collectives gathered subjectivities; film projects like these helped me to consider the work of Beat Cinema and underground filmmakers such as Jonas Mekas in terms of their decolonial status, the extent to which their work was resisting the logics of supply and demand, the uniquely imperial notions of cost which inform way in which racist structures are policed against people of color, immigrants, women, and queer bodies.

In my fourth Chapter, my third field, I wanted to see what would happen I treated sound as the guiding metaphor and principle for the interpretation of narrative in the one feature length film Jonas Mekas ever made, *Guns of the Trees* which was the focus of my Chapter two where I conducted close readings of the film and argued for its place in Beat and Spontaneous modes of filmmaking. Beyond that I wanted to explore the ways that Beat poetics influenced underground cinema in the sixties, where so much innovation occurred without the restriction or affordances coded into the logics of cost that shaped commercial cinema. In that exploration I discovered that sound maintains a radical potential for the subjectivity of the subaltern, the other, the colonized; a kind of spatiality

that did not betray its subjects while still offering them a kind of “way out” to use the parlance of the podcast: *This Way Out* (a queer, trans, lgbtqi+ show serving as news, information, activism, and more) of the proverbial closet that structures of oppression layer atop the consciousness of the othered. I also found profound connections across Beat resistance to corporatism/ commercialism in the context of the United States, and the “post-Soviet” experiences of decolonial resistance to empire in the Sakha Republic.

I approached this culture slowly because it has not yet received an appropriate place amidst the proliferation of decolonial and border thinking politics that has somewhat blossomed across the United States, Canada, Mexico, and communities across South America since Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/ La Frontera* and through the scholarship of my friend and colleague, activist, and scholar/ critic: Anna Gomboeva. Between the ongoing support and wisdom of my colleague and Partner, Art Historian Angelica Galbraith, and the community of scholars we have woven through our correspondences and research, this work came to be as a treatment of the forgotten by those who seek not to forget. It is therefore to these scholars for whom much of my decolonial thinking is in thanks to, since they continue to walk me through the complexities and perils of the “post-Soviet” condition, the complexities of Turkic, Persian, Mongol, and Sassanid identities across time and governances. Additionally, these scholars, such as Gomboeva face the adversity and repression of the Slavic centric settler colonial state that has, since the first and allegedly most “Terrible” Czar, has had as its privileged center, the exclusionary and elitist capitol of Moscow. Sakha activists and what so far has been referred to as “Indigenous” Peoples of Siberia speak out against the

intersections of racist governance, corporatist corruption and the ongoing settler colonial projects occurring across various “post-Soviet” lands where queerness is illegal and mobile gaming in a church is a jailable offense.

The intersections of oppression the subalternized faces are in line with the models of thinking Audre Lorde explains in their theorizing of the “Hierarchy of Oppression”. Lorde of course indicates that there is not hierarchy of oppression, that she faces scrutiny for blackness, oppression for queerness, adversity for female status, and even more for existing as all three at once. Likewise, Gomboeva must maintain visa status in United States, at a time where bipartisan efforts are working to expel immigrants in general and are increasingly draconian in the treatment of radical thinkers who speak out against say, the colonization and genocides of the Palestinian people and yet knows that they cannot safely return to the Russian Federation either. The plight of such scholars is endemic to the settler colonial condition in the present and it haunts the structures of corporations and governments worldwide. Because Gomboeva is ethnically “Siberian”, they are not welcomed by the Slavic centric policies of the Russian Federation, the racism and oppression they face is not allowed to be critiqued under the laws and standards, the very traditions, and tenants of the Russian Federation.

At the same time, their status in favor of and as a queer person makes their identity illicit once more, as the recent trends in religiously fueled reactionary politics in the Federation have rendered queerness just as illegal, if not more illegal, than it had been in Soviet times. I thank again my part and colleague, Art Historian Angelica Galbraith here as their firsthand experiences as a non-binary person, and the way our eros has led

me towards a queering of my lifestyle were the missing pieces in the confusions I historically faced when approaching poetics, peoples, art, art history, and media/culture studies. Part of my work is an ongoing reminder to my colleagues that the complexities of our political and theoretical considerations must become ever more nuanced, and complicated if we are to properly treat objects and artifacts of study as commensurate critics. It is imperative to consider the nuances of the sonic, the way that sound studies reveal, to quote Dr. Grant Palmer once more, “where we fall short” Both in the United States and elsewhere, the issues that media either makes light of, or erases completely are quite commonly the most important and relevant perspectives at play.

The cinema of Sakha (Yakutia) peoples is therefore linked through sonic logics to broader explorations of multi-modal expressions of poetic resistance, radical selfhood, and the promotion of quotidian subjectivities over commercialized constructions across various networks, embodiments, experiences, peoples, nations, and perspectives. The culture’s poetic tradition of the “Olonkho” which has been framed by scholars outside of the tradition as a kind of “Epic Poem” seems to express an enduring, sonic quality that defies and successfully outlived the Soviet era policies and governments that had rendered the Sakha (Yakutia) language illegal and “Un-Soviet”. Clearly sound has vast significance here which plays an ongoing role in the examples I show from recent Sakha (Yakutia) Cinema and in turn that cinema tells us that our theories and praxes are even more fraught than we presently imagine. At stake therefore is not just our subjectivity but the recognition of enduring traditions that are living ruptures in the logics currently fueling most major nations and settler states, the persistence and spatiality of sound then.

It is tragic and quite telling that the same issues should haunt much of the problematics in the United States; where for example my Partner and I are limited as to our employment opportunities because of inability to safely live in states with anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI+ legislation. At present, an increasing amount of the United States is attempting to make queerness even less than a horizon, to render it erased and to destroy all traces of queer culture. While a specific valence of problematics informs the situation, such bigotry is essentially in line with the historical and ongoing trends of the euro centric settler colonial projects in general. It would therefore be a mistake to ignore the way that straightness informs white supremacy and vice versa, further it is crucial to the work of scholars of sound, cinema, and media/cultural studies.

In the end I have woven an elaborate tapestry of the sonic effects, interpretations, designs, manipulations, trajectories, innovations, and the general give and take of technics and funding, commerce, and dreams at work across various cinematic examples of the poetic diegesis committed solely to the self and the peace that folk can generate together, as collaborative communities. In such cases the collaborations have likely no limits but certainly manifest in the filmic elevation of the quotidian, and the clever sublimation of narrative via various “sound envelopes”. More work shows the centrality and importance of the sonic via the theory of “sound envelopes” which creates more than segmentations of narrative, but layers of reality that inform and shape the embodiments of the audience. So much of the performer gets to determine the sensorium in these situations that Paul Arthur’s theories in “Routines of Emancipation” appear all to relevant and verified by the examples of underground cinema and its various filmic afterlives.

My claims are that sound events in cinema can indeed govern the plot so to speak; to put it more correctly, the sonic events I trace throughout this dissertation are such that they can arrange narrative and transmit meaning beyond vulgarity or chaos although each has its place in the soundscape, especially for Beat cinematic examples such as *Guns of the Trees*. Adapting that understanding to post-modern poetry theories allowed me to invert both poetics and cinematic reception around the role of the Speaker and again, the Loudspeaker. As these problematics in poetics play out, it turns out to be the case that sound helps unify and complicate the subjective space of poetry with additional layers of meaning and spatiality that become embodied by the audience. The poetry of sonic spaces deserves a great unpacking in the fraught eras of hyper visual techno cultures because sound remains the space of memory and presence in the moment, both evocative of what was and yet presenting what is. When sonic approaches like my “sound envelopes” are applied to the broader and more pressing matters of our time such as the plight of those resisting occupation, war, and atrocities both historic and yet, tragically also ongoing a configuration emerges that more adequately accounts for the way sound creates space and the way that we use that space to foster embodiments of culture and identity that surpass and precede commercial logics.

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